

# 100 ways to Indigenize and decolonize academic programs and courses

Dr. Shauneen Pete

## Executive Lead: Indigenization

### University of Regina

**Indigenization** at the UR is understood as *“The transformation of the existing academy by including Indigenous knowledges, voices, critiques, scholars, students and materials as well as the establishment of physical and epistemic spaces that facilitate the ethical stewardship of a plurality of Indigenous knowledges and practices so thoroughly as to constitute an essential element of the university. It is not limited to Indigenous people, but encompasses all students and faculty, for the benefit of our academic integrity and our social viability” (Indigenous Advisory Circle, University of Regina).*

The UR Strategic Plan, ***Peyak Aski Kikawinaw (2015-2020)*** identifies three key priority areas that include *Student Success, Community Engagement* and *Research Impact*. Indigenization and sustainability are over-arching themes for this plan. Each key priority identifies particular objectives. Indigenization is embedded in our collective work at the University of Regina and the Federated Colleges.

### Under *Student Success* the objectives specific to Indigenization include:

- Increase completion rates of Aboriginal students by enhancing services and academic supports for Aboriginal students
- Embed Indigenous practices, ideas and principles in our academic pursuits
  - **Indicators of Success:**
    - Increased Indigenization in each Faculty and academic unit\* (see below)
    - Increased academic programming partnerships and collaborations with First Nations University of Canada.
    - Increased number of Indigenous learning spaces

This document was designed to support faculty toward the goals of Indigenization. This document was designed to address not only the definition of Indigenization but the objectives set forth in the university strategic plan. Indigenization must be understood and implemented as working toward the “transformation of the academy” as defined by the

Indigenous Advisory Circle. Below are **100 Ways** to begin discussion and action with your faculty colleagues. This list is not exhaustive, and is informed by both the theory and practice of Indigenizing and decolonizing the academy.

### **Indigenization & Decolonization: For Deans Council**

1. Review and consider the implications of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples<sup>i</sup>
2. Review and implement *Universities Canada* Principles on Indigenous Education<sup>ii</sup>
3. Review and consider how to implement the recommendations posed by the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*.<sup>iii</sup>
4. Recognize that exploring Indigenous knowledges in the academy serves the purpose of *academic decolonization*<sup>iv</sup>

### **Indigenization & Decolonization: For Deans**

5. Review the university strategic plan, *Peyak Aski Kikawinaw*
6. Review and consider how to enhance your faculty relationships with FNUniv
7. Review the definition of *Indigenization* on the UR website
8. Promote the inclusion of diverse parties in the process of academic program reform (i.e. local Indigenous educators, Elders, students, faculty colleagues from FNUniv, Indigenous alumni, and community members) – addressing governance early on may ensure that academic programming reform reflects the priorities, interests, concerns and experiences of local Indigenous peoples
9. Recruit and retain more Indigenous scholars and staff<sup>v</sup>
10. Develop plans to recruit and retain Indigenous graduate students in your field
11. Consider cross-appointments to build capacity in other areas as well
12. Provide release time to individual faculty who are working to revise program offerings
13. Broadening processes related to performance evaluation<sup>vi</sup>
14. Acknowledge and act to minimize the perception of “double-work” that many Indigenous scholars and staff face<sup>vii</sup>
15. Recognize and respect Elders, Knowledge holders and faculty who fulfill important Oskapewis roles<sup>viii</sup>
16. Create opportunities for dialogue on how to imagine and envision Indigenous presence in the Faculty and departments (this is not just the work of Indigenous peoples)<sup>ix</sup>
17. Create physical spaces that reflect Indigenous peoples histories, contributions, languages and diversities. Review and develop signage, bulletin boards, and promotional materials for inclusion of diverse students, staff and faculty

18. Review your academic program. Consider how Indigenous programs are administered and delivered through the structures of Departments, Faculties and Colleges.<sup>x</sup>
19. As a program or department begin to develop a scope and sequence for indigenous content across program
20. Develop an advisory circle within your faculty to imagine and guide the implementation process
21. Develop and sustain programmatic approaches to the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges<sup>xi</sup>
22. Institute a policy response on integrating Indigenous knowledges<sup>xii</sup>
23. Prepare a Faculty response to allegations that Indigenous content somehow diminishes the perception of a quality higher education
24. Collaborate with Indigenous scholars at FNUUniv to review program plans
25. Consider how to structure recruitment efforts by developing cohorts of Indigenous learners for both undergraduate and graduate programming
26. Consider department based celebrations and welcoming events targeted at getting to know your Indigenous learners
27. Re-write your Faculty Criteria Document to reflect evolving priorities in teaching and learning
28. Undertake a department/Faculty self-study on efforts to Indigenize
29. Celebrate and honour Indigenous alumni
30. Invite Indigenous scholars to present to learners in your Faculty
31. Invite Indigenous scholars in your field to Skype to a Faculty meeting for the purposes of faculty development
32. Nominate Indigenous scholars for recognition and awards in your field
33. As a faculty, review progress towards Indigenizing academic programs annually
34. Seek out sessional and term hires who have experience in Indigenizing teaching
35. Promote and provide in-service on Indigenizing your teaching practices with sessional and term hires

### **Indigenization & Decolonization: For Faculty**

36. Utilize the local protocol norms (offering of a gift) in your relationships with Indigenous knowledge keepers
37. Work with HR and Financial Services to ensure that you follow the policies and practices supportive of respectful relationships with Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers (honorarium)
38. Attend the UR Human Resource *Discovering Knowledge...Sharing the Path* program<sup>xiii</sup>
39. Read Rauna Kuokkanen's book, *Reshaping the University: Responsibilities, Indigenous Epistememes, and the Logic of the Gift*

40. Read Herman Michell's book, *Working with Aboriginal Communities in Places of Higher Learning*
41. Read Herman Michell's book, *Working with Elders and Indigenous Knowledge Systems: A Reader and Guide for Places of Higher Learning*
42. Read Kovach, Carriere, Montgomery, Barrett and Gillies (2014) *Indigenous Presence*
43. Recognize that "a reorientation of post-secondary education to accept, incorporate, and improve Aboriginal knowledges and sciences in their community services, education and research may require substantial redesign of university protocols and rules" <sup>xiv</sup> Be prepared to inform policy reform.
44. Through your relationships with Indigenous scholars, elders and community-based partners begin to design courses reflective of Indigenous epistemologies. "Aboriginal programs should to some degree reflect approaches to epistemology preferred by Aboriginal persons and encouraged by Aboriginal cultural traditions...Aboriginal values and ways of being" <sup>xv</sup>
45. Some courses should be required of all learners (avoid academic ghettos)<sup>xvi</sup> these courses would take up topics associated with settler-Indigenous relations, treaty responsibilities, and actions aimed at reconciliation. This is shared work: not just the work of Indigenous peoples.
46. Indigenous peoples seek skills, knowledge and experiences which will support their leadership toward community resiliency and nationhood. Some courses need to be designed specifically for Indigenous learners to gain a deeper understanding of the theory and practice of Indigenous knowledges and the implications for these in their field of study. For example, in political studies courses designed to engage Indigenous learners in an exploration of say policy reform specific to the tri-partite agreements with different levels of government.
47. Indigenous learners are here to learn. Expecting them to fill in the curricular gaps by addressing Indigenous issues is an unfair burden that is not shared with other learners; nor do they get "extra credit" for doing so. You must be the catalyst. You are in the position of power in the classroom; if you are ill-prepared to bring forth Indigenous topics, and then utilize your material and human resources to do it with you.
48. Faculty must consider the ways in which they promote courses currently offered at FNUniv, and must avoid duplication of course delivery
49. Recognize Treaty 4 territory in your opening remarks to your students and in your course outlines and other resources; recognize that the U of R also offers programs in Treaty 6 territory
50. Name the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Lakota and Nakota peoples of Treaty 4 territory in your opening remarks to students.

51. Recognize and name the 4 historically Métis communities in this region (Lebret, Fort Qu'Appelle, Willow Bunch as well as Lestock)
52. Identify existing courses within your faculty/department with indigenous content
53. Review course calendar for the order and listing of electives; ensure that an Indigenous course is listed; privilege Indigenous course options at the front of the list of electives
54. Review individual course outlines for Indigenous content and scholars
55. Seek out and review the scholarship of Indigenous peoples in your field
56. Review academic program area for possible cross-references courses with other departments
57. Recognize that Indigenizing our teaching is not just about culturally relevant teaching; Indigenizing our teaching aims to challenge the dominant narratives about our collective histories, contemporary aspirations and challenges. Indigenizing our teaching is also about supporting Indigenous peoples and communities goals for the self-determination and sovereignty.
58. Consider how you are taking up social justice issues in your courses. Consider how you address Treaty relationships, the history of colonization in Canada, land use and development, Indigenous sovereignty, residential school histories and recommendations aimed at reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission – TRC), Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women and other matters.
59. Be flexible enough to take up emerging local Indigenous issues as they arise
60. Visit an Indigenous community
61. Require learners to conduct a review of literature on a topic specific to Indigenous peoples
62. Critically exam colonization and its effects
63. Deconstruct the construct of racism<sup>xvii</sup>
64. Deconstruct the neutrality of whiteness<sup>xviii</sup>
65. Practice challenging notions of colorblindness and meritocracy
66. Practice challenging notions that “it all happened a long time ago, get over it”
67. Identify, name and work to correct White dominance in the curriculum design, intended outcomes and resource material selection
68. *“But I teach other people too”* - Folks often think that Indigenizing their teaching will somehow detract from addressing the needs of other diverse learners. Too often, dominant group members want to fall back onto discourses of multiculturalism as a way of practicing curricular inclusion. St. Denis (2011) explains that discourses of multiculturalism actually undermine Indigenous sovereignty.<sup>xix</sup> She asserts that some Indigenous peoples believe that multiculturalism serves as a form of on-going colonialism.

69. Recognize that new Canadians and visiting students quickly adopt the dominant views about Indigenous peoples. Deconstruct with learners the implications for this ongoing alignment with dominance.
70. Explore diverse Indigenous peoples voices (Inuit, Métis, Bi-racial, LGBT, global and local) in your readings and other resource selections
71. Co-teach courses with other faculty members to build capacity within programs
72. Co-teach courses with Indigenous people from outside the university; consider alumni, local professionals, and Indigenous community members and others.
73. Consider moving away from lecture style course delivery to classroom design that encourages dialogue (circle format; small table groupings; and other approaches)
74. Anticipate and prepare responses to racism<sup>xx</sup>
75. Actively challenge racism, Eurocentrism and dominant assumptions of knowledge, voice, quality and delivery of academic programs
76. Identify the long term benefits of Indigenization with for you/your learners, the program, and your profession
77. Identify institutional and professional association barriers to the inclusion of Indigenous content; actively work to name and correct the barriers
78. Prepare responses to student questions about the level of Indigenous content (*Learners will often complain - "there's too much Aboriginal content"*)
79. Disrupt the dominant idea of deficit thinking directed toward Indigenous learners
80. Disrupt the idea that Indigenous ways of knowing are subordinate to dominant ways of knowing
81. Participate in the anti-oppressive summer institute (Faculty of Education)
82. Participate in the Fall 2015 CTL workshops in *Indigenizing your Teaching*
83. Ask the Executive Lead or a colleague to provide an external review of a course
84. Create a list of resources people that could work with you as guest lecturers including the names of local traditional knowledge keepers and Elders, business people and leaders
85. Develop a list of material resource to share throughout the program
86. Consider off campus delivery and land based learning
87. Consider the role that volunteering and community service can play in building cultural competency with your learners
88. Consider the role that elders and traditional knowledge keepers can play in course reform and delivery
89. Consider arts based and non-dominant forms of demonstrating understanding including re-storying, photo essay, performance, reflective writing etc
90. Name the dominant worldview; make visible non-dominant worldviews and work toward what Sefa Dei refers to as "synthesizing knowledges"<sup>xxi</sup>

91. Consider the role that ceremony may play in your course design, and department/Faculty norms
92. Consider offering courses/programs in off-campus locations (ie: introductory courses being taught at the food bank, friendship centre, public library etc).
93. Use the new names for the residence buildings when describing places on campus. Kisik, Wakpa and Paskwaw Towers. <sup>xxii</sup>
94. Initiate political actions in support of greater levels of academic decolonization (submissions or recommendations to university administration, local and federal political bodies). <sup>xxiii</sup>
95. Reward and recognize efforts aimed at decolonizing curriculum – tell your stories; promote departmental initiatives through the website or through media.
96. Recognize and respect that Indigenous scholarship is based on “relational capital” that needs to be recognized within tenure and promotion practices<sup>xxiv</sup>
97. Create an updated list of courses which have been Indigenized for your Faculty
98. Advocate for scholarly focus on Indigenization efforts in conference planning and academic societies
99. Apply for financial support to revise courses through the Indigenous Advisory Circle Indigenization fund. <http://www.uregina.ca/president/indigenization.html>
100. Give thanks that we are taking seriously this opportunity to work toward reconciliation.

---

<sup>i</sup> [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.univcan.ca/media-room/news-and-commentary/universities-canada-principles-indigenous-education/>

<sup>iii</sup> [http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> Sefa Dei (2002) Rethinking the Role of Indigenous Knowledges in the Academy

<sup>v</sup> Kovach, Carriere, Montgomery, Barrett, & Gilles (2014). Indigenous Presence: Experiencing and Envisioning Indigenous Knowledges within Selected Post-Secondary Sites of Education and Social Work.

<http://www.usask.ca/education/profiles/kovach/Indigenous-Presence-2014-Kovach-M-et-al.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> As above

<sup>vii</sup> As above

<sup>viii</sup> As above

<sup>ix</sup> Adapted from Kovach, Carriere, Montgomery, Barrett & Gillies

<sup>x</sup> As above

<sup>xi</sup> As above

<sup>xii</sup> As above

<sup>xiii</sup> <http://www.uregina.ca/hr/careers/working/workforce-initiatives/awareness-training.html>

<sup>xiv</sup> Paquette & Fallon (2014) *In Quest of Indigeneity, quality and credibility in Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada: Problematic, Contexts and Potential Ways Forward*

<sup>xv</sup> As above

<sup>xvi</sup> As above

<sup>xvii</sup> Marx (2006) Revealing the Invisible: Confronting Passive Racism in Teacher Education

<sup>xviii</sup> As above

---

<sup>xix</sup> St. Denis, V. (2011). Silencing Aboriginal Content and Perspectives through Multiculturalism: “There are other children here”.

<sup>xx</sup> Marx (2006) Revealing the Invisible: Confronting Passive Racism in Teacher Education

<sup>xxi</sup> Sefa Dei

<sup>xxii</sup> <http://www.uregina.ca/external/communications/feature-stories/current/fs-07292015.html>

<sup>xxiii</sup> Sefa Dei (2002)

<sup>xxiv</sup> Kovach et al