

## **Submission on Strategic Commitment # 3**

**STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:** UWinnipeg has made a strong commitment to sustainability and indigenization and aims to create an environment that embodies these values. Sustainability is a lens applied to all practices and processes to guide University activities (academic and operational) increasingly towards supporting the revitalization and resilience of ecosystems and communities. Indigenization, in part, refers to our recognition that we must do more to include indigenous peoples, perspectives, and knowledge in every aspect of the academy. One of our strategic priorities as we move forward is to ensure that there is a shared understanding of what indigenization means at UWinnipeg. Both sustainability and indigenization cut across all academic departments and student support units.

### **HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS?**

#### **What approaches would be most effective in promoting indigenization in our teaching and research?**

1) We wish that there had been more consultation and broader participation in the IARP process including the organization of the document and formulation of the questions. For example, Indigenization and sustainability are two separate concepts and we suggest that these two unique and important concepts are each given appropriate space and time for definition, discussion and action.

2) Current discussions of Indigenization at the University of Winnipeg frame the university as a place that does not already include Indigenous people and Indigenous history. For example, the strategic directions document on Indigenization states: "we have an important opportunity to play a pivotal role in partnership with indigenous people." This seems to exclude existing Indigenous students, faculty and staff at the University. A more effective approach would acknowledge Indigenous people on campus and identify UW's considerable Indigenous history as a post-secondary institution.

3) It is difficult to engage in these discussions without an understanding of what Indigenization means in the context of post-secondary education, research and service at the University of Winnipeg. Considerable critical literature on Indigenization in post-secondary contexts both in Canada and elsewhere dates to at least the year 2000. It would be valuable to have that research compiled, considered, interpreted and shared with the university. In addition, we suggest that UW support an open, organized and conscious process whereby Indigenous faculty, Indigenous students, admin and staff are invited to meet, study and develop a vision for how the University can create space for Indigenous perspectives, scholarship and teaching. This group would report its recommendations to the University. A campus Indigenization office that regularly tracks and communicates scholarship and ideas on Indigenization to the university more broadly would be of value.

4) An important approach to Indigenization is to hire and support Indigenous faculty. Five suggestions are:

- 1) In consultation with Indigenous scholars already at the University, develop and follow a plan to recruit and retain Indigenous tenure- and tenure-track faculty in all faculties of the university.
- 2) Indigenous faculty should be mentored for and hired in administrative roles in Deans' offices as well as the president's office.
- 3) Develop and fund post-doc programs that will bring Indigenous Ph D scholars to the University of Winnipeg to study with the long-term view to potentially hiring in these areas.
- 4) Develop and reserve research chair positions (including the CRCs, Chancellors Chair, and any other opportunities) to retain and attract Indigenous scholars.
- 5) Create a full-time position for an equity specialist who can identify and address issues of racism, discrimination and representation at the University of Winnipeg.

5) Indigenous language teaching and research plays a vital role. We would like to see: space created for the teaching of Indigenous languages; tenured and tenure-track positions created for teaching and researching about Indigenous languages; and a permanent and predictable program of Indigenous language courses available not only to undergraduate and graduate students but also to staff and faculty.

6) Current approaches to Indigenization tend to focus exclusively on Indigenous undergraduate education. More support for Indigenous graduate education by the University of Winnipeg is needed. For example, while the University of Winnipeg is part of the prestigious Newberry Consortium, little has been made to promote the activities of this group, or acknowledge and encourage students and faculty who participate in it. In terms of graduate history education at UW, we would like to see more formal support for Indigenous language education. We train a considerable number of specialists in Indigenous history in the Joint Masters Program, and one thing that would improve the quality of the students we send out is to ensure they have taken at least one Indigenous language course. We encourage the JMP to update the language requirements on all of its materials to reflect the importance, especially for students doing work in Indigenous and Canadian history, of taking Indigenous language courses. (Currently the JMP website states: "the student is required to demonstrate a reading knowledge of a second language (French for Canadian History)" and the University of Winnipeg "Fact Sheet" states that "Candidates who major in Canadian History must display a reading knowledge of French and English" (updated July 2015); and the University of Winnipeg calendar states "language exam in French or other relevant language.") We also recommend the creation of a graduate student research and conference travel award for Indigenous history.

7) The Indigenous Course Requirement

- 1) Structural support should be given to faculty who teach all ICR courses. A formal network of instructors teaching these courses will allow for a way to document and address any problems that arise and appropriate steps to follow-up and provide institutional support for this new curriculum initiative.
- 2) Currently the strategic directions document justifies the course in terms of its providing “plurality of world views.” We see the ICR as something much more directly politically engaged with the critique of colonialism and the project of decolonizing education. The ICR should not simply present “another” worldview, but aim to identify and challenge inequality, racism and oppression so that it meaningfully speaks to the question of reconciliation and address the issues that initiated the proposal. To draw an example from history, we encourage all faculty members in the history department including those who do not teach Indigenous history to consider how Indigenous and colonial history impact their fields. For example, in the history of science and medicine, considerable research has relied on Indigenous knowledge as well as Indigenous bodies used in scientific and medical experimentation.
- 3) We would like to ensure that all approved ICR courses are taught by capable faculty and to the correct standard. We are concerned that the ICR process creates a considerable burden on Indigenous Studies and they should be well supported in this work.

8) University of Winnipeg history faculty see the effects of the funding gap in education of students coming from rural and reserve areas. We look for ways to support equality in the education of all high-school students in Manitoba and seek ways to more formally address these inequities both inside and outside the university.

9) As teachers we find our work to be most effective in small classes in which we have more flexibility to promote discussion, target particular topics and gain a much closer relationship with our students. As such, an approach to Indigenization should be to protect the University’s reputation for providing this type of learning environment to UW students.

## **What role could individual faculty members, departments, and other units play in addressing indigenization?**

### History Department

In conjunction with all other departments at the University, the History Department will have to think through Indigenization and by way of starting the discussion the following considerations have been raised. A commitment of financial and logistical support on the part of the University is required to undertake these initiatives.

- 1) In honour of the TRC's work, the Department of History institutes an Annual Lecture Series in Indigenous History that celebrates the work of the commission. The Lecture/Lecture Series would be coordinated by a committee led by Indigenous scholars at the University of Winnipeg.
- 2) Indigenous history education plays a fundamental role in any program of decolonization and Indigenization at the University of Winnipeg. Support for and promotion of the teaching and research of Indigenous history should be key. One way to do this is to plan for a "Centre for Indigenous History" at the University of Winnipeg.
- 3) The Department creates an award to acknowledge undergraduate student excellence in Indigenous history

### Library

Improve funding to the library. Bring in more books by Indigenous people. Develop the collection on Indigenous Studies and history and create a space in the library that is devoted to Indigenous knowledge, scholarship, people, land and First Nations, Metis and Inuit histories. The UM Icelandic Collection could be a model.

### Administrative Bodies and Committees

- 1) Indigenization implies governance, and as such Indigenous faculty should be adequately represented in all aspects of the university governance and operation. One Indigenous faculty member per committee is not enough. Two is not enough. Representation means that university conversations are directed and undertaken in a substantial way by Indigenous faculty. While this makes the service load of Indigenous faculty considerable, to undertake these activities without meaningful involvement of Indigenous faculty on campus is highly problematic. Release time from teaching and other duties to attend to this work should be considered but we would like to ensure that Indigenous faculty are not taken out of teaching positions completely. An organized program of creating new appointments is necessary.
- 2) Each current Centre at the University of Winnipeg dealing in part or in whole with Indigenous studies and Indigenous history should be directed or co-directed by Indigenous people and an advisory committee or council (as the VP determines) comprised of Indigenous members, including UW faculty, the VP and community members (as the University's Institutes and Centres' Policy historically required). These centres should each consider studying how to align themselves with Indigenous worldviews, perspectives and scholarship. Resources should be provided by the university to these centres to support Indigenization and to devise programs and networks in the area of Indigenous history.

## Indigenous Studies

The Indigenous Studies Department holds a considerable place in the university both historically and currently. The university should acknowledge this work and provide institutional support in all forms including tenured and tenure-track positions.

## All units

Currently in discussions of Indigenization, reference is made to the place of the University on Treaty One territory and in the heart of the Metis nation. Acknowledging this place is evocative, however it is unclear what the university means by this acknowledgement in terms of the responsibilities and relationships that follow from it. The University administration, Indigenization office and each Department should be encouraged to engage in questions such as: What does it mean to teach, research and run a post-secondary institution on Indigenous land? What rights and responsibilities flow from this and how do we fulfill them as faculty, students, administration and staff? What does it mean for students, faculty, staff, and the larger community that we see our work as unfolding on (dispossessed/contested) Indigenous land? What do we see as an appropriate future for this place?

## **How can these values be embodied in the physical space on campus?**

It would be valuable to undertake studies on the Indigenous history of the University of Winnipeg and to find ways of teaching this history on campus. This could include identifying and profiling Distinguished Indigenous alumni of the University of Winnipeg, the history of the Aboriginal Students' Council and the Aboriginal Students Centre, and the history of Indigenous issues at the University of Winnipeg in the media. Another approach could seek to understand the history of UW campus as Indigenous territory. A third set of projects could develop public history education that situates the roots of the University of Winnipeg in a longer history of Indigenous education and connects this to broader history of colonialism. A close examination of Christian and Protestant privilege in university governance could be a meaningful step towards understanding UW's own history of colonialism. Other suggestions for public Indigenous history education on campus include an accessible exhibit on treaties and how Manitoba came into being. This history could be honoured in different places on campus in plaques, images and exhibits (for example, the UW's Oral History Centre/ Riley Centre for Canadian History has an exhibit on the history of the 1919 Strike that attracts a lot of attention from passers by).

Signed by Members of the History Department Indigenous Course Requirement Committee:  
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