

SECTION 2: INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE, PEOPLES, AND INCLUSION

Question:

12. How do we approach Indigenization² at UWinnipeg?

Background

In the Fall of 2004, President Axworthy convened an Aboriginal Education Working Group led by First Nations and Metis faculty, staff, and students. The Working Group resulted in a holistic and comprehensive Indigenous Education Strategy and a number of distinct initiatives. Over the past decade, UWinnipeg has become known as a post-secondary leader of Indigenous teaching, learning and inclusion. As a result, many other universities have studied the UWinnipeg approach. While this has resulted in other institutions implementing advisory circles and Aboriginal student lounges, it also means UWinnipeg is now just one of many players in the Indigenous space for post-secondary institutions.

UWinnipeg continues to see the percentage of first-year self-identified Indigenous students grow from

² The University of Regina defines Indigenization 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.” Camosun College defines Indigenization as “the process of infusing Aboriginal knowledge and perspective into the structural layers of an institution.”

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year to year. Currently, approximately 10% of UWinnipeg undergraduate students self-identifies as Indigenous. The retention rate after 7 years is approximately 10 points lower for Indigenous students. Metis students make up 55% of the Indigenous student body, but 75% of Indigenous graduates. This means there is a challenge around the retention of First Nations students. UWinnipeg is also home to a small but vibrant number of Inuit students. The Aboriginal Student Services Centre maintains a safe, educational and culturally competent environment for all Indigenous students (First Nation, Metis and Inuit) as they pursue their academic studies at UWinnipeg.



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Several UWinnipeg degree programs incorporate Indigenous perspectives and content in their coursework, such as Anthropology, Education, History, and Religion and Culture. UWinnipeg offers language courses in Cree and Ojibwe and has developed a variety of degree programs with a specific focus on Indigenous study such as:

- Master's in Development Practice (MDP) with a focus on Indigenous Development
- MA in Indigenous Governance
- BA in Indigenous Studies
- Community-Based Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (CATEP)

A key component of these academic programs are courses in Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Research Methodologies which are grounded in the distinct worldviews of First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples.

In November, 2011, the Indigenous Advisory Circle was created, comprised of leaders in the local Indigenous community as well as experts in Indigenous education from across North America, to ensure the inclusion of Indigenous peoples' perspectives in the governance of UWinnipeg. This followed the Board of Regents approval of the Indigenous Advisory Circle Policy. The policy notes that UWinnipeg recognizes that it is on Treaty One land in the heart of Metis Nation and that UWinnipeg chooses to operate with respect for all Indigenous peoples.

Indigenization also forms an important part of UWinnipeg's Community Learning initiatives, broadly defined as all of the educational initiatives undertaken by UWinnipeg to reach out to community members before they attend post-secondary with the goal of preparing them to attend University. This results in the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and languages into programs geared towards children, high school students and adult learners.



Indigenous people currently account for 11% of the population in Winnipeg. Winnipeg has both the highest concentration and the largest number of Indigenous people out of large Canadian cities. According to Statistics Canada projections, between 18% and 21% of the population of Manitoba could have an Indigenous identity in 2031. According to Statistics Canada, the Indigenous population of Manitoba increased by 20.1% between 2006-2011 compared to 5.2% for the non-Indigenous population. Fewer than 10% of Indigenous people

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between the ages of 24 and 64 have a university degree, one-third the rate of the non-Indigenous population.

In its recently released Strategic Plan, The University of Regina stated a strategic goal of increasing the Indigenization of the University over the next five years. Lakehead University recently announced that starting in 2016, studies about Indigenous people and issues will be incorporated into courses in every Faculty on campus. The University of Manitoba has stated the following strategic goal: “The University of Manitoba will work with a variety of partners to make Winnipeg the national centre of excellence in Aboriginal education, and in particular to allow Aboriginal students to be prepared for and to achieve educational success in the full range of academic programs we offer.”

Current Direction

UWinnipeg continues to work with Indigenous governments, organizations, and communities to share UWinnipeg’s resources and develop programs and services relevant to the evolving needs of Indigenous peoples.

There is currently a proposal before Senate regarding an Indigenous course requirement across all degrees obtained at UWinnipeg at the Bachelor level. Such a requirement already exists at University College of the North and University of Regina’s Faculty of Arts. Starting in 2016, studies about Indigenous people and issues will be incorporated into courses in every Faculty at Lakehead University.

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