

Indigenization of the Academy

A Checklist

June 2021



Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)
Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Working Group

Since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, many post-secondary institutions have developed Indigenization plans. This short checklist is intended to guide academic staff associations in local conversations about these plans and their impact and effectiveness as well as the experience of Indigenous staff.

CAUT has provided guidance on Indigenization through a [policy statement](#) that calls upon associations to establish “equitable policies and practices that involve Aboriginal Peoples and Indigenous Knowledge in all aspects of campus life.” It also provided guidance in a [bargaining advisory on Indigenization](#). Universities Canada has also set out a set of principles for [Indigenous Education](#). We have developed a checklist on Indigenization based upon these foundational documents.

Indigenization is a contested concept and interpreted in a wide variety of ways by post-secondary institutions. Given the contested nature of Indigenization, we have avoided creating a grading system that would evaluate institutions on their efforts. Our approach is intended to be formative rather than retributive recognizing that universities and colleges are diverse, and that progress requires much conversation, deliberation and consensus building.

We encourage you to use the checklist and the frame provided for thinking about Indigenization as a starting point and adjust it to your own local situation.

What is Indigenization?

Conceptually, Indigenization represents a move to expand the academy’s still-narrow conceptions of knowledge, to include Indigenous perspectives in transformative ways.¹

We welcome the breaking down of Indigenization efforts along a spectrum representing three distinct visions for an academic future – Indigenous inclusion, reconciliation Indigenization, and decolonial Indigenization, as analyzed by Adam Gaudry and Danielle Lorenz.²

Indigenous inclusion is a policy that aims to increase the number of Indigenous students, faculty, and staff in the Canadian academy.

Reconciliation Indigenization is a vision that locates Indigenization on common ground between Indigenous and Canadian ideals, creating a new, broader consensus on debates such as what counts as knowledge, how should Indigenous knowledges and European-derived knowledges be reconciled, and what types of relationships academic institutions should have with Indigenous communities.

Decolonial Indigenization envisions the wholesale overhaul of the academy to fundamentally reorient knowledge production based on balancing power relations between Indigenous peoples and Canadians, transforming the academy into something dynamic and new.

Indigenization can be seen as occurring in phases.³ These phases are not linear but, in a modern complex institution like a university or college, one can be in all phases simultaneously depending upon where one is located within it.

The first phase involves bringing First Nations, Inuit and Métis people into the academy as staff and students; the institution has noticed the absence and frames it as social or educational inequity. The goal is to improve the enrolments of Indigenous peoples in the academic programs of the institution and to improve the diversity of scholarship. This phase may involve the creation of support programs as well as targeted programs that are deemed to be of interest to Indigenous peoples. This phase involves limited institutional change and adjustment.

The second phase involves bringing our cultural practices into the institution. The institution creates spaces where we may have feasts, powwows, Elders and traditional peoples. This phase involves adjustment to the physical praxis of the institution as Indigenous peoples' cultural presence emerges.

The third phase involves bringing our knowledge and creating a place for it in the praxis of the institution: research and teaching. Indigenous studies programs or programs related to Indigenous peoples have been the main sites for Indigenous knowledge engagement. This phase has an early or entry phase in which Indigenous knowledge is introduced to students through the academic literature and limited engagement with Indigenous knowledge holders. There is a second part to this phase that sees Indigenous knowledge holders are engaged as academic instructors and researchers.

The fourth phase involves the spread of Indigenous knowledge beyond its foundational area in Indigenous studies. Indigenous knowledge and knowledge holders appear in other parts of the institution: philosophy, business, education, environmental studies, literatures, politics, etc.

CAUT's [Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Working Group](#) has identified several actions to assist in moving beyond the status quo to foster systemic change within universities and colleges. It starts with taking stock of what the institution is doing: Indigenization plans, data on Indigenous academic and administrative staff, leaders, students, curricula, and spaces. This data provides the foundation for a broader conversation about the institution, its internal climate as it affects Indigenous staff and the experience of Indigenous staff in the tenure and promotion processes. It also means understanding the broader Indigenous environment of the institution and its impact upon its mission and role.

Endnotes

¹Kuokkanen, Rauna. *Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistememes, and the Logic of the Gift*, UBC Press, 2007.

²Gaudry, Adam and Lorenz, Danielle. "Indigenization as inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization: navigating the different visions for indigenizing the Canadian Academy," *Alternative Vol 14*(3). 2018.

³Newhouse, David. "The meaning of Indigenization in our universities," *Bulletin* (63:6), CAUT, 2016.

Cover photo credit

Jordon Hon / University of Alberta

A Checklist on Indigenization



1. Is there an Indigenization Plan?

- Developed with local Indigenous community input
- Developed with Indigenous academic staff input
- Approved by governing bodies: Senate, Board of Governors
- Senior official responsible for plan
- Community relations
- Indigenous community advisory council
- Dissemination plan
- Goals and objectives
- Evaluation plan and progress reporting
- Linked to equity, diversity and inclusion plans and efforts

2. Elements of the Plan?

- Indigenous spaces
- Support for Indigenous students
- Indigenous academic programs
- Recruitment of Indigenous students
- Indigenous academic staff
- Contract, tenure-track
- Cluster hire
- Recruitment plan, hiring plan
- Indigenous Knowledge
 - Elders
 - Traditional People
- Support for research
- Other

3. Impact of the Plan?

- What results are expected?
- What has happened as a result of the plan?
- What issues were encountered? How were they addressed?
- Have Indigenous community members internal and external to the institution been involved in measuring impact?

4. What has been learned that can be used to guide future efforts?

- How transparent and open are discussions on lessons learned and next steps?



Canadian Association of University Teachers

2705 Queensview Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K2B 8K2

Tel 613.820.2270 | Fax 613.820.7244 | Email acppu@caut.ca | www.caut.ca



@CAUT_ACPPU



@CAUT.ACPPU