

# Building Reconciliation at the U of S

## Support for Indigenization: Teaching and Learning Gwenna Moss Centre For Teaching and Learning

### INDIGENIZING CURRICULUM

Indigenous people have a long and complicated history with Canadian society; this includes a problematic relationship with researchers, academics, and other data collectors (RCAP, 1999). Despite improvements in establishing an ethical space for working with Indigenous people, the approaches used for this work are typically framed, collected, and used in a non-Indigenous manner, and don't necessarily benefit Indigenous people or their communities (TCPS2, 2010).

The fundamental difficulty for academics working with Indigenous people is the underlying Western belief (to some extent) of knowledge in positivistic terms, which contrasts with the relativistic approach to knowledge that Indigenous people have (Little Bear, 2000). It is hard for many Western academics to appreciate how Indigenous people conceptualize and use knowledge; for example, the significance of spirit, land and sky, the four directions, and our relationship to ancestors, animals, and plants, and how they transmit knowledge and understanding. Academics can, and do, describe Indigenous worldviews well, but communicating the meaning, role, and use of these worldviews has been exceptionally difficult (Little Bear, 2000). As such, it is inevitable that academics from a non-Indigenous worldview will unintentionally codify knowledge with their own values and rules about knowledge and, thereby, continue to colonize Indigenous people through the inaccurate teaching of Indigenous knowledge, history or culture.

**Indigenization is a strategic and purposeful process to work with and for Indigenous education and people, while supporting the development of a deeper understanding with non-Indigenous people.**

### CONTACT

Stryker Calvez, PhD – Education Development Specialist  
GMCTL Room 50 Murray Building , 306-966-6280, stryker.calvez@usask.ca

### FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR INDIGENIZATION

Indigenization from an Indigenous perspective is not 'reverse colonialism', but an openness to and respect for different ways of knowing and living. This is a community-focused perspective that considers the well-being of everyone; therefore, respect for individual perspectives is paramount, but not at the cost of the community. This approach toward indigenization supports equitable Indigenous participation in and contributions to Canadian

society in a healthy and respectful manner, but on Indigenous terms.

The commitment to the transformative indigenization of the University will necessitate a dedicated response that is equal to or greater than the level of concern, fear, and complacency that exists toward institutional change and the appropriate inclusion of Indigenous people at the University. The

commitment will need to be built into and reinforced throughout all University processes, policies, and practices. Without change to the structure and institutional culture, indigenization is unlikely to succeed beyond taking accommodative actions, which Indigenous communities often perceive as tokenism.

### OBJECTIVES FOR INDIGENIZATION

#### Going Beyond Accommodation For Students

Transforming perceptions and support for Indigenous people; not just providing extra support to Indigenous students

#### Governance of Indigenous Knowledge

Following the principles set out by OCAP®, a system for stewardship of Indigenous knowledge should be developed for Usask

**Professional Development For Faculty and Staff** – tailored and collaborative programming to facilitate transformation of institutional culture for individuals, units, colleges and schools

**Institutional Transformation** – Review and adapt programming, policies and space, refine policies and procedures, and develop strong, reciprocal relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people

**Community Relations** – Prioritize the development of positive, equitable relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people

#### Indigenous Representation and Allyship

Support the hiring and promotion of Indigenous people into all areas of the University, including positions of influence and prestige. Recognize and reward good allies who help to further the indigenization priority at the University

**Communication** – Maintain an appropriate level of awareness, desire, and commitment to building a successful and meaningful indigenization strategy needs open, visible, and consistent leadership over the next few generations

### INDIGENOUS VOICES AND CONSULTATION

**Indigenous Voices** is a professional development tailored program for faculty and staff with experiential educational opportunities to learn about Indigenous culture, history and contemporary issues in pursuit of the TRC's Calls to Action. The primary goal of this program is to support institutional change toward an inclusive and rewarding environment for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, faculty, staff and community.

**Consult** with academic and work units about how to support a campus environment that respects, supports and encourages different ways of knowing in academic and non-academic settings.