

## **2021 CIRCLE OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS ENTRY**

### **SPECIAL EVENTS: ONLINE-OTHER**

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### **Summary**

In the fall of 2020, Simon Fraser University remotely installed Chancellor Tamara Vrooman and President Joy Johnson in a meaningful ceremony that signified a new era of hope and opportunity. Joined and viewed by 5,500 members of the university community – including alumni, donors, staff, faculty, students, local government and friends, the installation ceremony launched and animated the incoming president and chancellor’s key priorities of reconciliation, equity, diversity and inclusion and student experience.

The path to reconciliation was affirmed by the introduction of a new tradition of including Indigenous drumming and singing into the ceremony and new regalia for the president and chancellor which were redesigned to feature Coast Salish motifs. As well, included in the ceremony were an Elder from the Tseil-Waututh Nation who provided a traditional welcome to the guests and the Squamish Nation artists who blessed the gowns and shared the meaning of their work.

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) was woven throughout the ceremony. All of the speakers have led and championed EDI in their work. Representing diverse age groups, perspectives and backgrounds, six of the ten speakers were female, four were from the BIPOC community and the president was joined by her wife.

In regard to student experience, the focus on students was evident in the speaker remarks and two of the three speakers invited to respond to the president and chancellor were leaders in the student community.

SFU’s installation ceremony fully embodied the university’s vision and priorities.

## **Methodology and Strategy**

### **ENGAGED THE TARGET AUDIENCE**

Traditionally at SFU, installations are a part of the in-person convocation ceremonies. Due to the virtual nature of Fall Convocation, the installation was developed as a stand-alone event. The installation was less than an hour long—maintaining the interest of the audience. As well, the attendees were the target audience for the event (as opposed to graduates whose main interest would have been the graduation components). The messaging was sharply focused on the president and chancellor’s vision for the university.

To cultivate and steward donors, and to connect with the university’s closest friends and VIPs, an intimate VIP Installation Watch Party was arranged. 70 VIPs joined in this gathering, where the chancellor, president and senior administrators directly spoke or used the chat box to “chat” with all attendees.

### **THE ONLINE PLATFORMS USED MAXIMIZED ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES.**

The installation ceremony was broadcast live on YouTube. The live chat option was turned on and a moderator provided background information and encouraged comments.

The Watch Party was hosted on Zoom Meeting, so that all attendees were visible and had the opportunity to have personal exchanges.

### **THE CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT’S VISION AND PRIORITIES WERE WOVEN INTO THE CEREMONY.**

#### **Reconciliation**

The university traditionally starts its ceremonies with the SFU Pipe Band. This ceremonial opening was re-envisioned: the SFU piper piped in the first group of platform participants. Then, a member of the Tseil-Waututh Nation, one of the Indigenous nations on whose traditional territory SFU resides, drummed, sang and led in the Lieutenant Governor and the chancellor’s party.

The chancellor and president’s academic regalia were Indigenized. In consultation with SFU’s Office for Aboriginal Peoples, president and chancellor, the Ceremonies and Events Office reached out to artists from the four nations that the SFU Burnaby campus is on to commission an artist to design Indigenous motifs for the regalia. The design and motifs selected honour the Coast Salish peoples. As well, the motifs are similar to those once worn by past local Indigenous leaders.

*Other Indigenous elements in the ceremony:*

- traditional welcome by an Indigenous Elder,
- the Emcee was SFU’s Board Chair and a Squamish Nation Councillor, and
- Indigenous names were used in title slides and publications.

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### **Equity, diversity and inclusion**

All of the speakers represented diverse age groups, perspectives and backgrounds: six of the ten are female, three are from the BIPOC community, and one is a member of the LGBTQ community.

### **TO BE PERSONALLY MEANINGFUL TO THE CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT**

Due to COVID-19 protocols, the usual gowning and hooding of the president and chancellor was not possible. This turned out to be one of the most meaningful aspects of the ceremony as the president and chancellor's family were invited for this role. Moving forward, family members will be part of future installation ceremonies.

Following the ceremony, a celebration box was given to the president and chancellor. The boxes included a photo book and memorabilia from the various events.

### **Resource allocation details**

#### **Convocation ceremonies' resources were leveraged to produce the installation ceremony.**

- The installation ceremony was filmed immediately before the convocation ceremonies, in the same location, with the same equipment, participants, vendors and staff.
- Many of the resources were shared between events: video footage (e.g. the Canadian anthem), refreshments for the speakers, COVID-19 safety plans, AV set-up, etc.
- The staff on the convocation committees were also the same staff on the installation committees; streamlining the planning and leveraging the same resources. At the various committee meetings, convocation was first discussed, then discussions about the installation would follow:
  - Ceremonies and Events Lead Team (4 team members)
    - Conceptualized ceremony, events and program
    - Oversaw budget
    - Developed timelines and chaired various planning sub-committees to deliver the events
    - Worked with internal suppliers and vendors to execute
    - Coordinated with speakers, event participants and guests (managed guest lists, invitations, developed itineraries, etc.)
    - Managed the design and production of new Indigenized regalia
    - Stage-managed the various ceremonies and events and created safety plans
    - Developed web page, e-program, the Book of Words, etc.
    - Communicated and consulted on plans with key stakeholders: chancellor, president, board chair, vice-presidents (VPs), deans, on-campus suppliers
    - Initially, met bi-weekly and then weekly when closer to event: August to October

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- Planning/Working Group (lead staff members involved with the production of the ceremony: Ceremonies and Events (3), IT/AV Services, Student Services (2), Videographer, Communications, Facilities)
  - Initially, met bi-weekly and then weekly when closer to event: August to October
- Marketing and Communications Committee (Ceremonies and Events (2), Videographer, Communications team members (4))
  - Oversaw: news releases and articles about president and chancellor, digital media, design and branding of Collateral
  - Video production and editing
  - Social media
- External vendors provided the following:
  - AV Services – SFU’s IT/AV Services managed the contract with the audio visual supplier who provided the labour and equipment to videotape the ceremony.
  - Indigenous artists – designed the motifs for the president and chancellor’s gowns and led the Brushing Ceremony
  - Regalia designer and producer – worked with the Indigenous artist on how to best present the Indigenous motifs on the gowns. As well, the gowns were completely redesigned and produced.

## **Outcomes**

### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

- To celebrate and to formally install and introduce SFU’s 12th chancellor and 10th president to the SFU community,
- To share the vision and priorities of the incoming chancellor and president,
- To be meaningful to the chancellor and president, and
- To connect with the SFU’s most engaged community members, donors, partners, members of government, staff, faculty and alumni.

### **MEASURES**

- 5,500 members of the university community – including alumni, donors, staff, faculty, students, local government and friends have viewed the president and chancellor’s installation on YouTube and Facebook Live. The chat room was alive with feedback from the target groups from around the world. Likes and heart emojis flowed, words of congratulations to the president and chancellor and responses to the Indigenous gowns of the president and chancellor were shared (e.g. “Beautiful robes. Great ceremony. Congrats to the incoming Chancellor Tamara and

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President Joy Johnson” and “Terrific designs for the regalia that reflect that Indigenous peoples were this province’s and countries (first) inhabitants”)

- 70+ members of SFU’s highest level donors, government officials, past SFU presidents and chancellors, presidents and chancellors of other universities, members of the alumni board, senior administration and other VIPs joined the new chancellor and president at a small Zoom gathering preceding the “live broadcast” of the installation. In this much more intimate setting, guests offered the chancellor and president their personal words of congratulations verbally and in the Zoom chat; and together watched the installation ceremony (while live chatting in the Zoom chat together).
- Anecdotal remarks: kudos from the president and chancellor, senior leadership, members of the SFU community, alumni, presidents and chancellors of other Canadian universities, government, etc.
- The installation of the president and chancellor ranked as SFU’s top 10 (5<sup>th</sup> ranking) media and social media stories in 2020. The installation of the president and chancellor was:
  - one of SFU’s top news stories in 2020  
<https://www.sfu.ca/sfunews/stories/2021/01/top-10-sfu-news-stories-of-2020.html>
  - Top SFU news story in October 2020 was about the new regalia unveiled at the installation ceremony
  - Top Facebook by Reach - October 2020
    1. Fall installation
    2. New regalia
  - Top Facebook by Engagement - October 2020
    1. Fall installation
    3. New regalia
  - Top Facebook by Engagement % - October 2020
    2. Fall installation
    3. New regalia
  - Top Twitter by Reach - October 2020
    8. New Regalia
  - Top Twitter by Engagement - October 2020
    3. New Regalia
  - Top Twitter by Engagement % - October 2020
    3. New Regalia

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One thing to note, during the month of October, SFU's top ten earned media stories were dominated by coverage on the provincial elections and mask mandates; which adds to the success on interest in the installation.

**Media stories:**

<https://www.surreynowleader.com/news/new-sfu-president-joy-johnson-sworn-in-during-virtual-fall-convocation-this-week/>

<https://www.mapleridgenews.com/news/new-sfu-president-joy-johnson-sworn-in-during-virtual-fall-convocation-this-week/>

<https://www.sfu.ca/sfunews/stories/2020/10/coast-salish-motifs-at-the-heart-of-new-sfu-chancellor-and-presi.html>

<https://twitter.com/ubcpres/status/1319324862469427201?lang=en>

**What makes entry distinctive?**

The installation ceremony of SFU's chancellor and president notably launched the university into a new era. While traditions were maintained in the ceremony, new ones were featured to represent the vision of reconciliation, equity, diversity and inclusion.

- When designing the program to reflect the university's vision of reconciliation, we consulted closely with SFU's Aboriginal Office. Important Indigenous celebration customs, such as drumming and singing were added into the opening of the program. SFU has traditionally started all ceremonies with a piper. For the installation, the piper led the VPs and deans onto the stage. Once on stage, the piper stopped piping. After a moment of silence, the drummer drummed and sang, leading in the Lieutenant Governor and chancellor's party. The drummer was then followed by a traditional welcome by an Elder from one of the nations that SFU Burnaby campus resides on. The Indigenized regalia for the president and chancellor was also designed in close consultation with SFU's Office for Aboriginal Peoples. These added components were powerful additions and were strongly embraced by the SFU community.
- Careful consideration was also given to selecting speakers with diverse voices, perspectives and backgrounds. The result was a resounding success as each of the ten speakers represented a wide range of communities: six of the ten speakers were female, three were from the BIPOC

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community, the president is member of the LGBTQ community and speakers included a full range of age groups.

During this time of COVID-19 restrictions, the installation program was reimagined and adapted into four events to engage the various remote audiences.

1. The VIP Zoom Party engaged the university's highest level donors, partners, members of government and best friends.
2. The intimate in-person Regalia Brushing included a small group, but was filmed and then edited into the installation ceremony and convocation; allowing all to safely experience and learn about the Indigenized gowns.
3. The installation ceremony broadcast shared this important occasion with the SFU community, with 5,500 views.
4. Key elements of the installation ceremony were then edited into the convocation ceremonies.

Each of these events were designed with the remote audiences in mind: speaking programs were kept short; messages were developed for the target audiences; "chat" features were turned on and moderators encouraged chatter to create engagement.

As well, due to the physical distancing requirements, the president and chancellor were gowned by their family members. This was well received and as the university moves forward, this will become a new practice. This was highly meaningful to the president, chancellor and their families; and to the audience who could sense the emotional connection. As well, this is an Indigenous tradition. Families usually blanket and present the new leaders to the community – recognizing that the families are sharing their family member with the community.

SFU's installation of the president and chancellor on October 22, 2020 signified a new direction for the university. Each program element and each speaker were intentionally included to articulate the university's vision.