FIRST NATIONS UNIVERSITY OF CANADA

Developing Courses with Indigenous Content

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“Indigenizing my teaching is about asserting the significance and application of Indigenous knowledge within the subjects I teach. Furthermore, indigenizing is also about decolonizing myself, the classroom, the content I teach and the discipline I operate within by decentering western ways of knowing through the curricula I use” (Pete, Schneider, O’Reilly, 2013).
Indigenizing My Teaching

• Claiming Indigenous knowledge in the classroom is about “affirming the relevance of Indigenous knowledge” in the disciplines we teach (Sefa Dei, 2011, xii).

• George Sefa Dei further asserts that in order to be effective in claiming Indigenous knowledge in the educational system, “such Indigenous education must reflect the political, social, spiritual, as well as pedagogic, instructional and communicative needs and aspirations of Indigenous peoples and their communities” (2011, xii).
Indigenizing My Teaching

• Indigenizing my teaching also means that I am purposeful in my confrontation of racism and stereotypes in my courses.

• For example, I discuss stereotyping, systemic discrimination and representation within organizational and business-related contexts.
Indigenizing My Teaching

• Furthermore, I attempt to provide more avenues of self-reflection for my students when exploring different subject matters.

• In my Marketing class, I asked my students to read a chapter in Cultural Representations in Native America (Jolivette, 2006). The chapter is titled, “Say Hau to Native American Barbie,” by Kim Shuck. I also asked students to write a brief summary and analysis of the reading.

• Shuck herself uses Native American/American Indian Barbie as a teaching resource in the classroom as a way to explore history, stereotypes and oral literature.
Incorporating Values in the Classroom

• There are many critical lessons and values taught by the Elders: storytelling, respect, humility, kindness, relationship-building, community and humour. How can we incorporate these values into the classroom?
Storytelling and Relationship-Building

• In an effort to incorporate more Aboriginal voices and storytelling into the classroom, I am making an effort to include more Aboriginal-focused case studies, Aboriginal guest speakers and video-based interviews with Aboriginal entrepreneurs and employees.

• Group work often provides me with the opportunity to teach the importance of respect, kindness and relationship-building.
Humility and Community

• It is important to demonstrate humility by showing the students that it is ok to make a mistake or that you don’t know everything. My colleague, Dr. Kathleen O’Reilly, shared this advice with me.

• I try to teach the importance of community by emphasizing it relevance to business and economic development.
Humour and the Circle

• The importance of humour in opening up students to one another and ensuring that they enjoy the learning process cannot be overstated.

• I also attempt to teach or hold discussions in a circle set-up when possible. This type of structure absolutely changes the dynamics of the class in a very positive way.
Indigenizing Course Content

I think that every discipline can do at least five things in an effort to Indigenize course content:

1. Provide examples from Indigenous contexts that illustrate specific concepts being taught.

2. Integrate Aboriginal languages into the course. Relate Aboriginal languages/words to the course content.
3. Discuss Aboriginal worldview in relation to certain concepts and theories being taught.

4. Discuss methodological concerns regarding certain Western research/scientific approaches that Indigenous communities might have.

5. Attempt to choose course projects and assignments that will teach students more about Aboriginal peoples and communities. Projects and assignments should contribute positively to Aboriginal communities.
The School of Business and Public Administration (SBPA) at FNUniv does the following when it comes to indigenizing course content:

- Uses Indigenous relevant business cases, examples and exercises in its classes;
- Includes Indigenous concepts and theories in its classes;
- Brings Aboriginal organizational representatives and entrepreneurs into its classes as guest lecturers on a regular basis;
Indigenizing Course Content

• Uses Indigenous texts and papers whenever possible;
• Focuses and relates many of its classes and/or weekly course topics on business, governance and socio-economic issues that are pertinent to Aboriginal communities; and
• Chooses course projects and assignments that teach students more about Aboriginal peoples and communities.
Indigenous Science

- Indigenous Science at FNUniv is in the process of creating:
  - A series of Indigenous Science labs: hide-tanning, plant dyes, red willow basket, paper birch basket, porcupine quill work.
  - These labs will be used in Biology and Chemistry courses.
Indigenous Science

• Indigenous Science is also in the process of creating a handbook of Indigenous relevant biology, chemistry and physics exercises and experiments that can be used by secondary and post-secondary teachers.

• Teachings from the Elders will be included throughout the handbook. The vision behind this handbook is to not only create Indigenous relevant science curriculum, but also to help bridge the gap that exists at many high schools when it comes to Science.
Conclusion

• By the end of all my courses, I hope that the readings, assignments and exercises not only provide my students with a strong foundation in the course topic, but also in Indigenous Studies and Indigenous/Tribal Critical Theory.
Conclusion

“Indigenizing business is about scrutinizing those business ideologies that are assumed to be universal and reconstructing business through an Indigenous lens that values Indigenous knowledge and teaches us how we might improve upon business theories and practices that have largely excluded non-Western ways of knowing and privileged Eurocentric epistemologies” (Pete, Schneider, O’Reilly, 2013).