

INDIGENIZING THE ACADEMY

GATHERING

S'iwes Toti:lt Q'ep —
Teaching and Learning Together



UNIVERSITY
OF THE FRASER VALLEY



Lieutenant Governor Steven Point, Stó:lō Nation, UFV alumnus and honorary degree recipient, greets attendees.

Indigenizing the Academy is about body, mind, and spirit...

Indigenizing is about creating an environment where we, as Aboriginal people, do not have to give up part of ourselves in order to take part in academia ... where we see ourselves reflected in the everyday life of the institution...

Indigenization is finding ways to accommodate indigenous ways of knowing into the traditional academic structure.

Goals of the Gathering: meaningful collaboration, dialogue, engagement; increase capacity; create a culturally safe environment, develop responsive programs.



Dr. Eber Hampton, First Nations University of Canada

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THANK YOU

Our heartfelt thanks to the Vancouver Foundation for your contribution, making our Indigenizing the Academy Gathering possible: fostering meaningful collaboration with community, facilitating ongoing transformational dialogue and engagement.



INDIGENIZING THE ACADEMY GATHERING

S'iwes Toti:It Q'ep — Teaching and Learning Together

As summer turned into fall of 2012, 275 delegates from 33 post-secondary institutions came together at the University of the Fraser Valley's Aboriginal Gathering Place. The purpose of the gathering: to discuss indigenization – a way of making universities welcoming for indigenous cultures, knowledge, learners, faculty, and staff.

JOHN WILLIAMS



INDIGENIZING THE ACADEMY GATHERING

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The ceremony, the sweats, the food, the sharing created an environment in which all speakers and listeners could reach down deep into themselves to bring renewal, understanding, and transformational growth to each other.

"It's all about relationship building. How do we do things in a good way? Spirituality is about relationships: relationships with self, with others, and with the universe. It is all about how we manage the relationships."—Dr. Jo-Ann Episkenew

Discussion circles, breakout groups, and conversations arising from the keynote carried on into the night and all weekend. Arising from these dialogues were lists of best practices, networking, alliances, and practical solutions. Without a doubt the atmosphere, the ceremony, and the sharing arising from the Indigenizing the Academy Gathering facilitated the intimacy that allowed all participants to dig deeply into themselves and contribute in a good and meaningful way.

Inspiring, inspired, inspirational

Those who came to the gathering overflowed out of the UFV Longhouse/Gathering Place; they listened with their eyes, their ears, their spirit, and their hearts. And in exchange, the keynote speakers, the guest speakers and visiting dignitaries spoke from the heart: shared their thoughts, and engaged in dialogue, speech and conversations that "needed to be had."

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Self-effacing and slyly humorous (cheeky, she called it), keynote speaker Dr. Jo-Ann Episkenew dealt with a myriad of difficult topics, because the nature of the gathering made it a safe place to share without causing anyone harm.

She was able to address questions such as institutionalization of indigenization, of elders, of traditions; she asked who gets to define what academic rigour is or how policies and procedures are put together; how tenure and promotion and hiring practices can privilege non-aboriginals over aboriginals. There are gatekeepers everywhere. She dealt at length with dissertation committees and indigenous

methods of research, community participation and involvement in research; and through it all, the gathering listened intently, hanging on every word.

Indigenizing the Academy she said, is a little like asking the white kids if we can play and sometimes they say no. The message that we have subliminally is that we are not good enough; that we will never be good enough; and we are working hard to eliminate that. She touched on the lack of indigenous content taught in Canadian history. Violence, she said, is being absent from the story; it is being not worth of mention...when people learn the truth about the treatment of Aboriginal people; it is very powerful, sometimes traumatic, and always transformational.

When people learn the truth about the treatment of Aboriginal people, it is very powerful, sometimes traumatic, and always transformational.



Dr. Jo-Ann Episkenew, University of Regina.



Increase capacity
Create a culturally safe environment
Develop responsive programs

Meaningful collaboration
Dialogue
Engagement

Hiring, Retention, Promotion, Tenure

She echoed Dr. Wenona Victor's statement: "It's all about relationship building.

The solution is not in calling people racist or arrogant or putting anyone down; it is going forward, remembering what past attitudes were and what they are today, and how to change them. "We are repairing 500 years of damage. We have a choice of hope or hopeless, and I choose hope."

She echoed Dr. Wenona Victor's statement: "It's all about relationship building. How do we do things in a good way? Spirituality is about relationships: relationships with self, with others, and with the universe. It is all about how we manage the relationships."

Mark Point said, in thanking Dr. Episkenew, "It is so refreshing to hear truth. Truth is something that we all find difficult to deal with whether we agree or disagree."

"Truth is so important that it's a very basic valid value that we must all explore. We say the word very easily but we don't often use it. So thank you for today."



Young Semoya dancer.



Mark Point, Stó-ló educator and consultant, addresses the Gathering.



"Pick your head up. Pick your head up and be proud of who you are. Pick your head up but don't pick your head up so high that your nose is in the air." –

Steven Point



Sweat lodge, Indigenizing the Academy



Eddie Gardner, Elder in Residence, UFV



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Keynote Speaker

Dr. Jo-Ann Episkenew.
Director, Indigenous Peoples
Health Centre

First Nations University of
Canada

—Education is the practice of
freedom.

—The Four R's of what
we want from education:
Respect, Reciprocity,
Relevance, Responsibility

—You don't make someone
stop being racist by calling
them a racist.

“I think the response to
racism is called ‘Indigenizing
the Academy’”

What do we do? We need to
go back. We are repairing
500 years of damage. We
need to acknowledge what's
actually happened and fix it
accordingly.

Heartfelt speech inspired eloquent discussion

Dr. Episkenew's speech inspired equally eloquent discussion: the participants recounted that they felt they were having a conversation that needs to be had and is usually cast to the side; they were making connections, networking with each other, and learning from each other. Love, tradition, and spirituality needed to be brought back into the academy and to make it a safe place for everyone. Participants were concerned that they not fall into their own form of assimilation; that they not turn to the same methods of the Eurocentric mentality and ways.

You need to go through the trials and tribulations to make it to the other side stronger and more knowledgeable.

Senior Administrators

... said that although they were doing very good work at their institutions, they needed to work on recruiting, and on creating a friendly and culturally accessible space. Limited financial resources and support for Aboriginal studies and aboriginal services are obstacles:

Indigenization is about having a better understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal people.

This is why formalized structures, strategic plans, and public policy are all needed to achieve goals around hiring, retention and tenure, and to give direction to middle management, which struggles if these elements are not in place. To create a framework with broad consultation that spans both the academic and administrative areas is very complicated. Indigenization can be overwhelming, they felt, and added that they would need support in order to do it successfully.



Sony Williams

Students, elders, community members

Student retention is closely tied to support structures, including a culturally safe (decolonized) space, funding support, daycare support, community involvement, aboriginal advisors, elders in residence, and Indigenous faculty and programming. Elders and community members should be most welcome; and traditional knowledge could be passed on, with the proviso that it belongs to the community and not the institution. Culture and tradition need to be seen as a way of being, rather than a series of events: there needs to be more dialogue and action around the difference between First Nations ways of knowing versus the western way.



Semoya Dancers performing at Indigenizing the Academy 2012



Theresa Neel, Elder in Residence, UFV.



Eddie Gardner, Elder in Residence, UFV.

Have higher admin engage as much as possible with the students... We had many administrators participate in a 10 day tribal journey that really took them out of their comfort zone to a vulnerable place. They got to experience the generosity of the culture. These aren't things you can experience from your office. These are the administrators that we now see attending events and taking risks. Many said the experience was transformational.



Dr Mark Evered, President, University of the Fraser Valley



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*Comments by Eber Hampton,
Professor Emeritus,
University
of Regina:*

*“Young people nowadays
have double the
responsibility. They have to
learn culture and they have
to pay bills. Young native
people nowadays have double
the responsibility as well as
having to wear two hats.
Young native people have to
wear one hat to live with their
community and one hat to
survive outside of it.
You're speaking for everyone
that went before you and
pave a path for those after
you.
Be a human, just a human for
a bit.
Resistance is a form of
integrity.
Be humble, set your ego aside,
you don't know everything.*

Student reflections on the Indigenizing the Academy Gathering

Indigenization is Acceptance, respect;
coming back to school and feeling the respect
from everyone being treated as an individual;
I felt that what I had to say as an individual was important.
—Cheryl Forrest-Havens, Mohawk



I can see the value for people who are not aware
of indigenous culture... also incorporating indige-
nous cultures outside of local indigenous culture
is also important; there are indigenous cultures
all over the world.
—Jay Havens, Mohawk

I feel like [this conference] is reversing the effects of
colonial history and cultural genocide...educating people
about our history; I'm very excited about the indigeniz-
ing... it's going to be awesome moving forward.
—Alisha Tushingham, Stó-lō



This is just a start; It's in our
teaching the importance of the seven genera-
tions; seven generations from now is when we
are going to see all that change happen; the
finished product.
—Jonathan Williams, Stó-lō



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ing the effects of colonial history and
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awesome moving forward.*

Student reflections on the Indigenizing the Academy Gathering



I work harder for these Indigenous classes because.... they know my grandparents. I think the one thing that I love with the First Nations classes is that they are Stó-lo taught by Stó-lo people. Especially in Criminology and Social Work these classes should be mandatory; to know more about the people you are working with.

—Melissa Sam, Stó-lō

Learning through indigenization I learned not only how to write better but to understand how to incorporate my culture into my work without sounding preachy.

—Brittany Wiesner, Métis

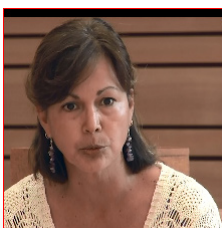


When you live in BC, indigenous history and culture is a part of our heritage and speaking as a non-aboriginal it is extremely important to learn; it is part of our culture and makes us who we are as well.

—Jenn Moulton, non-Indigenous

I think there are a lot of generalizations and judgements from the people who don't know the history of the aboriginal people; this conference can help not only the students but the instructors.

—Shannon Dalrymple, non-Indigenous



The teachers should be taught cultural sensitivity; they are the ones who are going to be teaching the students. I had one instructor who was so knowledgeable not only about Stó-lo culture but about the rest of BC; I thought, this is good.

—Maretta Berger, Stó-lō

Most of the time I am surrounded by non-aboriginal voices. To be here and to listen to aboriginal voices fills me; it creates energy for me that I will take forward.

Although many institutions have created an aboriginal-student-only space— it is usually allocated in a remote part of the institution and furnished with awful old couches and mismatched tables—yet this space, no matter the aesthetics, is a safe place to be who we are: a space that is fondly remembered. This space is important to aboriginal student success “Aboriginal students who complete their undergraduate degrees are considerably more likely to go onto higher degrees than the average population.”

—Mark Point, Stó-lō.



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<http://blogs.ufv.ca/indigenizingtheacademy>

Indigenizing the Academy Gathering is the result of many years of development. In October 2005 under the guidance of the Aboriginal Community Council, Mark Point was hired to conduct research within UFV and local Indigenous communities to provide input in four areas of interest: the development of an Indigenous Studies department at UFV; enhancement of Indigenous research capacity; increasing the enrolment of Indigenous learners at UFV; and improving the success experienced by these learners. This research proved to only scratch the surface of what is needed to engage in this work. Increase capacity, create a culturally safe environment, develop responsive programs.

(continued on opposite page)



Mark Point, Stó:lō educator and author, addresses the Gathering.

The Gift of Cedar

Cedar plays an integral role in our cultural and spiritual beliefs. As a plant that has ensured the survival of our people for thousands of years, cedar has become a powerful symbol of strength and revitalization. The deep respect for cedar is a rich tradition that spans thousands of years and continues to be culturally, spiritually, and economically important.

At our Indigenizing the Academy Gathering, four western red cedars were donated by Brian Minter. They are planted in the North, South, East, or West. Each University present at the Gathering will choose a tree and attach its name to a tree and its corresponding direction.

The Cedars represent the beginning of the work that is being done at our Gathering and in our institutions, and symbolize the end of the old ways; as they grow they will reflect our growth, and the laying to rest of colonized education.

The beginnings continue to benefit the administrators as well as the students, and the people who are struggling the most to learn how to indigenize. It is easy to indigenize the specific things, to change names, for example, but the most difficult things to indigenize are the non-specific things: how do you ensure that the aboriginal voice is heard, for example?

Over time we will mark the growth of the trees, and our growth and learning through indigenization.

When we need help, the cedar helps us.

—Shirley Hardman, Senior Advisor, Indigenous Affairs, UFV

Ken Tourand, President, NVIT



Eber Hampton, Professor Emeritus, First Nations University of Canada

Dr. Eber Hampton, Professor Emeritus of First Nations University of Canada and University of Regina says that a university is more than just teaching the next generation. The university is also the place where the knowledge and wisdom of the past is stored, nurtured, and expanded upon. Dr. Hampton referred to indigenization as a life and death situation that indigenous peoples face--this is what they had come to talk about at the gathering. From a lifetime of teaching and working in academia, he had these thoughts to share:
Never forget the value of a heart-beat: you are speaking for everyone that went before you and you are paving a path for those after you. Every breath you breathe in is the universe's gift to you and every breath you breathe out is your gift to the universe.



Dr. Eber Hampton, First Nations University of Canada, engaging in storytelling.

Published by the University of the Fraser Valley, 2013



Eber Hampton, Professor Emeritus, First Nations University of Canada.

In the spirit of the collective and interconnected wisdom of the indigenous community, he had these words to add about indigenization of the academy:

—It is not the 'me' way, it is the 'we' way.

—We are inviting and accompanying each other to accomplish something as siblings.

—We are making family for mutual benefit.

—Our mouths are too small to talk about God, but every time an Indian breathes, it is politics.

— Resistance is a form of integrity.

1. That a major strategy for communicating with Indigenous communities and individual households be developed and implemented.

2. That a special effort be undertaken to bring together the leaders of the Indigenous groups to explore and receive direction on the role of Indigenous education within the University College structure.

3. That UFV work to "build capacity" within Indigenous communities by delivering programs in the Indigenous communities.

4. That local institutions that offer Adult Basic Education agree on a common curriculum so that outcomes, and therefore entrance to UFV, will be similar for all students, regardless of where individuals study.

5. That an ad-hoc committee be mandated to make recommendations to the UFV Board of Governors.

6. Local Indigenous scholars should also be sought out and asked for their input into the strategic planning of Indigenous programs and services at UFV.

7. Review the practices of other sectors in Indigenizing and to share these.

8. Indigenous community leaders must approve of this project, not only in intent but in process.

9. Indigenizing Our Academy will take a concerted effort from steadfast committed Indigenous community representatives and equally committed UFV faculty, staff and administrators.

The third and most profound pattern is alliance as a site of learning and transformation: non-indigenous people say that their lives are profoundly changed by what they've learned. When people hear the story, their world shifts, and transformational shifts take place... they see things in deeper focus... and the rest of their lives continue to be punctuated by revelatory moments that will continue to unfold. Indigenous students are now placing their research squarely within the realm of indigenous knowledge. Some people are open to learning in this new paradigm; others are not. Some people because of their scholarship have a very deep understanding of colonization all over the world; globalized nations; but they have a much more difficult problem with the spiritual basis of indigenous knowledge -- the spiritual dimension is not easy for many non-indigenous scholars and that is really an important piece and it is very hard to bridge. The other difficulty, she said, is the whole model of a faculty member as expert. It is like the story of the University professor and the Zen master.

Governance, Partnerships

Dr. Lynne Davis from Trent University spoke to the profound sharing, as she prepared to give her presentation. Beautiful, beautiful energy had begun the journey with its sacred beginning, with the sweat lodge, the ceremonies, the food, the conversations and creativity that everyone was now engaged in. The gathering, hushed, waited for her to begin.

Dr. Davis, a self-described non-indigenous scholar and colonial settler, spoke with an elegance and simplicity that hid none of her passion for her life's work. She described her slow awakening to her own colonial heritage and the systems that had privileged her, and her dawning realization that the majority of non-indigenous people were unprepared by the school system to take up their responsibilities as citizens in their dealings with First Nations people. Unless they were fortunate enough to have meaningful encounters with indigenous peoples in their life's journey, they were unlikely to develop the historical consciousness that makes it possible to understand the issues that they see and hear about in the news.

Dr. Davis' life work and that of her colleagues has been to change that paradigm at her own university, through governance, through alliances, partnerships, building programs, creating supportive spaces, committees, graduating at first BA's in Indigenous studies, partnering with other centres to offer numerous MA programs, and creating the first Indigenous Studies PhD program in Canada, with three different tenure streams.



Mark Point, Stó-lō; Dr. Peter Geller, Associate Vice President, Academic, UFV; Shirley Hardman, Senior Advisor, Indigenous Affairs, UFV; Dr. Eric Davis, Vice President, Academic, UFV.

Building Alliances

Dr. Davis' work has led her to identify three kinds of patterns within indigenous/non-indigenous alliances: alliance as a microcosm of colonial relations, such as she described at her university; alliance as a site of pain, where worldviews collide and people's feelings are hurt; and alliance as a site of learning and transformation. When you are non-indigenous, she said, and working with indigenous people, you make mistakes, big ones and small ones all the time. If you have a relationship with people you may be guided and you may recover, particularly if you can be honest and face mistakes you are making. If you don't have a relationship, this step could be quite costly. Quoting Leanne Simpson, she said, "It's really important to establish these relationships in times of peace: we have to get to know each other and we have to work through our relationships now, because when crises come have to already know one another. In my experience, relationships it's not a big bang--

"It's slow and steady building over time; through personal experience, respect and trust are developed. And respect and trust are earned over time and that is what forms the relationship. And those relationships are built by being in different meetings, having a cup of coffee.

"They are built over everyday practice and that's why it's so incredibly important to have indigenous faculty and staff in the academy, because that's what transforms the academy. Those people are critical to building relationships." She added, "The other challenge is that we are moving into new spaces. At least for me these spaces are full of not knowing. That is not the realm of experts. It is the realm of not-knowing. And in this not-knowing are a lot of new possibilities but it's not a comfortable space and not everyone can walk into a space of not-knowing. And that is a very important dimension of this shift in consciousness that is taking place."



A University professor goes to see a Zen master to find out about Zen. And the Zen master serves tea and he starts to pour the cup of tea and the teacup is full, and he keeps on pouring. And the University professor can't contain himself any longer. He says it's full! You can't put anything more in there. The Zen master says, "Like this teacup, you come here all full of opinions and speculation -- how can I show you Zen until you empty your cup -- how can I fill you up with any information when your teacup is already full?" All kinds of people are very certain in the world -- very certain of their opinion of the world they know what is certain, they know what is true and what is right and that makes it very difficult to fill their cup.





ABOUT THE COVER IMAGE:

S'i:wes

The man and woman are in a circle to represent the circle of life, the left hands are open to represent receiving, and the right hands are open in down position to represent giving. Their heads are down representing humbleness to each other. The cedar hats and cedar clothing represents Sto:lo culture and signifies the importance of cedar to our people. The paddle represents the journey of our First Nation people. The salmon on the paddle represents the river. The Sto:lo are the people of the river. The male and female salmon in the background also show the circle of life as salmon are the Sto:lo people's main source of food.

About the Artist:

Jonathan (Jonny) Williams is Sto:lo from the Chlyo:m (Cheam) First Nation. He grew up in Chilliwack, BC. Jonny is a self-taught artist. Through many years of practice, Jonny has developed his own style of First Nation art.

<http://blogs.ufv.ca/indigenizingtheacademy/>

Community is at the heart of Indigenization: Learning and Sharing Knowledge

Comments from community members and witnesses:

At this gathering, I wondered, where was the indigenization? And then I saw the heart and spirit. The heart of the gathering is the community, talking about the heart and soul of what is being said everywhere...Learn from your community, learn with your community and then take that knowledge and those teachings and share them with other communities and people both First Nations and Non-First Nations. When we come together like we have at this gathering we share the spirit. What is knowledge without sharing it? Sharing what you have, sharing what you know. Knowledge comes from everywhere. We are family. It only takes one person to make a difference in our lives; it only takes one (us) to make a difference other people's lives. We don't know how we touch people...we may have some small idea on the outside but we don't know how we touch people's hearts. So be careful what you say, what you do.

LOVE.



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S'iwes Toti:lt Q'ep — Teaching and Learning Together

