



**York University Faculty Association**  
**Association des professeur.e.s de l'Université York**

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Lisa Phillips, Interim President & Vice-Chancellor  
Laina Bay-Cheng, Interim Provost & Vice-President, Academic  
Parissa Safai, Vice-President, Equity, People, Culture

July 8, 2026

**Re: Termination of Audrey Rochette, AVP Indigenous Initiatives**

Dear President Lisa Phillips, Provost & Vice-President Academic Laina Bay-Cheng, and Vice President, Equity, People, Culture, Parissa Safai:

YUFA Indigenous Caucus has been made aware that York University has terminated without cause Audrey Rochette, Assistant Vice-President of Indigenous Initiatives.

We have always maintained that the AVPII role should remain a YUFA position because we feel an Indigenous faculty member best understands the complexities and nuances of university-wide decolonization efforts, and the Indigenization of our education system. York has so few Indigenous faculty members, this role would increase the number of faculty members we have that can contribute to teaching, research, and creating policies based in Indigenous knowledges.

Throughout the recruitment process of the previous AVPII we advocated for this stance through the YUFA executive, directly with the President of the University, and through various other forums on campus.

We also note what the University's own record makes plain. This role was created as an Associate Vice-Presidency. The Indigenous Framework named a dedicated associate vice-president; the 2020 proposal to President Lenton argued for it as permanent, sustained leadership embedded within the structure of the University; and York's own 2024 six-year review of the Framework still names the role Associate Vice-President. It was last filled,

and is now being searched, at the rank of Assistant — a lesser office asked to carry the same University-wide decolonization and Indigenization work with less standing to do it. A commitment the University put in writing has been quietly shaved down a rank, and we expect an accounting for how, and why.

We demand that the AVPII role be made a YUFA position, or in the least a YUFA exempt position, which can be negotiated and discussed through JCOAA, with the explicit consultation with YUFA Indigenous Caucus and the YUFA Equity Subcommittee throughout the process.

Although Audrey Rochette was not a YUFA member, we mourn the loss of a fellow Indigenous community member at York, especially at a crucial time, when we were working closely with her office on Indigenization efforts across the University.

As a remedy for the sudden termination of a fellow Indigenous colleague, we request that we be provided with more information as to why York ended its relationship with Audrey, why the Indigenous community was not consulted on this decision, and why this was not done in a relational way in accordance with our ways of being and knowing. At the least, we should be given the opportunity for a restorative justice circle, held in accordance with our ways of being and knowing, to sit with what has happened and to determine together, through Indigenous understandings of justice, whether this relationship can be restored, or ended in a good way. We fear that if an Indigenous colleague can just be disappeared on campus, what would stop the administration from doing so with another AVPII, especially if the role is not a YUFA position, and does not have the same labour protections and support of the Indigenous faculty community on campus.

We have also been made aware that the Interim AVPII role will be filled by Amy Gaukel, who is non-Indigenous. We feel this interim role should be filled by an Indigenous faculty member, as we are best suited to take on this work which requires deep cultural knowledge of Indigenous ways of Knowing and Being. There are almost two dozen Indigenous faculty members on campus, and we cannot believe none of us were considered for this Interim role. To end this relationship without consultation, and then place a non-Indigenous appointee over Indigenous Initiatives, is for York to act against the very commitments it made in writing — in the DEDI Strategy and the Indigenous Framework — to relational process and to Indigenous leadership. This is not a question of how things appear. It is a contradiction the University now has to account for.

We feel that the sudden termination of an Indigenous colleague will negatively impact York's reputation, and will deter other qualified applicants. This sudden termination will have a negative impact on our relationships

with Metis, Inuit, and First Nations communities, especially Indigenous communities around the GTA which the AVPII office was working on building.

As Indigenous scholars from various disciplines, cultural backgrounds, and lived experiences we don't always agree on everything, but we agree that the AVPII role at York University should be a YUFA position. The sudden termination of Audrey was unfair, and we demand consultation on any future decisions regarding the AVPII role which directly impacts our work on campus. We are asking that you fulfill the demands and remedies in this letter, and that you meet with us at least twice before the beginning of the Fall 2026 Semester to resolve this matter. As the majority of Indigenous Faculty are carrying out research over the summer months and travel extensively, a written reply to this letter by July 10th will be a good start in rebuilding trust.

Sincerely,

YUFA Indigenous Caucus

P.S. We are copying the York Indigenous community on campus, and encourage any Indigenous body on campus to share this letter among your members.

CC:

Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Languages (cikli@yorku.ca)  
Centre for Indigenous Student Services (cissinfo@yorku.ca)  
Indigenous Education Council (indigenousinitiatives@yorku.ca)  
Indigenous Health Committee - School of Medicine  
Indigenous Graduate Students (info@yugsa.ca )  
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