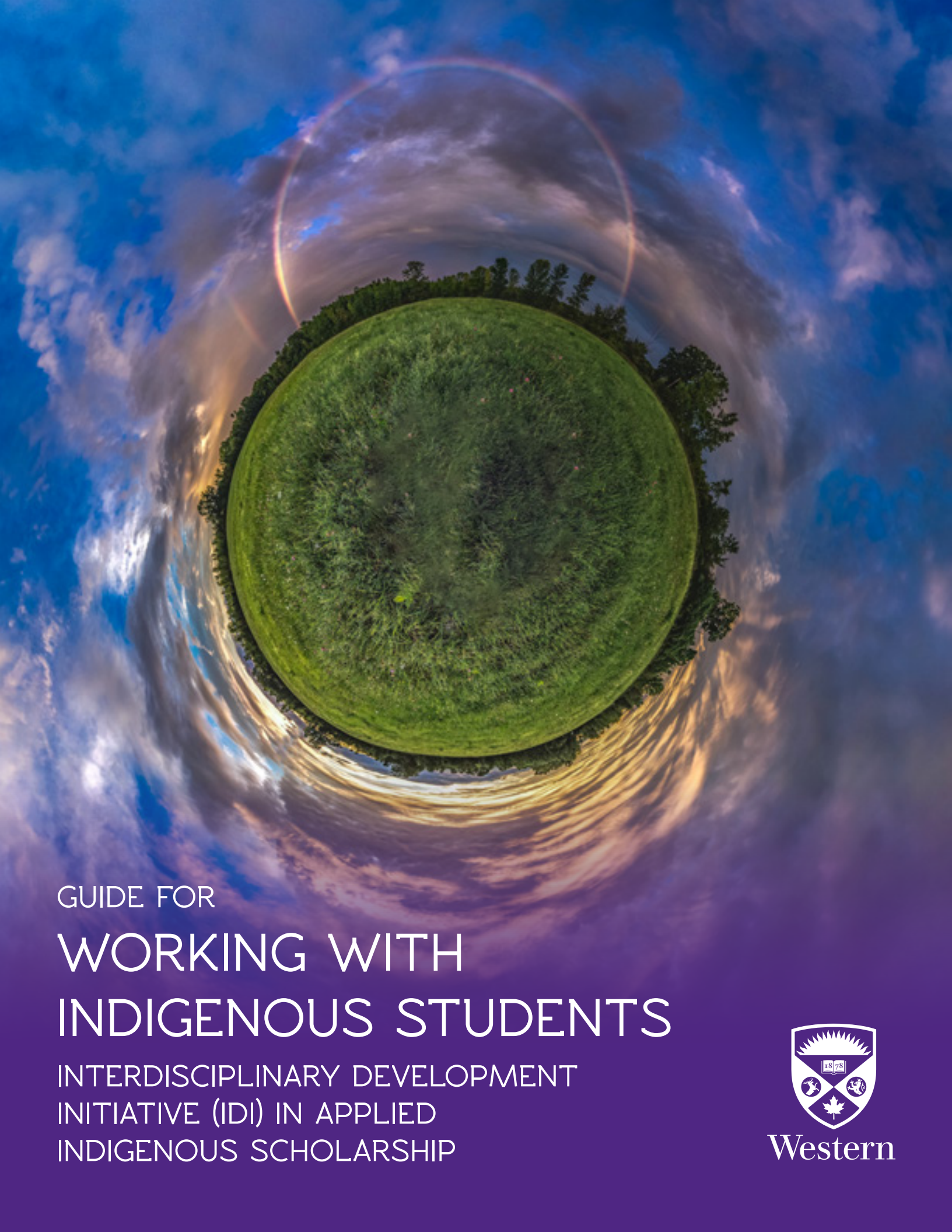

GUIDE FOR

WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

INTERDISCIPLINARY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (IDI) IN APPLIED INDIGENOUS SCHOLARSHIP

Western

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Western University is situated on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapewak, and Attawandaron peoples, who have long-standing relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the city of London. The local First Nations communities are the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, the Oneida Nation of the Thames, and the Munsee Delaware Nation.

Contributors

This Guide was made possible through the collaborative vision, effort and support of Western University's Interdisciplinary Development Initiative (IDI) in Applied Indigenous Scholarship. This IDI is composed of an interdisciplinary team of faculty, staff and students who represent eight of Western's Academic Faculties, as well as Student Experience, Indigenous Services and the Centre for Teaching and Learning. We would also like to thank Western's Indigenous Postsecondary Education Council (IPEC) members and other community partners who provided valuable input in the development of this Guide.

Leads:

Candace Brunette	Faculty of Education
Chantelle Richmond	Faculty of Social Science

Contributors:

Robert Andersen	Faculty of Social Science
Jamie Baxter	Faculty of Social Science
Brian Branfireun	Faculty of Science
Deborah Coward	Office of the Registrar / Student Experience
Michael Coyle	Faculty of Law
Brent Debassige	Faculty of Education
Rick Ezekiel	Student Experience
Janice Forsyth	Faculty of Social Science
Aisha Haque	Centre for Teaching and Learning
Stewart B. Harris	Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry
Robert Hegele	Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry
Amanda Myers	Indigenous Services
Treena Orchard	Faculty of Health Sciences
Thomas Peace	Huron College University
Debbie Rudman	Faculty of Health Sciences
Joanna Quinn	Faculty of Social Science
Victoria Smye	Faculty of Health Sciences
Lina Sunseri	Brescia University College
Clare Tattersall	Faculty of Engineering
Gloria Thomas	Faculty of Social Science
Pauline Wakeham	Faculty of Arts and Humanities
Jerry P. White	Faculty of Social Science
Lloy Wylie	Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry

Cover art

Robert Snache

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INTRODUCTION

Following the release of the 94 Calls to Action by Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 2015), Western University approved its first-ever Indigenous Strategic Plan (ISP), a document that reflects and seeks to support the long-standing work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous allies at Western. Western's ISP is a five-year plan with multiple strategic priorities designed to facilitate a more inclusive and welcoming campus that supports Indigenous students, faculty, and staff, as well as Indigenous ways of knowing and learning. With this document, Western aims to contribute to the implementation of the ISP and important shifts currently taking place in universities across Canada as they seek to become more receptive, open spaces for Indigenous peoples.

Who Will Benefit from This Guide?

This Guide will support faculty, staff, and administrators in better understanding the realities and needs of Indigenous learners in university settings. The release of this Guide coincides with increases in Indigenous student populations on Canadian university campuses in general, and with increases in commitments to Indigenize (or decolonize) university environments. These calls for change highlight the need for all faculty and staff to be more knowledgeable and responsive to Indigenous learners' realities, needs, and barriers. This Guide focuses on the role that educators and student affairs practitioners can play in contributing to equitable changes at organizational, professional, and personal levels.

Important Caveat

To avoid blanket generalizations and stereotyping of Indigenous students, it is especially important to recognize that all learners, including Indigenous students, are diverse in their identities, cultures, languages, and learning styles. This Guide draws from an Indigenous intersectional framework (Clark, 2012) that outlines the ways in which Indigenous students' day-to-day lives are shaped by:

1. their geographic relationships to their homelands;
2. their relationships to community and family histories;
3. a history of colonial violence and intergenerational trauma; and
4. students' struggles and resistances within the Euro-Western educational system.

We will expand further on an Indigenous intersectional understanding later in this Guide (pg. 26).

Enhancing Western's Commitment through Learning:

This Guide is intended to support the learning of Western community specifically educators and student affairs practitioners. The Guide's aims are to:

- Develop learners' understandings of the historic and ongoing struggles of Indigenous peoples in postsecondary educational settings in Canada;
- Introduce learners to appropriate language and terminology when working with Indigenous peoples;
- Expose learners to local Indigenous communities, histories, and understandings of Wampum and treaties;
- Deepen learners' understandings of Indigenous students' experiences, strengths, and barriers in accessing and fully participating in the university context;
- Expose learners to Indigenous presence at Western, including basic demographic information, survey results highlighting Indigenous experiences on campus, and highlight accomplishments of Indigenous-related units, programs and services;
- Introduce learners to the roles of Elders in Indigenous communities and at the university;
- Identify learners' limitations and areas for ongoing learning; and,
- Expose learners to additional resources and information so that they may continue to learn about Indigenous peoples.

4Rs APPROACH

Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility

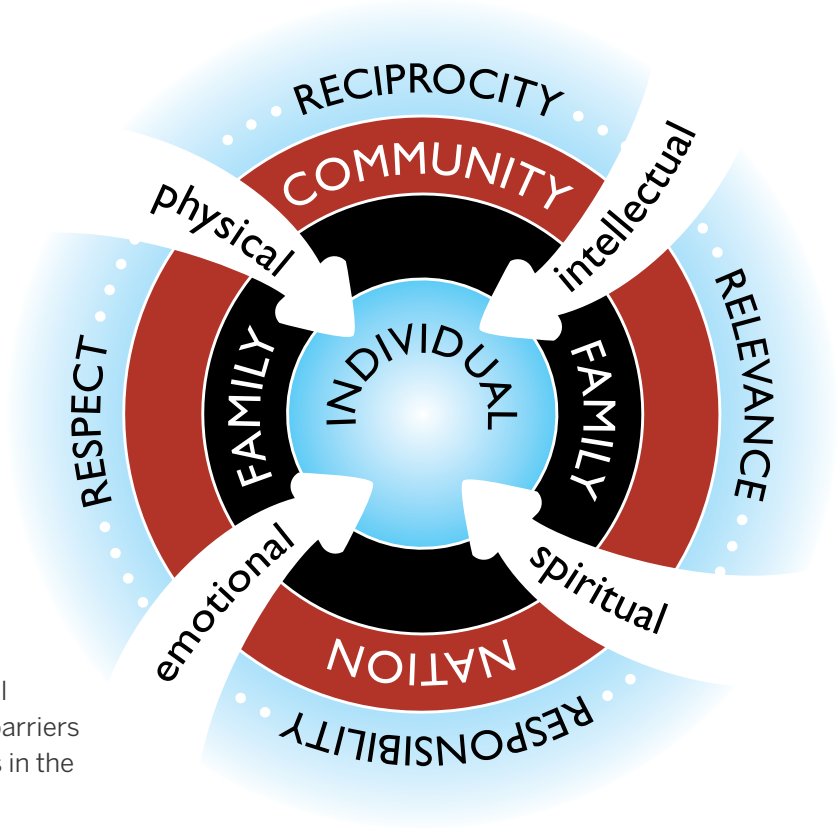
This Guide draws from an Indigenous 4Rs Framework founded on the principles of Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility (Barnhart & Kirkness, 2001). This foundational framework provides ways to imagine reorienting the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the university environment. Rather than expecting Indigenous students to assimilate into the dominant university culture, this framework places responsibility on institutions and their representatives to learn about Indigenous peoples and to reflect upon and unlearn ethnocentric bias. The framework also places responsibility on university communities to develop relationships, and better understand how processes of colonialism and dominant Euro-Western norms are embedded in Canada's educational system. Dr. Michelle Pidgeon (2016, 2008) has tailored the 4Rs Framework in a way that privileges Indigenous ways of being and knowing. This framework recognizes the holistic and interconnected nature of Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous learners.

RESPECT for perspectives that Indigenous students bring into the learning environment, for Indigenous thought and scholarship in academic discourses, and for Indigenous ways of knowing as valid in the academy.

RELEVANCE means that Indigenous students' interests and diverse learning needs are considered in the development and delivery of university curriculum, policies, practices, programs, and services.

RECIPROCITY involves establishing mutually beneficial relationships between local Indigenous peoples and the university and between and among faculty, staff, and Indigenous students.

RESPONSIBILITY entails taking critical and meaningful action at personal and institutional levels that contributes to removing systemic barriers and to engaging all students and communities in the long-term processes of reconciliation.

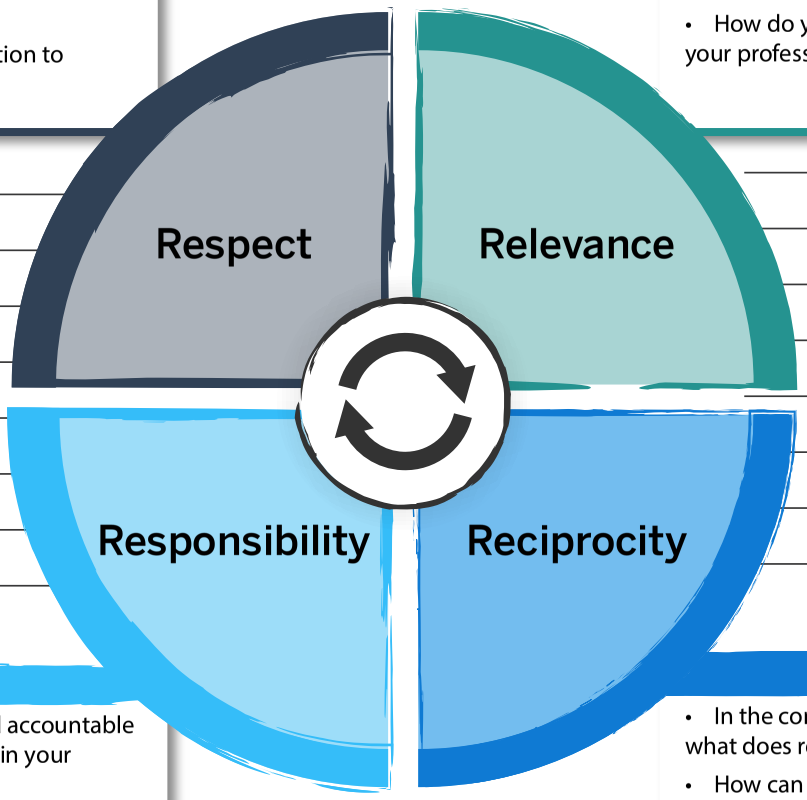


Pidgeon, 2008

4Rs Self-Reflection Tool

- What does respect of Indigenous peoples rights, knowledge and perspectives in education mean to you?
- What is your social location in relation to Indigenous peoples?

- How is your curriculum and/or programming relevant to Indigenous peoples?
- How do you demonstrate the 4Rs approach in your professional practice?



- What does being responsible and accountable to Indigenous peoples mean to you in your professional practice?
- What relationships do you have with Indigenous peoples/students and communities on and off campus?

- In the context of truth and reconcilation, what does reciprocity mean to you?
- How can you in your professional practice establish reciprocal relationships with Indigenous peoples?

LOCAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Western University is located in the heart of Southwestern Ontario, on the traditional lands of the Attawandaron people (also known as the Neutral) and territories associated with various treaties of the Anishnabeg, Haudenosaunee, and Lunaapewak. Locally, there are three First Nations communities located within a 30-minute drive from Western. They are the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, the Oneida Nation of the Thames, and the Munsee Delaware Nation. There are an additional 8 First Nations communities located in southwestern Ontario. They are: Six Nations of the Grand River, The Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, Chippewas of Kettle Point/ Chippewas of Stony Point, Aamjiwnaang First Nation, Moravian of the Thames, Walpole Island (Bkejwanong Territory), and Caldwell First Nation.

Chippewas of the Thames First Nation
cottfn.com

Chippewas of the Thames First Nation is an Anishinabeg Ojibwe community established in 1760 along the banks of the Thames River, originally called Deshkan Ziibiing (Antler River) 20 km southwest of London. The land base comprises 3,331 hectares of unceded land in Southwestern Ontario and falls within the Longwoods Treaties (1818–1822). They are a part of the larger Three Fires Confederacy, which includes the Odawa, Pottawatomi, and Ojibwe Nations. Chippewas of the Thames is one of several nations that were party to the London Township Treaty of 1796. Descendants of the modern-day communities of Bkejwanong (Walpole Island), Chippewas of Kettle & Stoney Point, Aamjiwnaang and Caldwell First Nations are included in the London Township Treaty of 1796 as well as Alexander McKee (on behalf of the Crown) for the City of London. Today, the Chippewas are a forward-thinking nation with a strong grasp of Anishinabeg values and culture.

Munsee Delaware Nation
munsee.ca

The Munsee Delaware Nation, also referred to as the Lunaape Nation sometimes referred to as Lenni Lenape or Delaware, is located in southwestern Ontario west from Oneida Nation of the Thames within the boundaries of Chippewas of the Thames First Nation. Today, the Munsee Delaware community covers 1,054 hectares, roughly 3 square kilometres. There are approximately 600 registered Munsee Delaware people, and 150 live on the First Nation. The Munsee Delaware Nation is making great strides to develop their local economy.

Oneida Nation of the Thames
oneida.on.ca

The Oneida Nation of the Thames, also referred to as Onyota'a:ka (People of the Standing Stone), is member nation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy that includes the Mohawk, Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, and Tuscarora Nations. The Oneida community often refers to itself as the 'Oneida Settlement,' and are located a 30-minute drive from London, Ontario across the Thames River from Chippewas of the Thames and Munsee Delaware Nations. The Oneida people originally relocated from their traditional homelands in New York State after the 1848 Buffalo Creek Treaty and bought the land that they are located on today. Today, the community comprises approximately 6,000 members. The Oneida Nation is a sovereign independent nation that observes both traditional and contemporary systems of governance and law.

London Indigenous Population

Canada has a large and growing urban Indigenous population comprised of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. In Ontario alone, more than half of the Indigenous population now live in cities. There are many factors that lead to urbanization among Indigenous people, including the desire to pursue higher education, the availability of healthcare, and access to greater employment opportunities. In London, and in many cities in Ontario and across Canada, there is a vibrant sense of Indigenous community. Some facts about London's Indigenous population:

- 1.9 percent of London residents identify as Indigenous
- 2.9 percent of London residents identify as having Indigenous ancestry
- 46 percent of the identified Indigenous people in London are Status Indians

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In recent years, territorial or land acknowledgments have become a more common and widespread practice in Canadian universities (Wilkes et al, 2017). Historically, these acknowledgments have been led by Indigenous peoples on many university campuses, and their activities have served to recognize Indigenous self-determination and Indigenous peoples' relationship with the land upon which universities rest. Acknowledgments are often used at the beginning of a public gathering to open, recognize, and honour Indigenous presence. They have also been used in online forums and course syllabi. From an Indigenous perspective, land acknowledgments are situated within complex local political, spiritual, and diplomatic relationships that centre Indigenous peoples' treaty relationship, rights to land, place, and education both historically and culturally. Despite increasing awareness and need to practice land acknowledgments, they remain contested practices.

(decolonialatlas.wordpress.com)

What You Need to Know

- Land acknowledgments are cultural, political, and spiritual practices.
- The reconciliation movement has increased land acknowledgment practices in educational settings.
- While land acknowledgments may differ based on the person delivering the acknowledgment and/or the geographic context within which they are being delivered, land acknowledgments recognize Indigenous peoples' ongoing presence, sovereignty, traditional lands, and treaties.
- Land acknowledgments often observe local Indigenous protocols and laws.
- Land acknowledgments may recognize harms committed against Indigenous peoples.
- Land acknowledgments may also affirm a commitment to renewing relationships and reconciliation.
- Land acknowledgments do not simply recognize place; they educate and inspire people to move into meaningful action.
- Land acknowledgments are everyone's responsibility – not just Indigenous peoples'.

What You Can Do

1. Begin by learning about the local Indigenous communities, histories and treaties in the place where you live and work (see Local First Nations section).
2. Acknowledge the long-standing presence of Indigenous peoples on your course syllabus and at the beginning of your courses.
3. Learn to pronounce local Indigenous nations' names properly in their original languages.
4. Speak from the heart rather than read a script verbatim.
5. Move beyond a checklist approach and formality to practicing reconciliation in your professional life through your relationships and work priorities.

Questions for Reflection

1. In what places have I resided over my lifetime?
2. Do these places and their names reflect or erase Indigenous presence?
3. Who are the Indigenous peoples original to the places in which I have resided?

Helpful Resources

Apihtawikosisan (Chelsea Vowel). (2017). *Beyond Territorial Acknowledgments*. Retrieved February 13, 2018. *apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/*

Canada Association for University Teachers (CAUT). *Guide to acknowledging First Peoples & traditional territory*. Retrieved February 13, 2018. *www.caut.ca/content/guide-acknowledging-first-peoples-traditional-territory.*

First Nations Map of Ontario *www.files.ontario.ca/pictures/firstnations_map.jpg*

Healthy Weights Connection. *London Culture Card.* Retrieved February 13, 2018. *www.healthyweightsconnection.ca/culturecard*

Laurier Students Public Interest Research Group. *Know the Land*. Retrieved February 13, 2018. *www.lspirg.org/knowtheland/*

Wilkes, R., Duong, A., Kesler, L., & Ramos, H. (2017). Canadian university acknowledgment of Indigenous lands, treaties and peoples. *Canadian Sociological Association 54*(1).

WAMPUM & TREATIES

What is a Wampum?

Wampum are small cylindrical beads made from whelk (white) and quahog (purple) shells, which can be found throughout North America's northeastern seaboard. From time immemorial these shells were traded in the form of strings, bracelets, necklaces, or belts, as far inland as the Upper Great Lakes, Saint Lawrence Valley, and Gulf of St. Lawrence. Of far greater importance is the role wampum plays in international diplomacy. During international gatherings, such as treaty negotiations, strings of wampum are used to accompany and give gravity to the words spoken. Wampum belts are also exchanged, symbolizing the agreements made between the involved parties. A belt solidifies important agreements and is kept by First Nations as the embodiment of the treaty. A prominent wampum belt from our part of the world is the Dish with One Spoon Belt. It marks an agreement between two important Great Lakes polities, the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg, to share hunting grounds. Likely agreed to after decades of conflict in the 1690s, the Dish with One Spoon Belt is important as a reminder that treaties bound by wampum transcend colonial understandings and systems of knowledge.

What is a Treaty?

A treaty is a formal relationship between peoples and nations. On the land that has now become Canada, the meaning of treaty has depended on the time period, peoples involved, and geopolitics. Diplomatic relationships following Indigenous legal systems have existed from time immemorial. In the Great Lakes region, diplomatic practices were adhered to through ceremonies, such as the Haudenosaunee Edge of the Woods Ceremony, which helps determine the purpose for which visitors have come to a community, and through ceremonial processions remembered through the exchange of wampum. As a symbol of their relationship, parties to treaty often gather to renew their understandings of the agreement. When colonists arrived with the intention to settle, at least six new diplomatic systems and protocols emerged. No one can fully understand treaties in Canada today without understanding each of these contexts.

> "Today, 133 First Nation communities are located within the artificial boundaries of the Province of Ontario; within these boundaries also exists a complex interrelationship of treaty obligations, federal-provincial division of powers, statutory regimes, inherent jurisdiction, and constitutionally protected Aboriginal and Treaty rights; and a relationship where much reconciling must take place if peaceful coexistence is to be achieved."
>
> (Chiefs of Ontario, 2006).

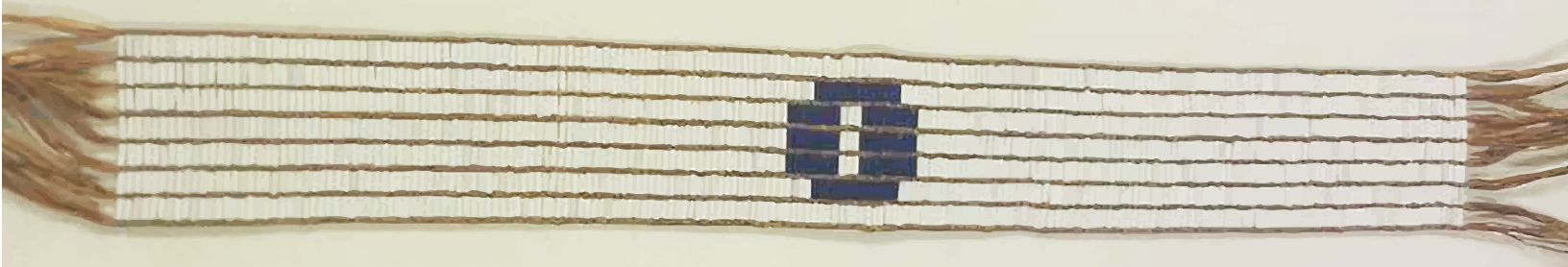


Photo Credit - Dish with One Spoon Photograph by: Jake Thomas Learning Centre

How are the Treaties Relevant Today?

In London, our treaties include the 1796 London Township Treaty and the 1822 Longwoods Treaty. The London Township Treaty was a regional treaty signed by diplomats representing all parties living on the land that today we know as southwestern Ontario. In 1796, when it was made, Upper Canada's first Lieutenant Governor, John Graves Simcoe, envisioned the forks of Deshkan Ziibi (which he renamed the Thames River) as an ideal site for the new colony's capital. Despite Simcoe's wishes, few colonists settled on this land, and York (Toronto) became Upper Canada's administrative centre. At these same negotiations in 1796, Anishinabek and British diplomats negotiated another treaty along the Saint Clair River (Sombra). The purpose of this treaty was to create a home for Indigenous allies living on the western side of the Detroit River. As tensions continued with the United States, it was important that Britain accommodate its Anishinabek allies, who now found themselves on the wrong side of the colonial border.

The situation in 1822 was considerably different. By then, there were nearly 10,000 British settlers in Middlesex County. It took thirty years and international warfare for British settlers to arrive at the place Simcoe once thought suitable for the colony's capital. Where the 1796 London Township Treaty reflected seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century diplomatic practices, triggered by international geopolitics following the American Revolution, the 1822 Longwoods Treaty reflected Britain's unarticulated desire for imminent and massive colonial resettlement. Juxtaposing these two treaties demonstrates the importance of historical and cultural context. Even by the early 1820s, colonial settlement was relatively new. There is no reason to assume that Anishinabek had any forewarning that the Longwoods Treaty would be followed by massive waves of immigration. As they entered negotiations, Anishinabek were used to treaties that were oral in negotiation and wampum in remembrance. The colonial archive, however, only recorded a handful of paragraphs documented by colonial negotiators. The significance of this discrepancy continues to form the basis for negotiation and litigation between First Nations and the Crown to this day. It is important to recognize, however, that even through British understanding of the law, all claims to property in Ontario are anchored in one or more of these treaty contexts.

"We are all Treaty People"

Ever wondered what this statement means? Treaties include all people who live in a particular treaty territory or area. If you live on land governed by a treaty, you are a treaty person, whether or not you are new to the area or your ancestors immigrated here many years ago. In Ontario, chances are very good you live within territory covered by treaty.

Since the earliest contact between European settlers and First Nations, treaties were negotiated to support terms of peace, friendship and trade. One of the most famous examples is the 1613 agreement between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch, known as Gudwetah of the Two-Row Wampum.

In the colonial era, treaties took on a new meaning, that of land surrender by First Nations to British control. During this time, First Nations 'ceded' their land through treaty. There are a few examples in Ontario of 'unceded land'; these refer to communities who did not engage in treaty processes or whose treaty did not "cede" Indigenous land.

For more information:

Indigenous education online resources
www.oise.utoronto.ca/abed101/modules/

What You Can Do

- In light of the fact that most of Ontario is covered by Treaty, it is important for all Ontarians – and not just First Nations people – to know about and be aware of the origins of the land upon which they live. Who lived on this land before you did? Who used the river before you did? What activities historically took place on the lands upon which Western University now sits?
- As Canadians, we must recognize and appreciate the fact that we are all treaty people. This land has a history that predates colonial expansion. The people, cultures and languages of the Indigenous peoples who have lived in this region for many generations deserve to have their title, sovereignty, treaty rights and rights to land acknowledged and celebrated.

Helpful Resources

Alan Ojiig Corbiere on The Underlying Importance of Wampum Belts: *www.youtube.com/watch?v=wb-RftTCQ_8*

Great Lakes Research Alliance for Aboriginal Arts and Culture: *https://carleton.ca/grasac/about/*

Jaime Battiste on Early Mi'kmaw Alliances: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7nqEH2YTyY*

On the Wampum Trail: *https://wampumtrail.wordpress.com/*

Native-land.ca: *https://native-land.ca/*

Senator Murray Sinclair on the Royal Proclamation of 1763: *www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSQsyZDGoX0*

Treaties Ontario: *https://www.ontario.ca/page/treaties*

Union of Ontario Indians Educational Resources: *anishinabek.ca/education-resources/gdoo-sastamoo-kii-mi/*

Witnessing and Unwitnessing Treaties in Ontario *http://activehistory.ca/2017/11/witnessing_treaties/*

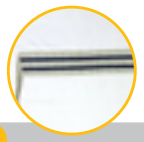
Photo Credit - Two Row Wampum by: Jake Thomas Learning Centre

LOCAL HISTORIC TIMELINE

Separate Nations (more than 20,000 years)
Indigenous nations lived throughout Turtle Island North America

1500s
European Settlement
1604 New Brunswick, 1608 Quebec, 1610 Newfoundland

1613
Two Row Wampum
Courtesy of Jake Thomas Learning Centre



1793
Crown Grant to Six Nations
Haldimond Track

1794
Jay Treaty

1795
The Brant Track

1796
The London Township Treaty
Sombra Treaty

1797
First Residential School
Sussex Vale opens

1812
War and Regional
Indigenous peoples contributions

1818/20/22
Longwoods Treaty
Chippewas Treaty

1826
First Residential School Closes
Sussex Vale

1827
Treaty 29

1828
Mohawk Institute Opens
Some people date to 1832

1840
Munsee and Chippewas
agree to share land

Oneida Move
from New York State

1994
Big Bear land claim
suit begins

1995
Ipperwash incident

1996
Last Residential School Closes
Gordon, SK

Royal Commission
on Aboriginal People (RCAP)

1982
Aboriginal Rights Enshrined in the Canadian Constitution Act

2003
Ipperwash inquiry

2006
Caledonia land dispute

2016
The re-establishment of the Waawayaatanong Treaty Council

Canada removes objector status to UNDRIP

2015
Truth and Reconciliation Commission
report released

1690s
Dish with One Spoon
Courtesy of Jake Thomas Learning Centre

1701
Nanfan Treaty
Great Peace of Montreal Treaty

1760
Chippewas of the Thames
permanent community was established

1763
Royal Proclamation

1779
Sullivan Expedition

1782
Gnadahutten Massacre

1848
Buffalo Creek Treaty

1867
Canadian Confederation
The British North American Act

1851
Mount Elgin Opens
Residential School

1871
Treaty 1
First treaty between the new Government of Canada and First Nations

1876
The Indian Act Established

1960
Right to Vote
For those with Indian Status

1970
Mohawk Institute closes

1967
N'Amerind Friendship Centre opens in London

1946
Mount Elgin Closes
Residential School

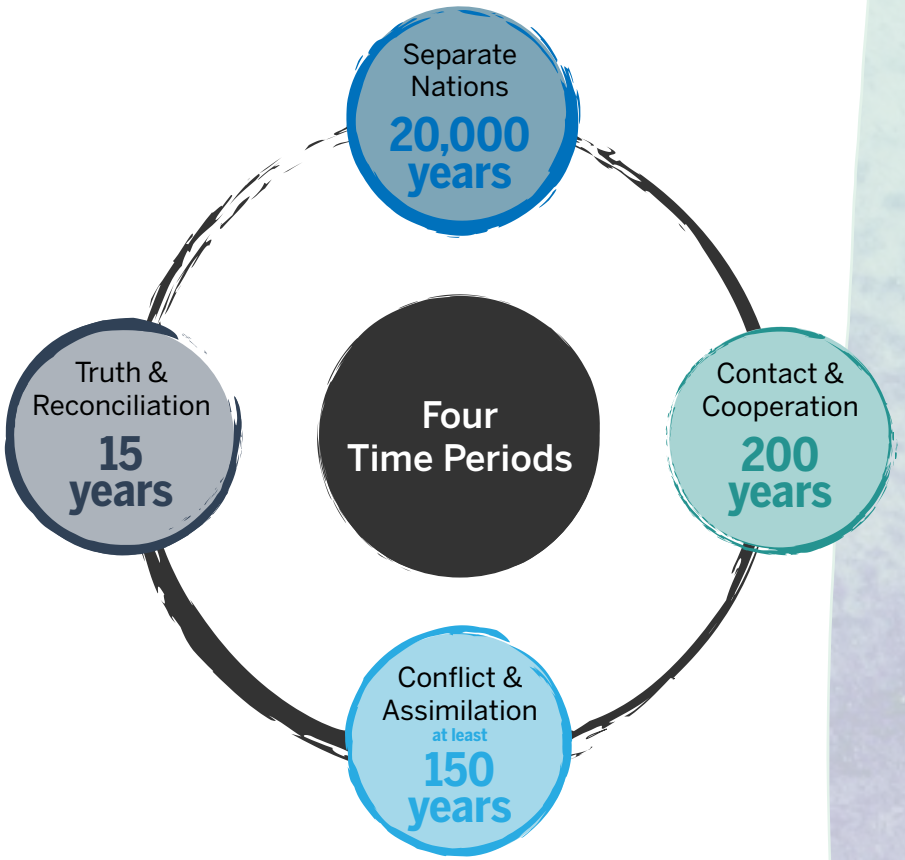
2009
Federal Government Formal Apology
for Residential Schools

2007
United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples Rights (UNDRIP)
is adopted by 144 states (Canada, Australia, New Zealand and United States object)

2013
Big Bear Creek
land claim settlement

COLONIAL CONTEXT

The relationship between Indigenous peoples and the settlers of Canada is embedded within a colonial encounter and an ongoing nation-state structure that was created under the assumption that Indigenous people and their ways of living were inferior to Europeans and their ways, and were uncivilized. As a Canadian and professional working with Indigenous students, you need to understand the colonial context upon which this country is founded. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996) provides a useful framework for looking at the colonial encounter through four time periods/stages:



Did You Know?

- **Colonialism** is generally understood to be the subjugation of one group by another, in this case through a process by which Europeans invaded and claimed Indigenous territories for political and economic purposes or entered into treaties. In this often-violent process, settler colonies imposed new systems of governance, law, and education on Indigenous peoples.
- In 1876 the **Indian Act** was legislated with the fundamental goal of "civilizing the Indians," and created under the assumption that Indigenous people and their ways of living were inferior to Europeans and their ways, and were uncivilized. The measures enacted through the Indian Act were part of a coherent set of structures put in place to eliminate Indigenous people as distinct peoples and to assimilate them (against their will) into the Canadian mainstream Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs Duncan Campbell Scott outlined the goals of that policy in 1920, when he told a parliamentary committee that "our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic."
- The **doctrine of discovery** also known as "terra nullius" ("land belonging to no one") was claimed to be a principle in international law that has been widely used to legitimize European colonial settlement and has served to subjugate Indigenous peoples' rights and dispossess them of their land.

EARLY ENCOUNTERS TO PRESENT– FOUR TIME PERIODS

Separate Nations – a time when Indigenous people lived in separate nations based on complex and sophisticated confederacies (e.g. the Haudenosaunee and Anishnabe Confederacies). While the length of this period is often debated, many Indigenous nations assert that they have been here from time immemorial.

Contact and Cooperation – a period following early European settlers' first arrival in this land. This period, of course, occurs at different times in different geographic locations across the Americas, starting in the 1500s. During this time, contact and cooperation occurred between Indigenous nations and early settlers who formed alliances through diplomatic relationships, including wampum-making and some early treaties. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was also put forth at this time.

Conflict and Assimilation – this begins with Confederation in 1867 and has lasted for at least 150 years. This period includes the federal government's institutionalization of the infamous Indian Act, and, through its legal authority, the racialization of the 'Indian,' which continues to have a lasting impact on Indigenous communities. During this time, the Canadian government also began to ignore former treaties, and many Indigenous groups were forcefully relocated to small plots of land called reserves. Through federal policies, the government, in partnership with various churches, further instituted the residential school system – a system that aimed to 'kill the Indian in the child.' Residential schools were underfunded and under-resourced, the curriculum was based on Christianity, and Indigenous children were removed from their families and land and denied the right to speak their languages. These schools ran for over 150 years, and have had a devastating impact on Indigenous families and communities over generations.

Truth and Reconciliation – In the last decade, the government of Canada has begun to devote resources and efforts to truth-telling and recognizing its misguided efforts to assimilate Indigenous peoples. Actions have been taken in Parliament, including the issuing of a formal apology and the striking of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 2015). As part of this growing movement, many public social institutions, particularly postsecondary institutions, are making considerable efforts to act on the TRC's 94 Calls to Action.

What You Need to Know

- Part of the Truth and Reconciliation process is naming colonialism (and its violent and abusive nature) and listening to Indigenous peoples' truth-telling.
- Postsecondary institutions are deeply implicated in historical processes of colonization. For example, many early universities had religious affiliations, and were directly and indirectly involved in fuelling the residential school era.

What You Can Do

- Commit to lifelong learning about, with, and by Indigenous peoples and processes of colonialism in education.
- Read literature and scholarship authored by Indigenous peoples.
- Reflect on your own social location in relation to colonialization.
- Reflect on power relationships in your professional practice.
- Read the Truth & Reconciliation Report.

Helpful Resources

Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation through the lens of cultural diversity. *http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/cultivating-canada-pdf.pdf*

Canada's Statement of Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools. *www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015644/1100100015649*

From Truth to Reconciliation: Transforming the legacy of residential schools. *www.ahf.ca/downloads/from-truth-to-reconciliation-transforming-the-legacy-of-residential-schools.pdf*

Kairos *www.kairoscanada.org/*

National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, University of Manitoba *https://nctr.ca/map.php*

Reconciliation Circles *http://circlesforreconciliation.ca/*

Regan, Paulette. Unsettling the settler within. *www.ubcpress.ca/asset/9215/1/9780774817776.pdf*

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. *www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014597/1100100014637*

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action Report. *http://nctr.ca/reports.php*

Did You Know?

- Mount Elgin Residential School ran from 1851–1946 in Chippewas of the Thames First Nation. This school was legislated and administered by the federal government and operated by the Wesleyan Methodist Church.
- Watch the film, Our Healing Journey to learn from local survivors of Mount Elgin residential school.

"Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect, and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies, and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledges of their properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expression."

Article 31, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007

Photo Credit - King of the Castle by: Anthony Isaac

INDIGENOUS TERMINOLOGY

The use of appropriate language, terminology, and traditional names demonstrates respect and helps build good relationships with Indigenous peoples. Despite the best intentions, however, communication can unravel when people are misinformed or afraid to ask questions. Against the paternalistic backdrop of colonialism and its processes of renaming Indigenous people and claiming Indigenous places and natural areas across Turtle Island (now known as Canada) – or appropriating Indigenous names incorrectly and without accurate knowledge – it is critical for others to learn appropriate and current terminology for speaking about, and speaking with, Indigenous communities.

When working with Indigenous peoples, it is also important to recognize that terms have changed over time, and that the naming process is dependent on many complex factors, including the context, the individual, and community.

The Canadian government uses the umbrella term Aboriginal to classify Indigenous peoples into three sub-groups: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. While these terms are still used in statistical surveys, laws, and policies, they are not necessarily used in daily practice by Indigenous peoples to refer to themselves. For example, when some Indigenous communities use a particular term, they may define that category differently from the federal government (i.e. the Métis Nation's self-definition versus the Canadian courts' interpretation). Another important point is that the term 'Aboriginal' has also falsely contributed to homogenizing Indigenous peoples into one 'pan-Aboriginal' group, which does not recognize the diverse nations, languages, cultures, and lands that different peoples and groups come from.

Remember

- Using appropriate terminology demonstrates respect. 'Getting it right' in terms of words is difficult. So plan on not getting it right. Make your best effort to make informed, mindful choices of terminology, and take direction from Indigenous peoples at the centre of your work (Younging, 2018, p.50).

Did You Know?

- Deshkan Zibiing is the original name for the Thames River – when translated from Anishnabemowin to English it means Antler River. Like many places, Deshkan Zibbing was renamed after the River Thames in English by Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe in 1793 (Wikipedia, 2018).

What You Need to Know

- The naming process is entrenched within colonial systems of power.
- Regarding First Nations (when referring to Indigenous groups in Canada that do not identify as Métis or Inuit), it is important to remember that there are more than 600 distinct First Nation communities across Canada. Often, these nations prefer to be referred to according to the culturally specific names they have given themselves.
- Referring to 'Indigenous people' or 'Indigenous culture' is problematic because it is used in the singular form and thus homogenizes many Indigenous cultures.
- Remember that the ways in which Indigenous students name themselves is dependent on their identity and experiences, and may change from student to student.
- The term Aboriginal is less common, but still used in legislation such as the Canadian Constitution Act.
- The term Native is also less common, and considered outdated
- The term Indian is outdated and considered offensive, although still used in Canada's Indian Act legislation.

What Can You Do

- Recognize that Indigenous peoples continue to live and thrive in Canada, and therefore avoid referring to Indigenous peoples and cultures only in the past tense.
- Refer to Indigenous peoples in the plural to demonstrate diversity.
- Always capitalize 'Indigenous' when using proper names to refer to a group of people.
- Avoid inappropriate possessive pronouns such as 'our Indigenous students,' or referring to 'the Indigenous peoples of Canada.' As this reinforces an inferior and subjugated power relationship.
- The most respectful approach is to take the time to learn the names that Indigenous individuals and communities have given to themselves. This act of listening and learning shows respect for Indigenous peoples' and nations' own self-definition and self-determination.
- When in doubt, ask for help.

Helpful Resources

Indigenous Foundations UBC *http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/aboriginal_identity__terminology/*

http://assets.brand.ubc.ca/downloads/ubc_indigenous_peoples_language_guide.pdf

Vowel, C. (2016). Indigenous writes: A guide to First Nations, Metis & Inuit Issues in Canada. Winnipeg, MB: Highwater Press.

Younging, G. (2018). Elements of Indigenous style: A guide for writing by and about Indigenous peoples. Brush Education, Canada.

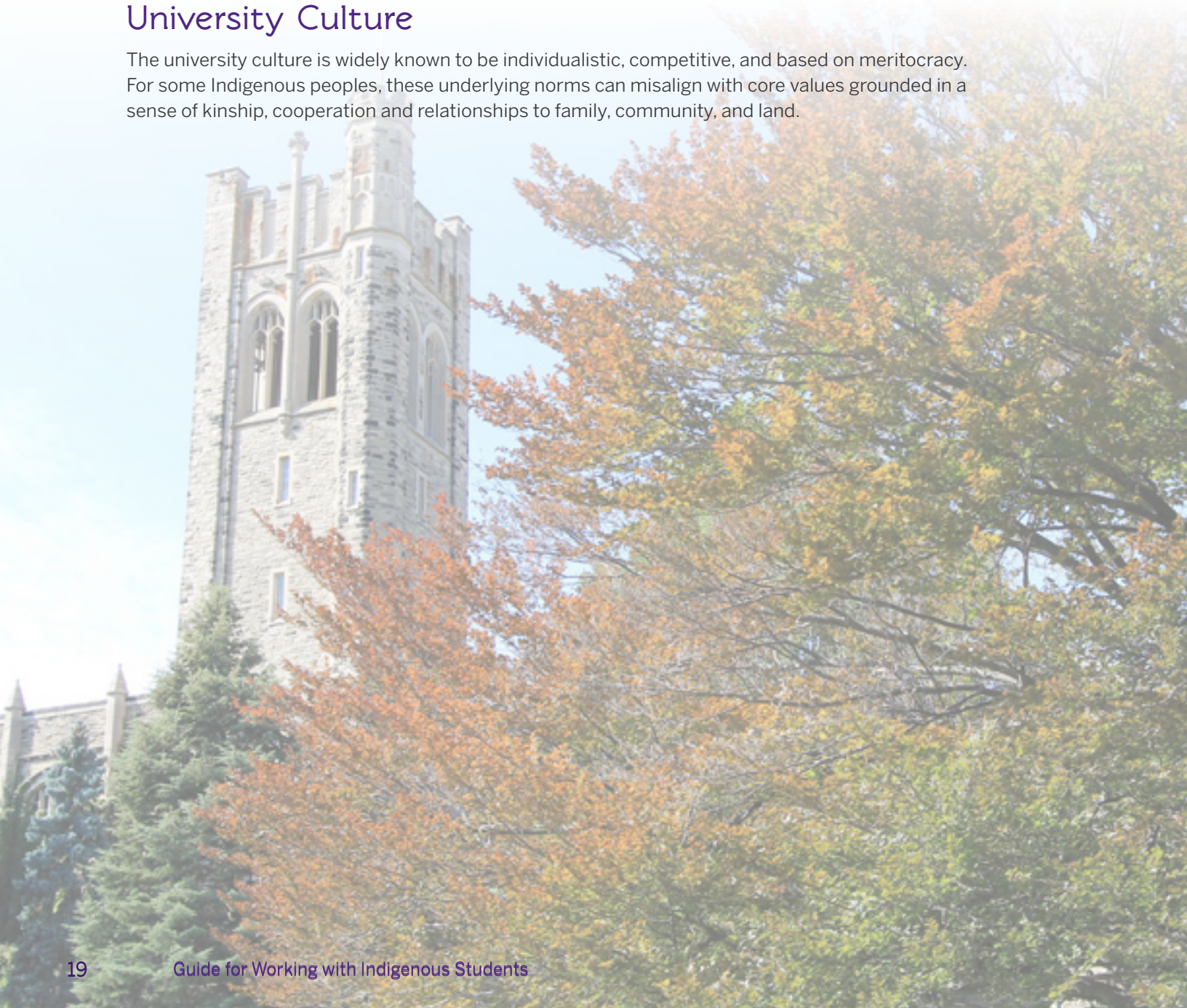
UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

Many early Canadian universities had strong religious ties, including Western's founding College. The religious roots of early universities can be connected to colonial missionizing efforts and Eurocentric models of education that aimed to assimilate Indigenous peoples. Early Western research practices also contributed to mass collection, misinterpretation, and othering of Indigenous peoples across many disciplines. This approach to education has been critiqued for overlooking Indigenous peoples' languages and ways of knowing in preference for English European Eurocentric ways and has also contributed to a loss of Indigenous languages and knowledges.

While the modern university has reformed over the last 30 years to become more open to Indigenous peoples, their knowledges and ways of knowing, Indigenous students continue to struggle inside the university for many complex systemic reasons. Overall universities are considered places of learning and possibility, yet they can also be challenging and even unwelcoming places for marginalized groups, including Indigenous students.

University Culture

The university culture is widely known to be individualistic, competitive, and based on meritocracy. For some Indigenous peoples, these underlying norms can misalign with core values grounded in a sense of kinship, cooperation and relationships to family, community, and land.



> "Education is what got us here, and education is what will get us out."
>
> – Justice Murray Sinclair, TRC Chair

Indigenous assimilation is the practice by which governments, through assimilation policies (e.g. residential schools and involuntary enfranchisement of Indigenous peoples who obtained formal education), attempted to absorb Indigenous peoples into the dominant settler society, in turn eradicating Indigenous peoples culture and distinct rights.

As a result of Canada's past assimilationist approaches to educational policies, dominant educational systems are often deeply Eurocentric and often criticized for their hidden curriculum and assumed assimilation approaches.

Institutional racism refers to practices that negatively affect a group based on members' race (in this case, Indigenous), that operate through social and political institutions (in this case the university), and that are often unquestioned because of the authority and power that institutions carry.

Eurocentrism (also referred to Westernism) is tied to a worldview that reinforces the idea of European histories, philosophies, theories, and knowledges as superior and often universal.

Meritocracy is the assumption that 'if you just work hard, you will succeed,' which does not consider how people inherit privilege and face barriers due to complex reasons outside of their control.

APPROACHES TO INDIGENOUS UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN CANADA

AREA	FORCED ASSIMILATION 1800s to 1927	ASSUMED ACCULTURATION (hidden assimilation) 1927–1970s	INDIGENOUS EQUITY AND INCLUSION 4Rs approach 1970s–present
STUDENT AFFAIRS	• Involuntary enfranchisement of First Nations (Status Indian) people who obtain a degree under the Indian Act legislation; • Underlying colonial assumptions and logic are that 'educated Indigenous peoples cannot be Indigenous.	• Indigenous students are permitted to enter the university; • Indigenous students face systemic barriers (first generation to go to university uneven access to the K-12 education required to meet prerequisites); •Underlying assumptions and logic dictate that Indigenous students must acculturate to the university's norms; Indigenous students thereby check their identities and cultures at the door; • The obligation to change and accommodate are placed solely on Indigenous students.	• Indigenous student advisor positions emerge in the 1970s in universities in certain provinces; • In Ontario, most Indigenous student services emerge in the 1990s. Western launched Indigenous Services in 1995. Today, almost all universities in Canada have Indigenous Services; • Universities explore and implement programming to foster Indigenous belonging; • Indigenous academic admission processes are established; • Indigenous smudging and religious/ spiritual policies are established; • Late 1990's Indigenous advisory councils are established in many postsecondary institutions in Ontario.
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS	• Indigenous voices are silenced across academic disciplines; • Indigenous peoples are taken up in various disciplines, but from Eurocentric perspectives.	• The first Indigenous Studies program in Ontario was established at Trent University in the 1960s.	• Indigenous Studies programs continue to grow and expand. Western launched its program in 2003; • Indigenous Education certificates are established at many institutions; • Indigenous Studies begins to take its position as an emerging discipline.
RESEARCH AGENDA	• Western research is done on Indigenous peoples, many times, without Indigenous peoples' consen; • Indigenous peoples' knowledges are mass-collected, categorized, and (mis)interpreted through Eurocentric Western lenses; • Indigenous peoples are 'Othered' and positioned as inferior, illiterate, and uncivilized.	• First wave of Indigenous scholars enters the academy; • Many early Indigenous scholars aligned themselves with Western disciplines and research approaches.	• Indigenous scholarship contributes to ethical shifts in Western research practices (e.g. Decolonizing Methodologies, Smith, 1999); • Research done for and by Indigenous peoples flourishes; • Indigenous research methodologies and epistemologies are articulated; • Indigenous research paradigm emerges (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008).

What You Need to Know

- Up until the 1960's, Indigenous peoples had very limited access to, and, in turn, participation in Canadian universities.
- Indigenous peoples were historically and legally prohibited and excluded from participating in universities in Canada. The Indian Act, for example, used to promote that those who attended university would be stripped of their "Status Indian" and their right to remain in their community.
- Indigenous peoples have contributed and continue to contribute to the academy through innovations in research, teaching and learning.
- Indigenous peoples continue to be marginalized, underrepresented and under-resourced in universities in Canada.
- The colonial context of universities shapes many of the current challenges that Indigenous students face in universities.
- The academy has contributed to the perpetuation of colonial thinking through literature that has 'Othered' Indigenous peoples and positioned them as primitive, uncivilized, and inferior compared to Europeans and their knowledges. These biases have been absorbed in the unconscious minds of non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples.
- Indigenous peoples in the academy are shifting the discourse and shedding light on ongoing forms of colonialism across disciplines.
- The individualistic and competitive culture in postsecondary institutions sometimes conflicts with Indigenous students' cultural values.

What you can do

- Familiarize yourself with Western's Indigenous Strategic Plan.
- Read Universities Canada's Principles on Indigenous Education.
- Read the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Familiarize yourself with Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (TRC, 2015).

Helpful Resources

Western University's Indigenous Strategic Plan: *www.indigenous.uwo.ca/universitywide/indigenous_strategic_plan.html*

Truth & Reconciliation Commission: *www.trc.ca*

Universities Canada Principles on Indigenous Education: *www.univcan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/principles-on-indigenous-education-universities-canada-june-2015.pdf*

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: *www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf*

Photo Credit - Catching My Dream by: Anthony Isaac

DECOLONIZING HIGHER EDUCATION

Decolonization is a political movement led by Indigenous peoples that focuses on the advancement of Indigenous self-determination; that is, the ability to make decisions and plan for one's own future. From an educational perspective, decolonization is a process that aims to reverse the negative and disempowering nature of colonialism in education, while at the same time privileging Indigenous knowledges, perspectives, and priorities in the context of teaching, learning and research. Education has played a central role in the processes of colonization. Indigenous peoples and their ways of knowing and relating to the world have been silenced and othered. Moving forward, educational institutions must play a leadership role in the decolonizing movement.

25 Decolonizing Projects

Maori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) outlines 25 decolonizing projects in her book, Decolonizing Methodologies.

Stages of Decolonization

Poka Lanaui (2000) outlines 5 stages of decolonization:

1. Rediscovery and recovery
2. Mourning
3. Dreaming
4. Commitment
5. Action

What You Need to Know

- Decolonization is both a personal and systemic process.
- Decolonizing processes are relevant to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.
- Decolonization often starts in the mind by unsettling taken for granted colonial assumptions and biases about Indigenous peoples and their knowledges.
- Decolonization is often difficult, painful and a messy process as it requires a shift in consciousness - an unlearning and a relearning.
- Decolonization is not a checklist, it is an ongoing process that is never complete.
- "Decolonization is not a metaphor" (Tuck & Yang, 2012) - the process must address materiality and unequal power relations between Indigenous and settler society.
- Most importantly, decolonization privileges Indigenous peoples' voices, agency, knowledges, languages and educational priorities.
- Decolonization is not a total rejection of Western knowledge, but it is about creating space (with adequate resources) for Indigenous knowledges, languages, perspectives, and initiatives to thrive and survive in educational contexts.

What You Can Do

- Challenge yourself to listen deeply to Indigenous peoples.
- Be open to emotions that may surface in your learning process.
- Be patient with yourself and others. Relationships take time, trust is not developed overnight, and cannot be forced.
- Be self-reflexive about your own power and privilege
- Critically reflect on your positionality and your different roles and responsibilities in advancing Indigenous agendas.
- Be open to different perspectives and ways of being, knowing and doing.
- Keep learning, sharing and growing.

Helpful Resources

Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education. Nourishing the learning spirit.* Saskatoon, SK: Purich Publishing Limited.

Battiste, M., Bell, L., & Findlay, L.M. (2002). Decolonizing education in Canadian universities: An interdisciplinary, international, indigenous research project. *Canadian Journal of Native Education* (26)2, 82-95.

Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous research methodologies*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington, DC: Sage Publishing.

Lanaui, P. (2000). Processes of decolonization. In Marie Battiste, (Ed). Reclaiming Indigenous voices and vision. (pp.150-160). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books.

Tuck E., & Yang, K. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society 1*(1).

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN UNIVERSITIES TODAY

Over the last 30 years, Indigenous peoples' presence in universities has grown exponentially. While educational attainment plays a powerful role in improving various social determinants, Indigenous students continue to be vastly underrepresented and still have negative experiences in Canadian universities.

Improving Indigenous peoples' access and experiences in universities is important not only for the Indigenous population, but for all Canadians. Indigenous peoples bring vitally important perspectives and knowledges into the learning space. Moreover, Indigenous presence also contributes to building relationships and meaningful dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and is an important part of the reconciliation process (TRC, 2015).

What You Need to Know

- Colonialism is not a distant event – it is an ongoing structure embedded in every social institution, including universities.
- Oppressive legislation (e.g. the Indian Act) and other policies have historically prevented, and continue to place barriers on and impact the full participation of Indigenous peoples in society.
- Institutional racism within universities negatively affects many Indigenous students' access and experiences.
- There is an emergence of Indigenous peoples entering the academy contributing to a paradigm shift in research and scholarship.

What You Can Do

- Learn about Canada's colonial past and ongoing present relationship with Indigenous peoples.
- Take professional responsibility and reflect critically on your own assumptions, biases, and positionality in relation to Indigenous peoples and knowledges.

Population Trends

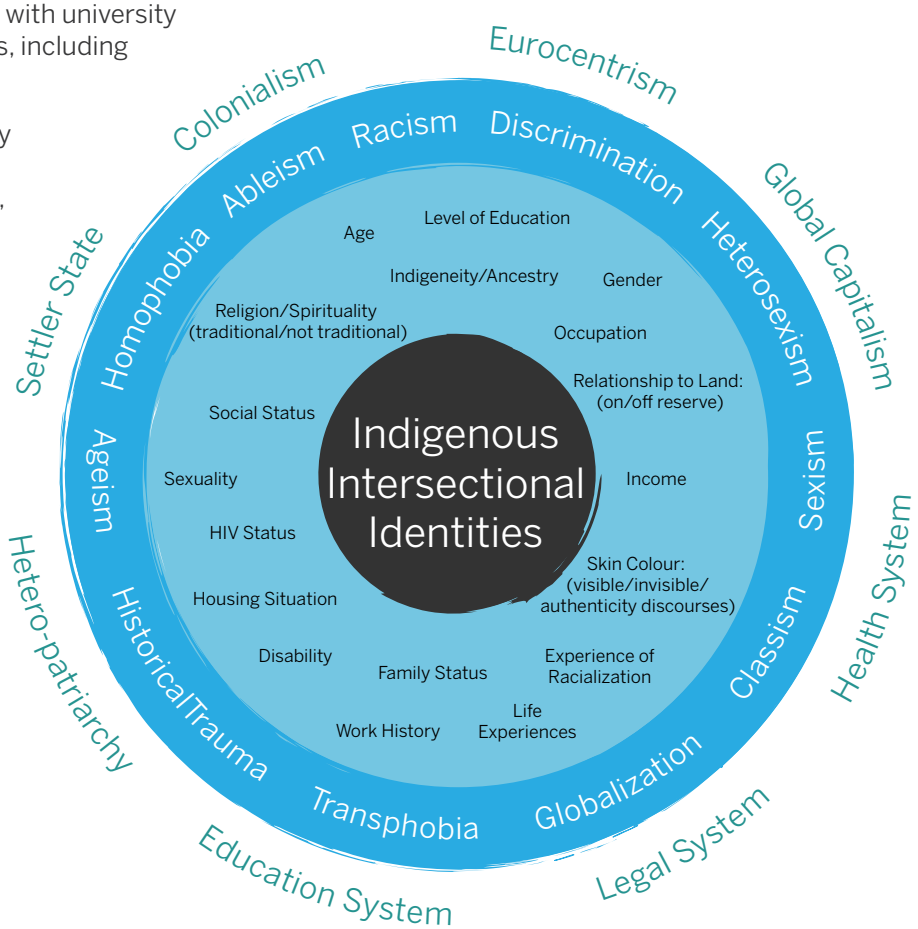
- Nationally, Indigenous peoples comprise roughly three to ten percent of university students, and currently fewer than one percent of faculty members are Indigenous.
- Indigenous students are underrepresented at all levels, especially in the disciplines of science, technology, engineering, math, and business.
- The university attainment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is widening. According to one study, it went from a 15-point gap in 2006 to a 20-point gap in 2011 (Parking, 2015).

INDIGENOUS STUDENTS' INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES

Like all students, Indigenous students' identities are complex, multiple, and shifting. We believe that an Indigenous intersectional framework helps to recognize students' complex identities. While intersectionality has been a helpful concept in recognizing students' complex identities (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, ability, religion, sexuality), this Guide extends beyond the dominant notions of intersectionality to encompass an Indigenous intersectionality (Clark, 2012). An Indigenous intersectional lens recognizes the unique realities of Indigenous students, including students' relationships to their homelands, their relationships to community and family histories, the effects of colonial violence and intergenerational trauma, and students' struggles against and resistance to the dominant educational system.

What You Need to Know

- Indigenous students' identities are diverse, multiple, and fluid.
- Indigenous students are diverse in their politics, understandings, and expressions of Indigeneity.
- Some Indigenous students may not publicly or formally identify as Indigenous with university professors for complex reasons, including safety and political reasons.
- Some Indigenous students may be opposed to certain identity labels (e.g. First Nations, Métis, or Inuit) and may prefer to be referred to in their Indigenous languages.
- Some Indigenous students are deeply connected and committed to the continuation of their cultures and languages, while others have been painfully estranged over generations.
- Indigenous students feel expectations about their Indigeneity imposed on them by others and themselves, often based on colonial notions of authenticity (what it means to be a 'real Indian' or to look like a 'real Indian').

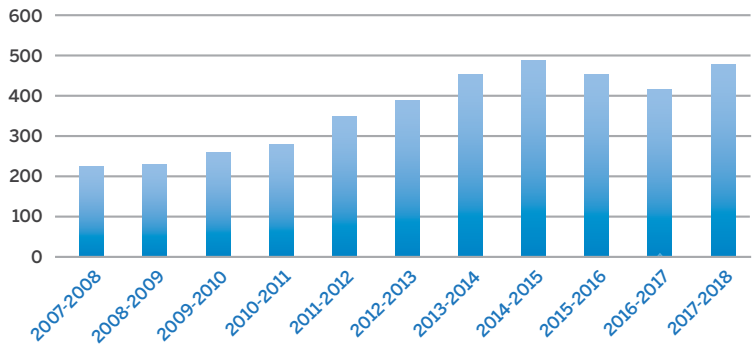


(This graphic has been adapted from the CRIAW/ICREF's Intersectionality Wheel Diagram published in Everyone Belongs: A Toolkit for Applying Intersectionality, 2009)

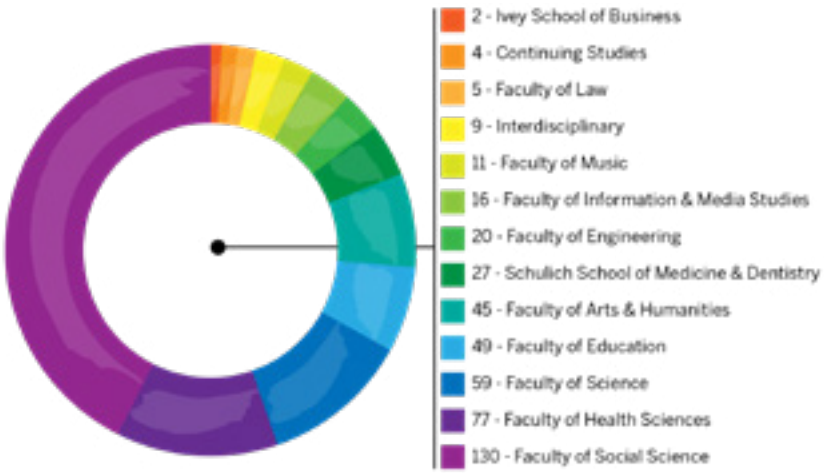
INDIGENOUS STUDENTS AT WESTERN

Every year, Western welcomes a large number of incoming Indigenous students pursuing their studies in diverse areas at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional school level. In the last 10 years, Western's Indigenous student population has more than doubled. Today, Western is 'home' to over 400 Indigenous students from varying Indigenous backgrounds and geographic regions.

Western University: Indigenous Student Enrolment



Western's Indigenous student population 2017-18



Brescia **24**

Huron **8**

Kings **71**

Did You Know?

- There is a difference between **identity** and **ancestry**. While you cannot have an Indigenous identity without ancestry, you may have Indigenous ancestry, but not identify as Indigenous.
- Western has an Indigenous Student Self-Identification Process that invites all students to identify voluntarily and confidentially within the university so that Western may track and better serve Indigenous students.
- For more information, go to: *indigenous.uwo.ca/universitywide/selfid.html*

431 Undergraduate

84 Graduate

385 Female

171 Male

3 Unspecified

INDIGENOUS STUDENT EXPERIENCES SURVEY

In 2015, Western's Indigenous Services and Student Experience partnered with the Faculty of Education and with Student Experience to develop and implement an online survey with Indigenous students. Using a holistic and culturally appropriate measurement tool, the university was able to gather important feedback from Indigenous students about their experiences which was used to engage in more meaningful planning, decision-making and institutional changes.

General Survey Results

- 98 students completed the online survey.
- 80 percent of respondents identified as Indigenous women.
- 19 percent of respondents identified as Indigenous men.
- 27 years was the average age of respondents.
- 26 percent of respondents had children and 64 percent of these respondents were single parents.
- 76 percent of respondents lived off campus.

Admission Pathway

- 46 percent of respondents entered university directly from high school.
- 24 percent were mature students.
- 15 percent were university transfers.
- 14 percent were college transfers.

Cultural Competency

- 71 percent of respondents felt that culturally competent academic services and supports were important to them.
- When seeking academic accommodation for cultural purposes some students indicated that there was a lack of understanding of Indigenous cultural practices, miscommunication and red tape to obtain accommodation.

Indigenous Services

- 90 percent of respondents used Indigenous Services (IS).
- 98 percent reported that IS provided culturally relevant services.
- 75 percent reported that IS was an important factor in their success.

Finance-related

- 40 percent of respondents earned less than $15,000 per year.
- 58 percent of overall respondents reported they were concerned about having sufficient funding to complete their education.
- 60 percent of respondents accessed First Nations band funding.

Wellness-related

- 82 percent reported feeling overwhelmed, depressed, sad, homesick, or unwell while attending Western.
- 49 percent of respondents accessed personal counselling services at Western.
- 66 percent of respondents indicated that counselling services were culturally competent.

Institutional

- 59 percent of the Indigenous survey respondents reported that they feel part of Western's university community.
- 40 percent reported having experienced racism on campus based on their Indigenous identity.
- 34 percent reported that they see Indigenous perspectives and voices reflected in their courses.
- 31 percent of respondents said that they felt Indigenous people were reflected in faculty members.
- 40 percent of respondents said that they felt Indigenous peoples were represented in staff members.

INDIGENOUS STUDENT BARRIERS & CHALLENGES

Indigenous students belong to one of the most marginalized groups in Canadian universities. There is a growing body of literature on the experiences and barriers experienced by Indigenous students in postsecondary education in Canada (Archibald, Pidgeon, & Hawkey, 2010; Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2008; Clark et al, 2015; Cote-Meek, 2014; Council of Ministers of Education, 2010; Holmes, 2006; Malatest, 2004; Mendelson, 2006; Pidgeon, 2008; Stonechild, 2006).

In the next section, we have identified and organized the barriers into six themes.

1 Historical & Ongoing Threat of Assimilation

The legacy of assimilationist approaches in educating Indigenous peoples in Canada continues to resonate in Indigenous communities and among students who perceive and experience the university culture and classroom as Eurocentric and sometimes hostile and sometimes a threat to their Indigeneity.

2 Access-to-Education Barriers

For many Indigenous students, being admitted to university is an obstacle that required them to overcome many complex and often compounded barriers. One of the biggest barriers to reaching university is related to access. Accessibility barriers can be connected to a number of issues, including access to adequate preparatory courses at the K-12 level, accessible application processes (Restoule et al, 2013) and bridging programs, etc. Access issues are also often hidden because they are often systemic.

3 Financial Barriers

The most significant barrier for Indigenous students attaining university education is financial need (Holmes, 2006; Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2007). It is a common misconception that all Indigenous students 'get a free education.' While First Nations (Status Indians) are eligible to apply for government funding, the funding is limited and highly competitive and many students are not eligible. Unfortunately, there is never enough funding for everyone, this is partly due to increasing populations along with government capping of funding since 1990's.

Did You Know?

- 40 percent of Indigenous respondents reported that they have experienced discrimination and/or racism connected to being an Indigenous student at Western.
- Western has a responsibility to accommodate students under religious accommodation. Indigenous ceremonies are considered a religious right.
- For more information, go to: *www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf*

Microaggression "is a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority." (Dictionary.com)

4 Geographic Barriers

Physical relocation is common for many university students; however, when Indigenous students relocate, they often face other challenges related to poverty, family obligations and cultural shifts which compound geographic shifts.

5 Social, Cultural & Political Barriers

Many Indigenous students experience social and cultural alienation when attending university. In this sense, the university is often observed as a competitive and hostile place compared to Indigenous peoples' close-knit family and community contexts.

Family and Community Responsibilities: Indigenous students tend to be older than the average university student, and often have additional family and financial responsibilities. Many Indigenous students also have additional community responsibilities connected to cultural responsibilities such as participation in ceremonies that do not sync up with school holiday calendar.

Racism and Anti-Indigenous Bias: Indigenous students often face racism and anti-Indigenous bias through microaggressions in and out of the classroom, which contributes to ongoing forms of violence and sometimes low self-esteem (Cote-Meek, 2014).

Intergenerational Trauma: Many Indigenous students experience a sense of grief and loss associated with the intergenerational effects of colonialism and residential schools. Consequently, many Indigenous students struggle with social and emotional issues connected to unstable childhood and adolescent experiences, alcohol and substance abuse, physical and sexual abuse, and higher rates of institutionalization (foster care and incarceration experiences). These realities affect some students' development and coping mechanisms and contribute to higher rates of mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, suicide, and unhealthy and risky behaviour (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004; Stewart, 2008).

Lack of Indigenous Representation: Part of students' sense of social and cultural alienation is connected to the fact that they do not often see Indigenous peoples, cultures, and values reflected in the university. When Indigenous perspectives are taken up in the classroom, often Indigenous peoples are positioned in deficit ways. Due to the marginalization of Indigenous peoples in universities, Indigenous students do not always have access to Indigenous role models.

6 Contextual Barriers

Academic culture shock adversely affects many Indigenous students when attending university. While cultural shock is most commonly associated with international students (Carroll & Ryan, 2005), it has also been linked to the experiences of Indigenous students in higher education (Trudgett & Franklin, n.d.).

Characteristics of Culture Shock

- Students are stressed because they do not have direct experience, knowledge, and understanding of the academic culture and expectations.
- Students are confused about their roles and responsibilities, and about the relationships and norms among students, teachers, and staff.
- Students feel helpless and frustrated when navigating the university system.
- Students experience a sense of alienation, anxiety, and indignation from the cultural differences they experience in the university.
- Students feel distant and lack a sense of belonging within the university community.
- Students feel a sense disconnection when reintegrating back into their own communities.
- Students are over-reliant on Indigenous student support units or particular programs or personnel.
- Students avoid and/or isolate themselves because they do not feel welcomed or comfortable accessing certain services.
- Students start to reject the university, their instructors, and learning experiences (Carroll & Ryan, 2005; Trudgett & Franklin, n.d.).

> "I had a bad experience with trying to get an academic accommodation so I could go home to attend our mid-winter ceremonies. The academic advisor basically told me that because our ceremonies are not scheduled on the multi-faith calendar, I could not be accommodated."
>
> "Much of the racism/ discrimination I've experienced has been from students."
>
> – Indigenous Student Testimonials

Photo Credit - Symbiosis by: Anthony Isaac

"We need to be able to speak candidly and openly about barriers and obstacles, about past treatment or current treatment of Indigenous men and women in the general public."

"It was always a dream to attend Western, one that I always thought was out of reach."

"Being an older student, everything is very new to me. Indigenous Services has always been on hand to advise me on what I needed to do and where I could go to solve any situations that came up."

"I lived on my reserve until moving 16 hours away to attend university. It was a very hard change from small town living to a huge city, classes from 20 to 700, and having teachers that don't even recognize who I am. My grades dropped significantly from high school to the end of my first year, so much so I debated not coming back."

– Indigenous Student Testimonials

What You Need to Know

- Many Indigenous students face complex and compounded barriers when attending university.
- Instructors automatically assume an authoritative position when teaching about Indigenous context in the university, which can have impacts on the power dynamics between instructors and Indigenous students in the classroom
- Many Indigenous students have community and ceremonial responsibilities that are not necessarily reflected in the multi-faith calendar but should be accommodated.

What You Can Do

- Learn about your Faculty's or department's accommodation process for religious or spiritual observances.

CASE STUDY 1:
First-Year Transition

Susan is an undergraduate student studying science. In one of her first classes, Susan proudly identifies herself as an Ojibwe woman with goals of going on to medical school and becoming a physician to serve First Nations' communities in the north. Susan is a bright, motivated, and engaged student, but recently, she has started missing lectures and tutorials.

Professor X is a popular first-year science instructor. He teaches a large seminar-style class once a week. This class is divided into four smaller sections for weekly tutorials with a teaching assistant (TA). The professor's lectures are fast-paced, and he delivers a lot of content from the course textbook. If students miss a lecture, it's hard to catch up unless peers take copious notes and share them with each other. The overall culture in the science undergraduate program tends to be competitive and not very community-oriented. For example, many students are driven by the need to earn high grades and to gain volunteer experiences to prepare themselves for medical school admission processes.

Susan does not have a lot of time to engage in extracurricular activities, since she is a single mother of two children and does not live on campus. Sometimes, Susan feels uncomfortable with the culture on campus and in the program overall, especially around students who are hyper-focused on grades and GPAs. Susan was admitted to the university through the Aboriginal Access Admission Pathway. She does not generally share this information with others, but she often feels uncomfortable when students start comparing their GPAs. More recently, Susan has missed a couple of classes due to her son falling ill and has fallen behind in studying for an upcoming quiz. The quiz is worth 20 percent of her final mark. Susan did not approach the professor or TA for help. In preparation for the quiz, she instead got up enough nerve to ask a student acquaintance in class for some tips, but the student only shared basic information verbally. Susan completed the quiz and got 45 percent. She is seriously starting to doubt her ability to continue in the science program. She starts to disengage from her classes even more.

Case Study Questions

- What barriers and challenges does Susan face in the science program, and why?
- Why do you think Susan feels uncomfortable about other students' focus on grades?
- What teaching strategies could the professor adopt to help facilitate student learning?
- What strategies could the TA adopt to facilitate learning and community in the tutorials?
- What supports exist on campus to help students in the first-year transition process?
- What is the Aboriginal Access Pathway Program? Why does this admission model exist, and how does it consider abilities to succeed differently?
- What underlying tensions emerge at the cultural interface?
- How can instructors contribute to shifting the competitive culture of universities?

Questions for Reflection

- What instructional strategies will you use in your classroom delivery (cooperative learning, anti-oppressive)?
- How do you differentiate your instruction for different learning styles?
- How do you use technology in your classroom (multimedia, apps, videos, radio)?
- Do you give your students opportunities to be self-directed and creative?

"Good for all – essential for some"

The University as a Cultural Interface

With the growing calls to Indigenize universities come increasing efforts for instructors to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into the classroom. Yet, a "myriad of complexities, permeations, and tensions . . . emerge when Indigenous and Western knowledge systems converge" (Martin et al, 2017, p.159). Martin Nakata (2017) has written about this process, and describes the university as a contact zone for the cultural interface. In this cultural interface, Nakata describes an interaction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, as well as Indigenous ways of:

Knowing – including teaching and learning, making sense of the world;

Being – including self-perception and perception of realities, as well as the process of making meaning; and

Doing – what and how knowledge gets operationalized, including cultural and social practices (haberlah.educblogs.org).

What You Need to Know

- The university classroom is not neutral, and is implicated in historical issues of oppression and exclusion in relation to Indigenous peoples.
- The university classroom becomes a contested space where different peoples, knowledges, and understandings converge.
- In these spaces, Indigenous peoples and processes of colonialization become a topic or subject, which can bring up tensions and conflicts, and even trigger trauma for some Indigenous students.
- Due to intergenerational experiences of trauma, Indigenous students can be threatened by and resist (or be ambivalent toward) studying certain Eurocentric theories. At the same time, many Indigenous students will embrace different knowledges and perspectives.
- In the taking-up of colonialism as a topic, interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students can result in microaggressions (Clark et al., 2015) and violent experiences (Cote-Meek, 2014).
- Microaggressions negatively affect Indigenous students' learning experiences (Clark et al., 2015).

CASE STUDY 2:

Student Conflict in the Classroom

A professor is inspired and eager to bring Indigenous perspectives into his classroom. While he is a non-Indigenous faculty member whose research does not focus on Indigenous peoples or issues, he has more recently expanded his knowledge and understanding through research, reading, and conferences. Over the summer, the professor has also revised his course syllabus to incorporate new readings with Indigenous-related content. On the first day of class, after the professor reviews the syllabus with students, he invites the class into a whole group to discuss their notions of Indigenous peoples and knowledge. He begins with an open-ended question.

Professor	What comes to your mind when I say, 'Indigenous literatures'?
Aaron (student)	Stories written by Indigenous peoples.
Deborah (student)	Oral stories, too!
Aaron (student)	(abruptly interjecting) I don't think that can be considered a literature, though.
Deborah	Figures. (She mumbles under her breath and stirs in her seat. Some of the students notice Deborah's response and there is an uncomfortable silence in the room.)
Aaron	This is a Canadian literatures class though, so I think we can safely assume that we are talking about the English written word. Right? (Aaron gestures 'come on' to the rest of the class.)
Tim (student)	I agree – Indigenous oral traditions existed, but I don't think they are considered a literature per say. Today, there are lots of Indigenous authors and writers who create Indigenous literatures though.
Deborah	(Sigh) You know we had our own oral traditions and languages before Europeans came and 'discovered us' and imposed English on us?
Aaron	(Rolls eyes)
Tim	(under his breath) Here we go.
Deborah	(Crosses her arms)

The professor did not expect the first discussion to start off this way.

Case Study Questions

- What conflicts between students emerged in this class?
- What could be the potential impact of this interaction for an Indigenous student?
- In your opinion, what is the professor's role in facilitating these kinds of discussions?
- How could the professor respond to the students' differing conceptions of literature?
- How can the professor anticipate and prepare for differences or conflicts which might emerge in the classroom?

Cultural Safety is an approach to education that takes into consideration historical, political, and social contexts, as well as systemic structural and interpersonal power imbalances that shape the experiences of Indigenous students.

In this approach, instructors are self-reflective/self-aware with respect to their positions of power and the effects of their roles and actions in relation to Indigenous students.

> 'Although Indigenous Services is culturally relevant, UWO is not. I feel I am constantly trying to get others to understand or care about Indigenous issues, especially in regard to education, effects of colonization, and European hegemony.'
>
> – Indigenous student survey student testimonial

Only 34 percent of Indigenous students at Western reported that they felt that Indigenous voices and perspectives were reflected in their courses.

The University as a Cultural Interface

What You Can Do

- Create ways to nurture cultural safety in your classrooms (e.g. establish norms and guiding principles with your students at the beginning of your courses/programs).
- Nurture a sense of community in your classroom.
- Foster opportunities for students (and yourself) to share your stories, experiences, and intersectional identities with each other.
- Use cooperative learning strategies to engage diverse learners in your classroom.
- Differentiate your instructional strategies for diverse learning styles.
- Do not single out Indigenous students and expect them to be the authority for all Indigenous peoples and issues.
- Give students opportunities to explore self-directed topics in their assignments.
- Bring diverse (even competing) Indigenous voices and perspectives into your courses (e.g. through your readings, as guest speakers, on field trips, etc.).
- Respectfully complicate and critically question oversimplifications and overgeneralizations about Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowledges.
- Ensure stereotypes and misinformation are corrected.
- Don't mistake students' silence for disengagement.
- Check in with students after a critical incident or microaggression occurs.
- Have high expectations of all your students.
- Reflect on your own social locations in relationship to settler colonialism and Indigenous peoples and students.
- Invite local Indigenous peoples as guests into your classroom to share their firsthand experiences relating to themes in your course.
- Include Indigenous authors and scholars in your selection of readings.
- Critically scrutinize the literature that takes up Indigenous peoples.
- Share and take up positive examples of Indigenous peoples and movements.
- Challenge all your students to move beyond binary thinking, and to complicate and deconstruct dichotomies.

CASE STUDY 3:
Spiritual Observance

Todd is a third-year undergraduate student who is Mohawk but does not generally openly identify himself to his peers or professors. He is taking a small upper-year course in which the professor attests to having "high expectations" for all his students. On the first day of class, the professor outlines his expectations to the class, which centre on fairness and sameness for all students (e.g. he expects that all students will attend all classes, will be on time, will complete all the readings, and will hand in assignments on time). The professor warns students that only under extraordinary circumstances does he accept late assignments.

It is the winter term, and Todd usually attends mid-winter ceremonies in his community – ceremonies are a local week-long spiritual observance that occur around the solstice. Todd recalls the class's strict rules and is hesitant to talk to the professor face-to-face about his absence. Instead Todd emails him on the week he will be away, advising the professor of his absence and quoting spiritual observance policy.

The professor is surprised by Todd's email. He is also skeptical of Todd's rationale, since Todd 'does not even look Native' and the observance is not explicitly named on the university's multi-faith calendar. The professor responds to Todd via email by asking to meet with him in person after class the following week to discuss his concerns.

Case Study Questions

- What is the accommodation policy for spiritual observances at Western University?
- What is the professor's duty to accommodate?
- How can the professor respond to this student?
- How are different values conflicting between the professor and student?
- How does power play a role in this interaction?

Questions for Reflection

1. What pre-conceived ideas do you have about Indigenous peoples, students and knowledges?

2. What is your social location and relationship to settler colonialism? Has settler colonialism in Canada (and elsewhere) benefited and/or hindered me in your life and how?

3. How do your other social locations shape who you are (Indigenous/settler identity, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, class, religion, and age) – refer to self-reflection tool on the next page?

4. How do your social locations shape your understandings of Indigenous peoples, students and knowledges?

CASE STUDY 4:
Power and Authority in the Classroom

Carlin is a third-year undergraduate student enrolled in First Nations Studies. She is Cree, and a vocal student leader in the Indigenous communities on and off campus. She is also a mature student, and she brings a wealth of life experiences into the classroom. Carlin is enrolled in an undergraduate course that takes up a lot of Indigenous social, cultural, and political issues.

The professor is a non-Indigenous woman relatively new to teaching. While she is very knowledgeable and well-read in the field, she is worried about taking up Indigenous content in away that may unintentionally be offensive.

On the second day of class, the professor shows a film about residential schools in Canada. The film details the trauma and abuse experienced by one survivor in graphic detail. After showing the film to the class, the professor asks students to form small groups. Most of the Indigenous students gather into a group and begin discussing their thoughts. After a couple of minutes, the professor notices that the Indigenous students are not dispersed, and so she interrupts their conversation and rearranges some of them into different groups. Carlin's close friend Amanda is moved to another group with no Indigenous students. They look at each other across the room, and Carlin can see that Amanda is viscerally upset. Carlin texts her friend, 'Who is this woman?'

Case Study Questions

- What underlying tensions between Indigenous students and the professor surface in this scenario?
- Why do you think Carlin and Amanda got upset?
- How can the professor anticipate, prevent, and address issues around their positionality when taking up Indigenous content in the classroom?
- What are the pedagogical considerations in taking up the subject of residential schools in the classroom?

INDIGENOUS SPACES AT WESTERN

Today, many universities have councils, academic programs, and services dedicated to serving Indigenous students and bridging the divide between the Indigenous community and the university. While Indigenous student services are generally small units within larger universities, these 'pockets of presence' are vitally important to fostering Indigenous student success, Indigenous presence and culturally safe learning environments (Pidgeon, 2008).

Indigenous Services

Indigenous Services as part of Student Experience has been in place since 1995 and is dedicated to supporting Indigenous students in reaching their highest potential. IS offers a culturally responsive space, programs, and services that honour Indigenous cultures and languages, foster Indigenous presence and inclusion, and increase Indigenous access, engage Indigenous communities, and facilitate transition, retention, graduation and advancement of Indigenous students at Western.

INDIGENOUS SERVICES

Did You Know?

Western University has an Indigenous Postsecondary Education Council (IPEC) that advises university administration on Indigenous matters.

For more information, go to: *www.indigenous.uwo.ca*

"Indigenous Services is my safe place and integral to my success here at Western."

"I would have given up in my post- secondary studies by now if it wasn't for the support, assistance, advice and comfort that Indigenous Services has provided for me."

What You Need to Know

- Many Indigenous students thrive when they connect with Indigenous communities and Indigenous mentors on campus and off campus.
- Giving back to community is a common value among Indigenous students and community connectedness is an important success factor in education.
- Indigenous Student Services exist at nearly every Canadian postsecondary institution.
- Indigenous Services was first created at Western University in 1995.
- Indigenous Services offers culturally relevant and safe services including academic counselling, youth outreach, study space, gathering space, a computer lab, printing services, and kitchen facilities, with 24-hour access for registered students.

What You Can Do

- Familiarize yourself with Indigenous Services and get involved in their programming on campus (e.g. Indigenous Services holds an Annual Indigenous Awareness Week, and the Indigenous Student Association holds an annual Pow Wow).
- Partner with Indigenous Services to bring in Indigenous guest speakers.

Find more information at Indigenous Services:
indigenous.uwo.ca

FIRST NATIONS STUDIES (FNS)

First Nations Studies (FNS) is part of Western's Faculty of Social Science and has been in place since 2003. FNS is an interdisciplinary program of study, examining topics relevant to Indigenous peoples' realities. Western's program allows students to either specifically focus on Indigenous issues or to combine their program with any other undergraduate degree. As an interdisciplinary program, it provides scholars with multiple points of reference to examine issues of importance to Indigenous people, Indigenous communities, and Indigenous revitalization and self-determination in Canada and abroad.

What You Need to Know

- In Canada, First Nations Studies programs are also referred to as Indigenous Studies, Aboriginal Studies or Native Studies.
- Indigenous Studies undergraduate programs emerged in Canadian universities in the 1960's. The first Canadian university to establish this type of program was Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario.
- Today, nearly half of all Canadian universities offer Indigenous Studies undergraduate programming and many have developed graduate programs across various disciplines.
- Indigenous Studies programs foster important space for intellectual and community partnerships to coalesce.
- Indigenous Studies scholarship has made significant contributions to academic research and thinking around approaches to methodologies and theories.

What You Can Do

- Familiarize yourself with Western's First Nations Studies programming.
- Engage in and attend First Nations Studies public events.
- Partner with First Nations Studies to bring in Indigenous speakers to your classroom or department.

Helpful Resources

First Nations Studies website:
firstnationsstudies.uwo.ca

"At FNS, we are committed to developing graduates who, in a rapidly changing global environment, will acquire a sound foundation for pursuing careers in the private, non-profit and government sectors. An undergraduate degree in FNS will also provide students with the opportunity to gain admission into professional schools such as law, medicine, health science, education, and business."

- Janice Forsyth, Director

ELDERS IN UNIVERSITIES

Working together to create culturally safe learning environments for Indigenous students often means observing Indigenous, holistic ways of knowing, being, and doing. From this Indigenous perspective, it can be helpful to engage Indigenous Elders in teaching and learning processes. Elders are deeply valued and held in high esteem in Indigenous communities. They are often considered the living libraries and life forces of Indigenous communities because they play such an integral role in protecting and sustaining Indigenous knowledges, languages, histories, traditional teachings, and ceremonies. As a result, Elders bring important perspectives and knowledges into academic learning environments. Postsecondary institutions have been working with Indigenous Elders in many different ways. For example, Elders are an integral part of Western's Indigenous Postsecondary Education Council (IPEC) and the Indigenous Services unit. They participate in many student events and much programming on campus, and even attend classes as guest speakers.

Role of Elders in University Education

- Elders can support Indigenous students in reconnecting with Indigenous cultures and identities, which is a vital student success factor.
- Elders can support staff and faculty by providing advice and consultation on areas of teaching, learning, service, and research.
- Elders can offer advice and consultation to administration relating to ethical uses of cultures and languages in the university.
- Elders can conduct ceremonies including traditional openings, sharing circles, sacred fires, and sunrise ceremonies on campus.
- Elders can sit on university committees (including research committees) and task forces to offer cultural perspectives.
- Elders can support Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in working together.

Who is an Elder?

- Within Indigenous communities, Elders are recognized and held in high esteem.
- Elders are generally recognized for their level of cultural knowledge and teachings.
- Elders are not necessarily defined by their age.

What You Need to Know

- Elders' knowledge is based in their life experiences and connection to Indigenous knowledges.
- Within Indigenous communities, Elders' level of knowledge is often considered equivalent to the highest level of education within formal educational systems (equivalent to a PhD).
- Elders often assume rights and responsibilities within specific nations for passing on specific knowledges and teachings, holding specific ceremonies, etc.
- Elders generally carry themselves with humility, and do not boast about their knowledge.

What You Can Do

- If you are uncertain about how to approach an Elder, contact Indigenous Services for one-on-one support.
- It is important to build ongoing and reciprocal relationships with Elders.
- When asking for support, it is helpful to provide in-depth background about the purpose you may be inviting Elders, and ask for their direction. In this sense, it can be disrespectful simply to ask Elders to perform an opening.
- It is important to observe individual Elders' cultural protocols. For example, some Elders may want you to offer them traditional tobacco as a form of respect. Having said that, Indigenous nations are highly diverse. It is acceptable to ask Elders if there are particular protocols that they wish you to observe.
- When working with Indigenous peoples' sacred objects, or ceremonies, it is respectful to ask for permission before touching objects, taking photos, or recording.
- It is also important to show respect and demonstrate hospitality by taking care of Elders when they are invited to your classroom. Ask them what they need in advance (e.g. a helper, special parking, smudging abilities, an altar, water, a snack, etc.).
- It can be deemed disrespectful to impose rigid time limits and structures on Elders' visits and talks.
- It is critical to offer Elders an honorarium for their time and knowledge. When possible, it is preferable to pay the honorarium upon arrival on the day of the event. You may contact Indigenous Services for best practices.

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