Indigenizing and Decolonizing the Academy

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Pronouns: she / her / they / them
Territorial Acknowledgement

The University of Alberta respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Metis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/Saulteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community.
We will...

- engage with Indigenous pedagogies to enhance their understanding of relationship building and reciprocity;
- learn about First Nations, Metis and Inuit histories and contemporary realities; and
- explore how Indigenization and decolonization can support student learning and engagement with curriculum.
tante ohci kiya

Who are you connected to?

Nehiyawk (Cree) term
First Nations, Metis, and Inuit

http://report.hc.com.ca/people/first-nations-communities-alberta/

http://www.nativenuetoday.com/2015/05/08/fishing-lake-metis-settlement-fishing-lake-metis-settlement-is-a/

“As long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and the rivers flow
- Treaties 6, 7, 8

We are all Treaty people...

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/af/Medal-Viki.jpg
Kinship
Relational Accountability
Reciprocity
Reciprocal Learning
Stewardship
KEEP CALM AND DECOLONIZE
Decolonization

- Decolonization restores the Indigenous worldview;
- Decolonization restores culture and traditional ways;
- Decolonization replaces Western interpretations of history with Indigenous perspectives of history.

Indigenization

- Indigenization recognizes validity of Indigenous worldviews, knowledge and perspectives;
- Indigenization identifies opportunities for Indigeneity to be expressed;
- Indigenization incorporates Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.
Supporting Indigenous Students

**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.

“Each student is a person who is becoming” (p.105)
Indigenous Pedagogies

“Aboriginal pedagogy is found in talking or sharing circles and dialogues, participant observations, experiential learning, modeling, meditation, prayer, ceremonies, or story telling as ways of knowing and learning.”

- AFN: Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy in First Nations Education
Indigenous Resources on-campus

First Peoples’ House
Transition Year Program
Indigenous Gathering Space (FoMD; MSB 2-02)
Libraries (Indigenous Librarians + Indigenous focused practice)
Wahkohtowin Lodge (Augustana Campus)
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

1. What barriers and challenges does Susan face in the science program, and why?

2. Why do you think Susan feels uncomfortable about other students’ focus on grades?

3. What teaching strategies could the professor adopt to help facilitate student learning?

4. What strategies could the TA adopt to facilitate learning and community in the tutorials?

5. What supports exist on campus to help students in the first-year transition process?

6. Why does this admission model exist, and how does it consider abilities to succeed differently?

7. What underlying tensions emerge at the cultural interface?

8. How can instructors contribute to shifting the competitive culture of universities?
Chief Lady Bird: We Must Protect the Land for the Next Seven Generations

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