VUSAC Meeting Agenda

**Call to order:** 5:32 pm EST, January 20, 2023

**Land Acknowledgement:**

*Michael Elsaesser*

*I would like to start by recognizing that while these statements can often become performative means for settlers to absolve guilt, I feel it remains important for us to acknowledge the land on which we live, work, study, learn, and meet. As we have conversations about the land which Vic “owns” for example, we must acknowledge the original caretakers of that land such as the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. They have lived on this land for thousands of years, and this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. We must remain grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land, which is the treaty land of the Mississaugas of the Credit and is part of the dish with one spoon wampum belt covenant, which is a legal agreement between local Indigenous nations to share and communally take care of the Great Lakes and its surrounding land.*

*The Huron-Wendat have historically lived in the St. Lawrence Valley and the Great Lakes region. The Wendat confederacy is made up of five nations, and their name means “island dwellers”. Following a series of conflicts, the Wendat were dispersed by the Haudenosaunee. However, the Wendat nation still remains, and is currently located in Quebec. There, they operate with a council that provides services such as schooling and healthcare.*

*The Seneca are the western-most member of the Haudenosaunee confederacy, and are known as “keepers of the western door”. The Haudenosaunee are a confederacy of six nations united by the Great Law of Peace. They use the metaphor of a longhouse to describe that political and cultural alliance. Even after the Canadian government tried to impose a new governmental system onto the Haudenosaunee, they continued to function in opposition by using their traditional council model. The Seneca have had famous leaders like Handsome Lake who is viewed as a prophet that revived traditional spirituality.*

*The name Mississauga means “people living where there are mouths of many rivers”. As such, the Mississaugas of the Credit have been described as “people of the waters”. The re-creation story of the Mississaugas tells of the cleansing power of the waters; with their people having watched the erosion of the Scarborough Bluffs and the creation of the Toronto Island. They understand water as a living spiritual being that flows through all aspects of life. Water is viewed as a vital part of a larger harmonious system. During the treaty making period, settlers viewed water as a commodity to drive their mills, a place to harvest salmon to near extinction, and a place to dump. The holistic view of water and the harmony promoted by the First Peoples was swept away in the name of “civilization” and “progress”. Environmental stewardship is a joint concern and the Mississaugas of the Credit note that it can be nurtured by focusing attention on restoring a respectful, harmonious, and grateful relationship with water.*

*Beyond looking back at the Indigenous peoples who have cared for this land, we must also acknowledge the importance of Indigenous peoples and justice in contemporary times. We must acknowledge that we are students at an institution which puts up posters saying that “decolonization is not a metaphor” yet continues to invest in fossil fuels. We must acknowledge the intersection between Indigenous and environmental justice. As well as the ways fossil fuel industries have contributed to the infringement of Indigenous sovereignty, stealing land for the purpose of resource extraction, and directly fighting against land back movements. We must examine exploitative work structures that undervalue the physical and emotional labour of Indigenous students in the student-university relationship. Listening to the voices of Indigenous activists, we must challenge the ways mental health crises are handled. We must acknowledge the very valid concerns raised by students about the university and city’s use of police, who have disproportionately targeted Indigenous communities throughout history and the role this involvement can play in reinforcing trauma. For decolonization to truly be more than a metaphor for forgive-and-forget-style reconciliation, it is our responsibility to interrogate the means by which colonialism perpetuates itself in our institutions.*

*As we acknowledge this land and the role colonialism continues to play in our society, it is essential that we centre the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples. Dr. Zoe Todd, a Métis scholar and professor noted in her work Refracting Colonialism in Canada that colonial recognition of Indigenous peoples in Canada “surges in moments of public remorse or defensive denial of Canada’s colonial history. And then it ebbs back into collective non-memory for those who are not viscerally impacted by the day-to-day legacies of Canada’s genocidal history” (Todd 2017). We cannot allow these conversations to be a performative clearing of the conscious before dissolving into the background. I urge us all to keep these discussions and acknowledgements in mind as we conduct our advocacy work, outreach, and event planning.*

*Todd finishes in relation to the stories Indigenous people tell themselves to grieve the losses of colonialism that “we must be careful about how these narratives become enmeshed in the ongoing power-relations of the settler-colonial State. However, paradoxically, the stories that Empire and its governments and agents try to tell about itself can be – and are – refracted through the insistent, fleshy, present bodies, voices and movements of humans and more-than-human entities. These refractions of the colonial and postcolonial offer us possibilities that expand our understanding of what it is to live well, together, across space and time” (Todd 2017).*

**Official Regrets:** Luca Carnegie (Proxy: Jackson), Ninon Crestois (Proxy: Amelia)

**Absent:**

**Approval of minutes:**

*Motion by Michael Elsaesser to approve the minutes for December 2, Seconded by Dhir Shah*

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

**Additions to the agenda:**

*President Update by Sooyeon Lee*

*Board of Regents Update by Cam*

**Approval of the agenda:**

*Motion by Zoe Lazaris to approve the agenda for January 20, Seconded by Diana Vink*

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

EX-OFFICIO REPORTS:

*Motion: Tariq Harney motions to grant Ali Kehl speaking rights, seconded by Michael Elsaesser*

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

Ali: Semi is coming soon, shoutout to Jackson and Soo, but specifically to Ninon. It’s been a busy day of meetings–we’ve had the Orientation Steering Committee meeting where we’re talking about orientation 2023, and hopefully you ratify our cochair since she’s already signed with us. Orientation executive applications are open until February 3rd, and leader and TM applications are open until March 3rd. We also have Ideas of the World: Theatre for Thought, signups are open and it’s a great way for you to get involved. There are cool professors present and a free meal, if you’re interested Elena and I can send you the information. We also have a lot of events incoming, like Gardiner Gala, Crescams, and Caucus. You’ve all been working so hard, congratulations on the new semester and I’m so excited.

GOVERNING BODIES:

*Board of Regents*

Cam: I just wanted to bring it up, on Feb 9th the ancillary budget will be voted on, and these are student fees and this will be most likely raised. So save the date, keep it in your minds.

Shane: They will definitely be raised.

Cam: They might not be raised, because we do have student votes, and students are not fans of paying more money, so we will vote against it.

ACTION ITEMS:

*Motion: Jackson Leslie to ratify Jocelyn Mattka as the 2023 Orientation Student Co-Chair, seconded by Sooyeon Lee (3 minutes)*

Jackson: So I was chair of the meeting, and I’m happy with this decision. We got some student representatives–one commuter, one on residence, one equity, and other representatives. Jocelyn was a great applicant and we made a decision, we all think that they would be a great cochair.

Jocelyn: Thank you Jackson, I’m really looking forward to the role, I had a lot of fun for orientation last year and I’m really excited about this year’s.

\*Collective Woo!\*

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

*Motion: Michael Elsaesser to ratify Lesley Pan as the new Cat’s Eye Co-Manager, seconded by Jackson Leslie (2 minutes)*

Michael: Lesley has been on the Cat’s Eye subcommittee for a year and a half now, and has also been an orientation leader and VicPride executive. They have already left an undoubtable mark on Vic student life, and I am very excited for them to co-lead the Cat’s Eye team with their dutiful work ethic and overwhelming kindness. Her application and interview demonstrated a rich knowledge and appreciation of the space, which makes me excited for her to help run the lounge and all the events Vickies hold close to our hearts.

Jerico: I like to think about succession and how students maintain community, and Cat’s Eye is an important part of that. I’ve been able to work with her, and I’m very lucky and looking forward to working with her.

\*Collective Woo!\*

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

*Motion: Michael Elsaesser to ratify Maximus Caron as the new Caffiends Co-Manager, seconded by Jackson Leslie (2 minutes)*

Michael: Max has been at Caffiends for about a year and a half now both as a volunteer and as an executive. He has a sincere understanding and appreciation for the cafe and its community. He gave an incredible interview which highlighted his experience, passion, and caring attitude which will help him excel at leading the Caffiends team. I know that Caffiends space, executive, and volunteers will be in exceptional hands as Max joins the Co-Manager duo.

\*Collective Woo!\*

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

*Motion: Michael Elsaesser to ratify Vic Urban Dance Club as a VUSAC-recognized club for the 2022-2023 school year, seconded by Jackson Leslie (2 minutes)*

Michael: Vic Urban Dance Club is a returning club here at Vic. They are a HipHop Dance crew founded in 2014. With that same passion for dancing, they promote original choreography and strive to encourage every student interested in dancing to join. They aim to provide an opportunity for Vic students to dance and connect them with the local dance community. They are preparing for the Spring Festival Gala, and I am very excited for the dance opportunities this returning club will offer the community.

\*Collective Woo!\*

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

*Motion: Michael Elsaesser to ratify Students for Collective Resistance as a VUSAC-recognized club for the 2022-2023 school year, seconded by Jackson Leslie (2 minutes)*

Michael: Students for Collective Resistance is a new club here at Vic. They aim to resist harmful systems in our communities and move towards establishing community-based and trauma-informed alternatives. One of their goals is to work with the community to advocate for the removal of police as responders to students experiencing mental health crises. In doing so, they aim to uphold the voices of those who have been directly and indirectly impacted by harmful systems of policing and coercion and to connect with communities, individuals with lived experience, and mental health workers to introduce other ways for UofT to ensure the health and safety of its students. This is a club with lots of passion, and will bring a great voice to advocacy here at Vic and beyond. Student organising is essential for things to get better, and this club is ready to make their voice heard.

Cam: That’s really great and I’m really excited that there’s a club focused on cops on campus.

Zoe: I helped start the club and you can come get involved thorough our Instagram, there’s a protest on Tuesday to oppose the police budget increase. If you wanna come, we’re gonna meet at 10:45 on the Vic Quad.

*Sixteen in favour. None opposed. One abstaining. Motion passes.*

*Motion: Michael Elsaesser to reallocate $150 from Fall Budget line item 213 to 214 (Appendix A), seconded by Jackson Leslie (2 minutes)*

Michael: Vic Chorus was able to hold a very successful concert in November which exceeded their expectations, leading them to need more food and drinks than previously estimated. Luckily, they do have left over funds from their merchandise that they would like to reallocate in order to cover the extra $150 in food. This shift won’t cost any extra money, but would just be a reshuffle of their fall term budget.

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

*Motion: Michael Elsaesser to reallocate $20 from VPSO Contingency Fund to The Strand for Fall Budget line 48 “Magazine payment to visual contributors” (Appendix A), seconded by Jackson Leslie (2 minutes)*

Michael: The Strand has a wonderful team who work very hard on their magazine and its art, so those students are compensated for their labour. The Strand just needs the $20 assistance to compensate one more student who worked on the cover of their magazine which is launching tonight. Their budget has already gone through their board of directors, so they need help from the VPSO Contingency Fund, which is meant to support student organisations.

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

*Motion: Shane Joy to ratify the Women's Circle's SPF Grant Application (Appendix B), seconded by Diana Vink (3 minutes)*

Jiwoo: SPF approved 2 lines in the Women’s Circle application for a weekend long retreat for muslim women students, the two lines include transportation which is $1500 and speaker honorariums which is $1000. The Committee understood the importance of this retreat for the women that do attend, and the great community-building experience that takes place. Because of that, we wanted to give partial funding for this retreat. The reasoning why ultimately the committee did not approve of funding the rest that was requested was concerns around the limited beneficial reach this trip would have on the Vic community at large. The total funding approved was $2500.

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

*Motion: Shane Joy to ratify VEFS' SPF Grant Application (Appendix C), seconded by Diana Vink (3 minutes)*

Jiwoo: SPF has decided to partially approve VEF’s application for putting together and host a fashion show. The two line items approved are for $2250 for recycled fabric and thrifted clothing. We approved of this as having the fabric and clothing needed to create their designs is obviously very important, since without it they wouldn’t be able to put on a fashion show. The other was $1560 for Big Film Warehouse, they were initially requesting this amount to book a studio for a photoshoot but decided to use that money to secure a venue for the fashion show instead which we approved them to do. The total funding approved is $3810.

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

*Lunar New Year event debrief, put forth by Charlie Sun (5 minutes)*

Charlie: The event went well, it fulfilled our goal with community building. I just wanted to show my appreciation to Soo and Jackson for checking the rationality of my budget, to Lara, Juhyung, and Michael for helping out, especially Lara’s drink serving, Carolyn for helping serve the dumplings. I look forward to our cooperation in the future.

Diana: This is the 2nd large scale international event, that’s so impressive, thank you for planning these. You’ve done an amazing job.

Zoe: I just wanted to say thank you Charlie as well, everyone was so excited about it.

Charlie: I also wanted to say thank you Jenny for helping set up.

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

STAFF REPORTS:

*Finance: Thomas (5 minutes)*

Thomas: I was really strict with the budget last term, but this term will be the opposite. Our utilization is subpar, but this is typical. With a 41.9% is utilization we have a lot of surplus. Just a couple of shoutouts, we got 100% utilization from Shane, VOCA spent the most money and had a great utilisation. Academic Commission had great utilisation too and Tunes Beats Awesome had 83%. This information is in the appendix, so feel free to take a look. There’s also the utilization among nonzero spenders, which brings up out utilization to 50%. We should keep this in mind for budget ratification, but also be lenient with money now because we have a lot of it.

Lara: Given this information, can we submit a request again?

Thomas: The form actually is not closed, so you can submit a request for additional lines.

Diana: Do we submit the whole budget or just the additional lines?

Thomas: Please submit just the additional lines and name the file as an additional request.

*Office Manager: Lara (3 minutes)*

Lara: Regarding the office hours schedule, if you haven’t sent in a conflict and you need to do so, please do so by the end of the meeting. I will revise the schedule to accommodate the conflicts and will send the final schedule by this weekend. On paper, we’ve decreased to twenty sides or ten pages back-to-back, and this is because we aren’t in a COVID era anymore, so a lot of people are coming in to print, and we can’t keep up with the paper demand. Please make sure to check on how much is being printed because it is a change since the forty pages. For the boardroom, if your commission is interested in using the boardroom, please feel free to email me so we can figure out availability that works. Lastly on the office space, Shane brought up the idea of submitting a request to Student Projects to improve the space of our office. I’ve been thinking about making the entryway more welcoming and also making the space seem less like it’s VUSAC-exclusive. If you have any ideas or thoughts about the office space, please let me know.

Cam: I was wondering if we’ve considered just buying our own photocopier/printer?

Lara: So right now we are under a contract with the printing company, but that ends this semester. Once that ends, we’ll submit a request to student projects for funding to buy our own printer and manage the demand ourselves.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS:

*VPE: Shane (3 minutes)*

Shane: I have a few things im working on with Ali. Crescams, which is yearly, they’re awards given to students at Vic for their contributions to their community. If you know someone who is actively involved in the community, you would fill out the nominations form and submit a CV as well. The description is broad so don’t be deterred, I highly encourage you to nominate anyone you want at Vic. Nominations close on the 17th and awarding is on the 9th. For Caucus, we’re working out the location. I hope you bring the same assertiveness you did last time, questions, or discussion topics you want, cause I intend to let the administrators know prior and that was productive based on our last caucus. President McEwen also wants to have another conversation with students other than at caucus and bring other relevant people and that will hopefully be on March 10th. The location for that will be worked out, and I intend to work with them to promote this more.

*VPI: Jackson (5 minutes)*

Jackson: Welcome back, it’s great to see you all. I did check ins with commissioners and cochairs the week we came back, and I thought it was really great. On budget, I just wanted to say that just cause we have more money that doesn’t mean we need to spend it, because we don’t know about the next council’s needs. Don’t hold yourself back but do be conscious. Next on check-ins is staff, I sent out a When2Meet, and councillors you are the week following them. For semiformal updates, everyone that is volunteering I’ll be handing your ticket to you, we thought it’d be nice if you had one to keep. Gardiner Gala, that’s underway and the volunteer form has been sent out. If you aren’t assigned a volunteer position and still want to go we will reserve a ticket for you. For the mini retreat, thank you to those who came, we have lots of improvements to make and the whole point was to facilitate discussion cause I’ve had conversations and you guys have really great ideas. Orientation Exec applications are due Feb 3rd, please apply and encourage anyone you think is interested. Have fun and a safe night, don’t make any decisions you wouldn’t like to be in. Ninon, Soo, and I are there, don’t be hesitate to reach out.

*VPSO: Michael (7 minutes)*

Michael: First off, I wanted to thank you all for your support in ratifying our new levy heads and clubs! I am ecstatic to have Lesley and Max take on those roles and I know that they will both do fantastic jobs. Club applications are open all year long, and I love it when we are able to foster new communities. Now, an update on VISA. Applications are open for the entire executive team! I highly encourage all international students to apply through the link on the VUSAC Instagram. Please send me an email at vpso@vusac.ca if anyone has any questions. This is an exquisite opportunity for students to gain experience running a levy, doing advocacy work, running events, and outreach to the international student community. Also, we’re just hiring for the remainder of this term, until April 30th, so it's a way to gain experience without a full year-long commitment. I also wanted to give another shout out to Charlie and his team for running a great Lunar New Year event last night. There were frequent lines going out the Cat’s Eye doors, and I know people had a great time. I’ve started my levy head check-ins this term. I just have one left to go. During these check-ins, I’m seeing how each levy is doing, assisting with any problems they’re facing, reviewing each of their constitutions, planning for succession at the end of the year, and so on. The levies all seem to be doing well, connecting with students and fulfilling their essential roles in the Vic community. The club head check-ins will start in February after our all club heads meeting next week on January 27th before budget ratification. At that meeting, we’ll review how things operate for clubs, go over issues which they all face, and help club heads get to know eachother better to form inter-club bonds and potential collaborations. I’ve also been working with the Equity Commission to finalise plans for the student organisation equity training which will happen in early February. We’ve wanted to assure that this new in-person framework we’re building from scratch is thorough and can be used in future years to help foster discussion based learning and understanding. I wanted to give a huge thank you to Diana for her tremendous help in creating this training. Their deep comprehension of equity issues has been an invaluable resource, and I whole-heartedly appreciate her work on this initiative. In terms of non-student organisation work I’ve done so far this term, one little project has been researching the Vic oil well. There is a Strand article coming soon which I highly encourage everyone to read and share with friends. I personally find it profoundly unsettling that Vic owns an oil well in Weyburn Saskatchewan, a town where over half of homes have high levels of radon gas. Radon gas, if you are not aware, can be released from the ground through processes like mining and oil drilling. It is a powerful carcinogen which is the leading environmental cause of cancer. Weyburn happens to be in a health district with some of the highest cancer rates in the province. As a cancer survivor myself, I find it deplorable for an institution like Victoria University to profit off something with even the slightest possibility of inflicting that kind of devastation onto others. I implore the Board of Regents to search their conscience, thoroughly investigate their impact, and close the oil well. The exploitation of natural resources and fossil fuel investment have profoundly negative effects on not only the environment, but on the peoples of this earth. There are alternative ways to make revenue which won't fund our education with blood. Another project I’m working on with other members of council is a report on mental health at Vic. We’re focusing on the policies and procedures relating to mental health, specifically the use of police by the Vic administration and dean’s office. Police involvement is not the best practice in dealing with mental health crises, and often causes more harm for those seeking help, especially when those students come from marginalised communities that already experience profiling and brutal violence at the hands of police services. If anyone else on council would like to join our efforts, let myself, Zoë, or anyone else involved know. I’m also hoping to start a report on Victoria University’s finances. A lot of that information is public, but still inaccessible for students as it’s cased in accounting formalities and requires significant research or inside knowledge to fully understand. I think students deserve to hold the university accountable for their handling of finances, and their spending. It can be hard to call for change when you don’t have all the information. If anyone would like to join that initiative, please let me know before I fully dive into Vic’s financial statements. The administration and board should be held to the highest of standards of accountability, so issues like divestment and the oil well can’t be hidden in the shuffle of numbers released under cloak and dagger. In closing, I am very excited to be back at it this term. I know that we can do great things this new year, and I can’t wait to keep working with you all! I wanted to give one last shout out to Ninon and the whole Scarlet and Gold team for organising semi-formal tonight. I hope everyone is able to have a safe and wonderful time at the event!

ADDITIONAL ITEMS:

*Presidential Update by Sooyeon Lee*

Sooyeon: We had a discussion regarding Goldring and we need to start getting data on how our spaces are used. This helps because we need to prove to admin so we don’t get pushed out. There’ll be QR codes throughout the GSC with a survey that asks how they use the space. So during your office hours, please ask students to fill the QR codes on their way out. I would also like to discourage giveaways by having actual events and having them stay at the event instead of having them pass by, so we can prove to admin that we hold our space efficiently. Shane and I had a meeting with President McEwen and Kelley, and Kelley said that the DO is open to buying furniture, which would be great for spaces like the commuter lounge. We also discussed the police response to student mental health, asking for transparency with what happens when students are in crisis. This is because a lot of students are misinformed about what happens and this spreads throughout the community. I asked if we could get a comprehensive report with what steps are taken and what exactly happens for the decision for cops to be called. But Rhonda said that no other colleges are doing those reports, so it would look a certain way. Overall, Rhonda and Kelley said that it’s a case by case basis, and it’s a little more complex than they can explain. I’m not satisfied with that and would like more information. If you’re volunteering tonight, then make sure that you get your lanyard and have Jackson, Ninon, and my phone numbers in case of emergency. You must be sober but if you’re off the clock then you’re all good. That’s all, have a good night everyone!

*Motion: Medha Barath motions to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Carolyn Gao*

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

*Meeting adjourned at 6:20 PM.*