



IAESC

Indigenous Advanced
Education & Skills Council

Indigenous Perspectives: Advancing Change in Higher Education

*Report and Calls to Action emerging from the event held during the 2022 UNESCO
World Higher Education Conference
on May 17, 2022 in Barcelona, Spain*

REPORT AND CALLS TO ACTION

October 2022



Acknowledgements

Report copywriter: Patti Ryan, Southside Communications Inc.

Artwork: Thunderbird by Haida artist Robin Rorick © 2022

“Indigenous Perspectives: Advancing Change in Higher Education” Report and Calls to Action,
Indigenous Advanced Education and Skills Council, 2022

Supported by:



CONTENTS

Purpose of This Report.....	4
Acknowledging the Opportunity	5
The Sustainable Development Goals	6
Indigenous Higher Education Innovations.....	8
Challenges to Overcome	10
Calls to Action	13
Indigenous Perspectives.....	18
Openings.....	18
Circle opening: Arnold Blackstar (Moderator)	18
Honour song: Daryl Kelvin Coy Kootenay and Kyle Logan Standingready-Snow	18
Welcome: Francesc Xavier Vila Moreno and Mariona Miret	19
Innu traditional opening: Jean St-Onge	19
Why we are gathered: Dr. Lorna Wánosts’a7 Williams	20
Expression of gratitude: Laurie Robinson	20
Thanks for gathering: Jennifer Brennan.....	21
Themes and Speakers	22
Dr. Marie Battiste.....	22
Dr. Elisabeth Kaine	23
Dr. Sonajharia Minz	24
Dr. Elmer Guy	26
Dr. Rongo H. Wetere	27
Laurie Robinson	28
Katelynn Herchak	30
Dr. Lorna Wánosts’a7 Williams	30
chuutsqa Layla Rorick	32
Ndawula Wangoola Wangoola.....	33
Stephanie Roy	34
Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami	36
Closing: Traditional Warrior Dance	37

Purpose of This Report

This report summarizes the discussions that took place at an event entitled “Indigenous Perspectives: Advancing Change in Higher Education” that was held on May 17, 2022 and was part of the [2022 United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\) World Higher Education Conference](#) in Barcelona, Spain.

The United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation (UNESCO) works towards achieving quality and inclusive education for all. In 2022, UNESCO gathered 2,500 higher education stakeholders from 139 countries, including ministers, academics, researchers, students, teachers, entrepreneurs, civil society, and the private sector to discuss the future of higher education and how it can contribute to sustainability for our planet and well-being.

Along with presenting summaries of all speakers’ presentations, this report synthesizes their remarks into key messages and presents a Calls to Action for a variety of decision-makers worldwide. The Calls to Action are aimed at significantly improving higher education systems for Indigenous people around the world. The Calls to Action, informed by centuries of experiences and efforts to realize what Indigenous education is, were guided by speakers’ experiences, remarks and ideas.

The report and Calls to Action are addressed to the United Nations and its bodies and systems (such as the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and UNESCO), other international organizations (such as the International Labour Organization and the World Intellectual Property Organization), all 193 United Nations member states, Indigenous peoples and their representative organizations, scholars, and post-secondary institutions and leaders worldwide. They present the challenges that emerged at the event and calls on these states, organizations, leaders, decision-makers and funders to act.

The “Indigenous Perspectives: Advancing Change in Higher Education” event featured nearly 20 Indigenous knowledge experts from a variety of countries with interest and expertise in higher education—from languages to accreditation to decolonization and more. Among the presentations, some speakers documented their alienating experiences in mainstream higher education systems, others explained how centuries of colonization have shaped their country’s

This report summarizes the proceedings of an event entitled “Indigenous Perspectives: Advancing Change in Higher Education,” held during the 2022 UNESCO World Higher Education Conference (WHEC) in Barcelona, Spain, in May 2022.

It presents 18 Calls to Actions to United Nations (UN) bodies and member states, Indigenous peoples and their representative organizations, scholars, and higher education institutions and leaders worldwide. They call these stakeholders to act to ensure that Indigenous people around the world have equitable access to relevant, high-quality education that meets their needs, sets them up for success and equips them for lifelong learning.

current educational systems to exclude Indigenous ways of knowing and knowledges. Still others discussed how persistent stereotypes of Indigenous people held by settlers continue to limit Indigenous people's access to educational opportunities.

The Calls to Action emerged from this hybrid (virtual and in-person) circle that wove together Indigenous perspectives from around the globe. This report calls for a great shift in higher education for Indigenous peoples. The goal is to deconstruct colonial education systems that were designed narrowly—as closed systems—and rebuild them to include and place Indigenous knowledge systems within them. In doing so, higher education systems and institutions can lead to better outcomes for Indigenous people and all learners around the world. These actions will contribute to making real rights enshrined in the [*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*](#) (1948) and the [*United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*](#) (2007).

The Calls to Action in this report represent a continuation of a conversation started in October 2021 with the global [*Virtual Circle on Indigenous Perspectives on Higher Education*](#). At that time, it became clear that a broader range of Indigenous voices needed to be heard. This broadening was reflected in the event on “Indigenous Perspectives: Advancing Change in Higher Education” and the Calls to Action that stem from that event. These Calls to Action serve as a rallying point for those who are dedicated to and engaged in advancing change in the diverse and complex areas in higher education.

Acknowledging the Opportunity

UNESCO conferences have not traditionally included Indigenous perspectives as a regular agenda item, or Indigenous scholars as speakers. The Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO) partnered with Dr. Budd Hall and Dr. Rajesh Tandon, co-chairs of the UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education to launch national and international consultations on the future of higher education. They considered it important to include Dr. Lorna Wánosts'a7 Williams, Chair of the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation and Professor Emerita in Indigenous Education, University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada, in the conversations taking place. Dr. Williams, in turn, invited other scholars to join her. This, then, led to the organization of an Indigenous-led session at the 2022 UNESCO World Higher Education Conference and a larger, more inclusive event concurrent with the main conference, engaging in dialogue on Indigenous perspectives on higher education. The event provided an opportunity for a deeper, more Indigenous-centric dive into some of the broader issues that would be raised at the conference presentation.

The scholars who spoke at the “Indigenous Perspectives: Advancing Change in Higher Education” event came from places as wide ranging as Canada, the United States, New Zealand, India and Uganda. They acknowledged the importance of this landmark opportunity to share their perspectives with an international audience. We thank the leadership of the Indigenous Advanced Education and Skills Council for organizing and funding the event as well as the financial contribution of the Mastercard Foundation.

The Sustainable Development Goals

The seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals—also known as the SDGs—were adopted in 2015 following a historic United Nations summit by 193 countries. This global action plan, also known as Agenda 2030, seeks to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure peace and prosperity by 2030. The SDGs build on the earlier Millennium Development Goals while encompassing new priority areas, such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, and others. Each Goal comes with targets.

SDG 4 – Quality Education, aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” It has seven (7) Expected Outcome targets and three (3) targets that are means of implementation:

OUTCOME TARGETS

4.1 UNIVERSAL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

4.2 EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND UNIVERSAL PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

4.3 EQUAL ACCESS TO TECHNICAL/VOCATIONAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION

By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

4.4 RELEVANT SKILLS FOR DECENT WORK

By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

4.5 GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

4.6 UNIVERSAL YOUTH LITERACY

By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

4.7 EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-

violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

4.A EFFECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

4.B SCHOLARSHIPS

By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.

4.C TEACHERS AND EDUCATORS

By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States.

Source: <https://en.unesco.org/education2030-sdg4/targets>

Indigenous Higher Education Innovations

Although a good part of this report is devoted to Calls to Action that arise from ongoing challenges and are aimed at transformation and improvement, it is important to begin by acknowledging what has already been achieved. Indigenous scholars, leaders and others around the world have made a continuous sustained effort for decades to incorporate Indigenous languages, cultures, and ways of knowing, being and doing into education systems.

The World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) was created two decades ago to bring professionals together to achieve common goals through higher education. WINHEC continues to play a leading role in advancing Indigenous higher education. There are now Indigenous higher education institutes in various parts of the world dedicated to improving higher education for Indigenous students by centering on Indigenous cultures, languages and beliefs.

In Ontario, Canada, the Indigenous Advanced Education and Skills Council (IAESC) was recognized with the passage of the *Indigenous Institutes Act, 2017*. This law was co-created by the provincial government and Indigenous peoples, as represented by the Indigenous Institutes, and it recognized Indigenous control of education, led by IAESC and the nine post-secondary Indigenous Institutes in the province.

IAESC is returning an Indigenous lens to higher education and training in Ontario. It affirms and approves institutions and programs using standards and benchmarks rooted in Indigenous worldviews.

In Canada and other global communities, Indigenous higher education institutes have made, and continue to make, significant progress in terms of recognition and accreditation. They are implementing innovative practices that are working to attract and retain students by recognizing and addressing unique challenges in areas ranging from curriculum to scheduling to childcare to development of role models. They are increasing enrolment, restoring Indigenous language fluency, working to attract funding, and generating optimism about the ability of youth to complete post-secondary education.

Meanwhile, mainstream universities are making positive changes in programs, curricula, policies, appointments and the numbers of Indigenous students enrolled in and graduating from post-secondary education.

For example, in Canada:

- Mainstream post-secondary institutions are naming more Indigenous scholars to senior administrative positions;
- Universities are showing a growing openness to decolonizing their approaches, indigenizing their content, and integrating the realities of Indigenous peoples and communities into their offerings by trying to ensure more inclusive experiences and programming;

- There are more resources available to support students who are transitioning from remote communities, including help with accommodations and childcare;
- Increasing numbers of universities are making it mandatory for all students to complete at least one course that contains a minimum of 50 per cent Indigenous content. (However, it is worth noting that some Indigenous scholars have criticized this approach and characterized it as vastly insufficient);
- Innovative programs are being developed that recognize the needs and opportunities of Indigenous people. One example in Canada is a University of Victoria program that offers a joint degree in common law and Indigenous legal orders; and
- Years of advocacy and activism are giving Indigenous people a stronger voice in how education systems are developed.

Meanwhile, in addition to pointing out what higher education can offer Indigenous people, it is important to highlight how Indigenous higher education models can benefit everyone if implemented. These models support the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by improving equity, decolonizing knowledge, opening science, reducing or eliminating racism, and offering robust and culturally attuned supports to students to ensure they can complete their studies.

This is important because, sadly, the world is **not** on track to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The world needs to restore its relationship with the planet and learn from those who have consistently proven willing and able to maintain it: Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous worldviews and ways of learning and teaching can benefit not only Indigenous students, but all of humanity. For this to happen, it is important for the United Nations and its bodies, in particular UNESCO, and the rest of the world to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into higher education systems.

Challenges to Overcome

Despite the progress documented above and the work to date, around the world higher education continues to exclude the perspectives and ways of knowing of Indigenous peoples.

In fact, even many Indigenous higher education institutions were essentially created in the image of mainstream institutions and may need to be further decolonized. Strengthening and expanding on the work that has already been done will contribute to UNESCO's work and to achieving Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG 4).

To advance the well-being and the sustainability of societies overall, higher education systems must be deconstructed and co-created into new structures that respect and incorporate Indigenous knowledge and values. They should be redesigned to be inclusive of Indigenous students and should give due consideration to what Indigenous wisdom and culture—developed over millennia—can offer humankind. Indigenous perspectives have much to contribute, but numerous obstacles and historical factors have prevented them from shaping our education systems.

The Calls to Action in the next section reflect this view and suggest approaches for achieving this inclusive goal.

This new and better structure for higher education should focus on accessibility, inclusiveness and respect for Indigenous ways of knowing and learning. This should be validated and incorporated into curricula in recognition of the fact that, as currently practised, Western science has often proven more harmful than beneficial to sustainability. Higher education should evolve to include Indigenous methods of knowledge acquisition, such as land-based education. These knowledge systems and methods can benefit and help preserve the world's ecosystems and biospheres to ensure they remain habitable for future generations.

Conference speakers pointed out the following challenge areas in higher education for Indigenous people worldwide. These should be the focus of the next stage of work to support Indigenous higher education.

1. Dysfunctional international and national systems and relationships

- The United Nations' existing systems are not set up to support change and improvement in Indigenous higher education. Achieving SDG 4 is important for the world and to the United Nations (UN). UNESCO is the UN body responsible for advancing quality and inclusive education for all, but it engages primarily with member states rather than directly with Indigenous higher education institutions. Most states lack mechanisms to include Indigenous voices, creating obstacles for the effective participation of Indigenous peoples and their organizations in these international bodies.

2. Indigenous languages

- Because Indigenous knowledge is coded within Indigenous languages, language is a cornerstone of education. However, colonial and Indigenous languages are not seen as equals and there is a scarcity of Indigenous teachers who are truly proficient speakers.
- The absence of Indigenous languages at all levels of education (not only post-secondary) can lead to a significant disconnect between innate ability and educational outcomes for Indigenous students. It is not uncommon for students to discontinue school and offer, as their reason for doing so, a sense that “the teacher doesn’t understand me and I don’t understand them.”
- The decline of Indigenous languages is a global crisis that not only makes the world a less vibrant place, but affects Indigenous peoples’ abilities to pursue, enjoy and complete higher education. These languages contain important knowledges and identities. They have a right to live and thrive.
- Education needs to be a cornerstone of the UN Decade of Indigenous languages.

3. Pervasive antiquated education systems continue to exclude Indigenous people, contrary to SDG 4

- While discussions of these topics are becoming more common, they remain superficial. It is not enough to add words like “indigenization” and “decolonization” to documents: deep thought must go into these concepts, including what they mean, why they are important and how these processes should work in practice. Most higher education institutions have not yet stepped beyond the jargon to more significant concrete action.
- Worldwide, Indigenous people generally remain socially, politically and geographically excluded from the hierarchies of power. Their cultures, spiritualities, literatures, medicines, games, livelihoods, and foods are considered subaltern by mainstream societies and decision-makers, including those who have the power and resources to make changes in education.
- Too many people continue to believe negative stereotypes about Indigenous people. Disparaging concepts of Indigenous people exist in every part of the world, affecting their trajectories and prospects, including in higher education.

4. Funding gaps, accreditation shortfalls and the need to rebuild

- A great funding gap exists between public and Indigenous institutions. In Canada, Indigenous institutions are treated similarly to private colleges and may receive a fraction of the funds that public institutions do. In some cases, the lack of mechanisms to ensure recognition and transferability of programs and credentials from Indigenous institutions has a negative impact on students’ employment and education pathways.

- While any higher education institution using Indigenous knowledge must develop theories, curriculum, and instructional materials, in reality Indigenous knowledges are not published or available, forcing each instructor to develop their own. Institutions and their staff need support in this area.

5. Insufficient numbers of Indigenous faculty

- There are too few Indigenous faculty members at mainstream higher education institutions. It is critical to have Indigenous faculty and staff lead, shape and govern these programs and ensure the cultural safety of students.
- Indigenous faculty are working with their communities, providing help and leadership, and creating curricular and instructional resources. Current tenure and merit systems in higher education institutions rarely recognize and compensate Indigenous faculty for these additional and important tasks.
- Self-determination in higher education is a significant key to success for Indigenous people today. A greater number of higher education institutions should have Indigenous communities, educational aspirations, and culture at their core.

6. Inadequate student supports

- It is important for Indigenous youth to feel that their knowledges and communities are scientifically valid and needed by the world. However, the chain of knowledge transmission is currently broken. To repair this chain—and to ensure future Indigenous leadership in research and education—more Indigenous people must be part of higher education institutions. Achieving this will involve educating greater numbers of Indigenous people at the post-secondary level, recruiting them as faculty in universities, and retaining them.
- It is not uncommon for Indigenous people to find higher education lonely and alienating, and as a result, crushing and draining rather than empowering. This is in great part because of the absence of familiar languages, cultures, peers and mentors in mainstream institutions. Adequate supports are lacking.
- Students can feel torn between their desire to complete their post-secondary education and their need to support their community, which may be geographically distant from their school.

Calls to Action

The following Calls to Action seek to improve higher education for Indigenous people worldwide. They have been distilled from the obstacles, experiences and solutions discussed by speakers, many of which contained striking commonalities despite speakers' different locations, cultures and languages.

We call upon the United Nations (UN) and its bodies and systems, other international organizations, all 193 UN member states, Indigenous peoples and their representative organizations, scholars, and post-secondary institutions and leaders worldwide to recognize that Indigenous people continue to remain excluded from higher education because of many historical, complex and inter-related challenges. We demand that these entities make the constructive changes needed to ensure that leaders and decision-makers at every level can engage with these issues and the changes outlined below.

Systemic change

1. **We call upon the United Nations and its bodies to prepare a system-wide action plan to improve all aspects of Indigenous higher education.** This plan should be co-developed with Indigenous peoples and should address the fact that Indigenous people remain largely unrecognized and excluded from higher education around the world because of their cultures, languages, and backgrounds. This action plan should rectify the fact that even the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which preceded the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), overlooked Indigenous peoples, largely because of the intricacies and workings of the United Nations systems.

While UNESCO champions SDG 4-Education, it works primarily with member states, many of whom do not have the commitments or connections to Indigenous peoples that are needed to concretely include Indigenous perspectives in efforts to achieve Quality Education. UN bodies and organizations need an action plan to better engage with Indigenous higher education institutions, Indigenous peoples and their representative organizations, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Issues with the goal of ensuring the inclusion of Indigenous people in SDG 4 and in the United Nations' and member states' work in this area.

Revitalizing Indigenous languages

Through the UN Decade of Indigenous Languages and through other local, regional, national and international networks, we call upon the United Nations, its bodies, systems and member states, and post-secondary education institutions worldwide to:

2. **Support, in partnership with Indigenous communities and Nations, the revitalization and reclamation of Indigenous languages.** Universities and colleges should develop curricula for teaching Indigenous languages and ensure that they are properly accredited, delivered, accountable and publicly funded. States and post-secondary education institutions need to create more connections to communities, pathways, and programs for learning Indigenous languages so more students can become fluent. All stakeholders should act in support of the implementation of the Global Action Plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.
3. **Build capacity and support the certification and employment of new Indigenous language teachers.** Currently in some jurisdictions, there is a need to earn two degrees (one in languages and another in teaching), which may be too high a bar when languages urgently need to be reclaimed and revitalized. Accreditation bodies and post-secondary education institutions need to recognize and value Indigenous languages, traditional knowledge and community experience.
4. **Give Indigenous languages their own space in programming.** Western higher education institutions are highly siloed places. Subject areas such as linguistics or modern languages are not a natural home for Indigenous languages. They need their own space and need to be better integrated with other related programs, as well as incorporated throughout higher education curricula.

Decolonization and indigenization

We call upon the United Nations, its bodies, systems and member states, and post-secondary education institutions worldwide to:

5. **Decolonize knowledge systems.** This involves deconstructing colonial knowledge systems and structures and reconstructing Indigenous ones so that the commitment and alignment of national and international rights of Indigenous peoples can be actualized in higher education and training systems.
6. **Decolonize mainstream higher education itself.** An important part of this process involves offering programming in Indigenous languages. This teaching should begin with primary schools. As part of the decolonization process, governments and institutions should do more to address racism, recognize the sophistication of Indigenous ways of knowing, and integrate Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being into

post-secondary education systems. Post-secondary education institutions should increase support for Indigenous students and promote their well-being.

We call upon Indigenous peoples, their representative organizations, and their higher education institutions worldwide to:

7. **Continue to pursue both decolonization and indigenization.** Although these Indigenous higher education institutions are at the core of cultural repatriation, many were set up in the shadow or framework of the mainstream higher education system. States and mainstream post-secondary institutions should support the efforts to further decolonize and indigenize these institutions.

New roles and recognition

We call upon United Nations member states to:

8. **Fund Indigenous higher education institutions adequately, on par with mainstream institutions.** Such funding will support the development and implementation of courses, programs and research based on Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.
9. **Stop requiring Indigenous universities to duplicate, mimic or compete with mainstream ones.** Indigenous universities should have the space and resources to focus on empowering the communities they serve. There should be no barriers to entry and less emphasis on graduate programs, which existing mainstream institutions are already well-equipped to offer.
10. **Ensure that non-Indigenous institutions support their Indigenous counterparts.** Mainstream institutions must work with or alongside Indigenous post-secondary institutions to ensure the latter are recognized and to further enhance their role, visibility, influence, and responsibility for the education of Indigenous people.
11. **Accredit and fund Indigenous higher education institutions.** They should have access to their own recognized programming, degrees and diplomas. This entails validating programs, recognizing the importance and value of Indigenous knowledge systems, and providing sufficient funding.

We call upon post-secondary education institutions worldwide to:

12. **Include and reflect Indigenous knowledge and lifeways in their governance and operations.** Indigenous communities are critical to building education that will meet the needs of Indigenous learners and communities. They are also critical to developing standards and benchmarks for post-secondary programs.
13. **Recognize Indigenous science for its role in protecting and respecting the land and ensuring that life on Earth remains sustainable over time.** For this to happen, post-secondary education institutions need to recognize further that Indigenous ways of knowing are learned not in classrooms, but on the land, and we need to find a way to

bring this awareness and practice to higher education. Higher education systems have to recognize cultural property rights in the same way as intellectual property rights to protect Indigenous knowledges. These actions are in line with the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Faculty supports and leadership

We call upon United Nations member states and post-secondary education institutions worldwide to:

14. **Intentionally nurture and develop more Indigenous researchers who can design and lead research for and by Indigenous communities.** This will help demonstrate the world-class nature of Indigenous research and the importance of Indigenous knowledge.
15. **Work to attract more Indigenous people to the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.** More funding and support are needed to attract and retain students in STEM fields, and teaching in those areas should be respectful and inclusive of Indigenous knowledge. These actions are needed to help foster the leadership who will lead innovations in sustainable development.

We call post-secondary education institutions worldwide to:

16. **Put mechanisms in place that recognize the unique responsibilities that Indigenous faculty members have to their communities.** These post-secondary education institutions must assist Indigenous faculty in supporting their communities. This would enable institutions to better attract and retain Indigenous faculty members. For example, recognition of fulfilment of community responsibilities in tenure assessments helps support the career advancement of Indigenous faculty and benefits their communities.

More generous and creative student supports

We call upon United Nations member states and post-secondary education institutions worldwide to:

17. **Improve supports for Indigenous students.** This entails recognizing the unique needs of Indigenous students, who are also often valued and essential community members. Institutions need to make it easier for these students to remain active in their communities while pursuing their education so that students are not forced to choose between the two.

Indigenous institutions should be welcoming places of language and cultural revitalization, community engagement, inclusiveness and accessibility. For this to happen, Indigenous institutions must be able to go beyond simply requesting “space in the academy” and have the capacity to *define their own space*.

18. **Encourage more Indigenous students to attend post-secondary education and training.** Indigenous students (and faculty) need to see others who look and think like them in post-secondary institutions.

Indigenous Perspectives

Indigenous Circle format and protocols

Sharing circles are an essential part of the oral traditions in many Indigenous cultures. To the extent possible given the event's hybrid (in-person and virtual) format, Indigenous protocols were followed. The event opened with prayers, an honour song, greetings and welcomes from respected Elders, and acknowledgements of the ancestors of the land, and closed with a traditional warrior dance and a round dance in which all attendees participated. This format encouraged respect, information-sharing, attentiveness and interconnectedness.

As a gift for the contributions of each speaker, it was important to honour them by having their words included in this report. While the Calls to Action present the overall themes that emerged over the course of the presentations, individual speaker summaries are included so that readers have the opportunity to delve more deeply into specific messages from individuals in various parts of the world. While edited for length and clarity, these summaries aim to convey each speaker's tone, speaking style and key points for interested parties who were not present at the conference.

A note on the full transcript

The remainder of this report includes summaries of each speaker's presentation in an effort to convey the key points they raised which, in aggregate, formed the basis for the Calls to Action. The [full transcript](#) of the event is available for download as a companion document.

Openings

Circle opening: Arnold Blackstar (Moderator)

Director of Strategic Policy and Research, Indigenous Advanced Education and Skills Council, Canada

Thank you for joining us here in Barcelona and thank you to those joining us online from your homelands, offices and other places across the world today. This session is truly global. We will have an honour song, a welcome with a greeting from the ancestors of this land, an Innu traditional opening, some remarks from our organizers and sponsors on why we are gathered, and presentations by speakers from many parts of the world. We will end with song and dance.

Honour song: Daryl Kelvin Coy Kootenay and Kyle Logan Standingready-Snow

Daryl "Dancing Buffalo" Kootenay is an Indigenous youth leader, artist, entrepreneur, facilitator, educator and mentor to many youth in his community and in the surrounding communities of Stoney Nakoda Nation near Calgary, Alberta, Canada. He is known for his ability to speak about using both traditional knowledge and Western knowledge in unique ways and for his extensive international experience and volunteer work. Mr. Kootenay is a member of the Stoney Nakoda Nation from his mother's heritage and Navajo nation from his father's. He is a faculty member of the Banff Centre for Indigenous Leadership.

Kyle “Black Cloud” Snow is from Morley, Alberta, and he is Nakodabi (Rocky Mountain Sioux). He is a representative of the Stoney Nakoda Youth Council. A traditional warrior dancer and drum-keeper, he is also a facilitator with the Further Education Society of Alberta. He works with Telus Sparks Science Centre and the McDougall United Church on issues related to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada and the Every Child Matters movement.

It is a great honour for us to be here today to start us off in this way. As Indigenous young people, based on our values, our beliefs, our identities, and ways of being, starting with song is our customary way to share before our leader comes to do a more formal prayer. The song we are going to sing is one that we sing for our grass dancers—a type of dance where the warriors go out in front of the community before an event or ceremony and pat down the grass to make it smoother for the people coming behind them. We will sing this song for you to start this gathering.

Welcome: Francesc Xavier Vila Moreno and Mariona Miret

Francesc Xavier Vila Moreno is Secretary-General for Language Policy in the Government of Catalunya. Mariona Miret is a language activist and revitalizer based in Catalunya.

Mr. Moreno: People living here identifying as Catalan. They are rooted here. As open and tolerant people, we have welcomed many waves of migration from around the world, and we have travelled around the world ourselves as merchants and warriors trying to play a small part in the human race. When we identify ourselves as Catalans, we define ourselves based not on race, but on the basis of the land and the language. A person who comes here and has a will to integrate into our heritage of language and culture is Catalan.

But the connection between the land and language today is challenged by groups and ideologies who would prefer that all peoples dissolve into a magma of fast-food culture. It is a predatory way of looking at the environment and culture. In the face of this, we Catalans want to defend the possibility of being open to the world while also fully aware of our language and culture. Because of that, we are working to establish a national agreement that allows us to put our language at the forefront of society. We want to continue our conversation with our brothers and sisters in the world without giving up our culture, which is rooted in our land and is one of the most precious things we have as human beings.

Ms. Miret: Welcome, everyone, to Catalunya. Dr. Lorna Williams extended the opportunity to us to begin with a land acknowledgement. This is special to us because it is an opportunity for us to ponder our roots and our relationship with the land, and to question what the language means for us and what our personal relationship is with the land.

Innu traditional opening: Jean St-Onge

Innu artist, designer and museographer from Uashat mak Mani Utenam and member of the committee of Indigenous Elders with the UNESCO Chair in the Transmission of First Peoples’ Culture to Foster Well-Being and Empowerment

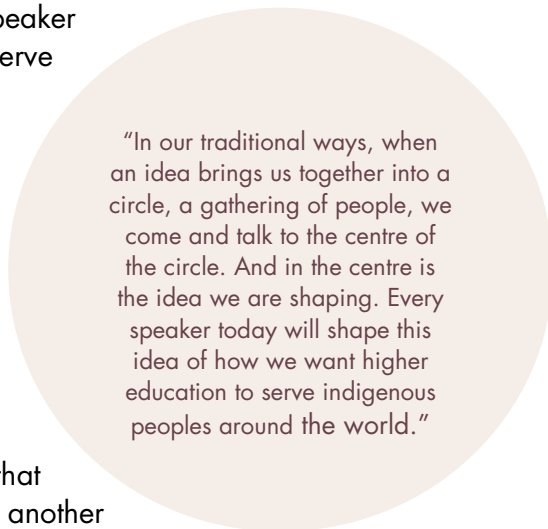
(Translation provided by Juan Marsiaj, Manager of Review and Assessment at the Indigenous Advanced Education and Skills Council)

I am thankful to everyone for being here and listening. I ask the Creator to unite us and bring us all together so that our words will be heard for the benefit and well-being of our children and future generations.

Why we are gathered: Dr. Lorna Wánosts'a7 Williams

Dr. Williams, from Lil'wat First Nation, has devoted her life to restoring Indigenous language and culture. She is Chair of the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation and Professor Emerita in Indigenous Education at the University of Victoria in Canada. She has worked as an Indigenous educator and language specialist for more than 50 years in diverse settings. She is an Officer of the Order of Canada and a Fellow of the Pierre Elliot Trudeau Foundation. Dr. Williams serves as a committee member for the working group on the UNESCO International Decade of Indigenous Languages and is an observer on the Global Task Force for the Decade of Indigenous Languages.

It is an honour to bring our ideas to this land and to one another. In our traditional ways, when an idea brings us together into a circle, a gathering of people, we come and talk to the centre of the circle. And in the centre is the idea we are shaping. Every speaker today will shape this idea of how we want higher education to serve Indigenous peoples around the world. We rely on education systems now, but they have sought to change us, to modify our thinking, our way of life and all of our relationships—with each other, with the land, with the ancestors and all those unborn. We need to be able to build learning institutions that respect and honour those relationships.



"In our traditional ways, when an idea brings us together into a circle, a gathering of people, we come and talk to the centre of the circle. And in the centre is the idea we are shaping. Every speaker today will shape this idea of how we want higher education to serve indigenous peoples around the world."

There have been many hundreds of years in which our ways of thinking, wisdom, and ways of knowing have been altered. Now it's time to pick up the pieces of our knowing, our relationships that make us and our lands whole and healthy, so that they will come back, and we will be able to be of service to one another again so that the land, the air we breathe, and our water will continue to nourish us.

Expression of gratitude: Laurie Robinson

Ms. Robinson is the Chair and Executive Director of the Indigenous Advanced Education and Skills Council. She has also served as the Special Advisor on Indigenous Issues to the Deputy Minister of the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. She has been an advisor on education for the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations in Canada. She is Algonquin and a member of Mahingan Sagaigan First Nation in Quebec, Canada.

Thank you to everyone who is here today for accepting our invitation and bringing your kindness, ideas, and perspectives. I want to offer gratitude to those who helped us to arrive here today. I'm honoured to stand with Dr. Lorna Williams, a beautiful human being who graces everywhere she goes. It is always an honour to get on any ride she invites you on. I would also like to thank the Mastercard Foundation for collaborating with us so we could be here today and share our

perspectives. And I want to acknowledge the land we stand on today. I appreciate the warm welcome from Mr. Francesc Xavier Vila Moreno and our new friendship with Mariona Miret.

[Laurie Robinson calls upon Rajesh Tandon and Budd Hall, UNESCO Co-Chairs in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility, and gifts them with blankets to offer thanks, acknowledge their leadership and inspire them to remember the words that are spoken today.]

Thanks for gathering: Jennifer Brennan
Head of Canada Programs, Mastercard Foundation

I am honoured to be joining this circle virtually and to listen deeply to the incredible wisdom that is gathered. I offer my thanks to the Indigenous Advanced Education and Skills Council and our partners. First and foremost, I am here to stand with you and to listen.

Decolonizing knowledges in the academy

Dr. Marie Battiste

Dr. Battiste is a Mi'kmaw educator from the Pottotek First Nation, Nova Scotia, Canada and full professor at the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada. She is the founding academic director of the Aboriginal Education Research Centre at the University of Saskatchewan, a founding board member of the Canadian Council on Learning, and a former co-director of the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre. She heads the Canadian Prevention Science Cluster, which identifies evidence-based research for violence prevention programs in schools. Dr. Battiste was recently invested into the Order of Canada in recognition of her contributions to Indigenous education and commitment to traditional languages and knowledges.

Incorporating Indigenous content into universities has been part of a growing movement in post-secondary education in Canada. Universities are developing Indigenous strategic initiatives and urging action and changes. Most have increased Indigenous faculty and added new Indigenous course requirements. Some have required all students to take at least one Indigenous studies course.

Adam Gaudry, a professor at the University of Saskatchewan, has pointed out that while adding Indigenous content through these multiple approaches is generally positive, universities should cautiously consider their assumptions about the purposes of these courses.

Students' learning of Indigenous people's lives in the context of oppression has often led them to blame Indigenous people—rather than the colonial power structures imposed on them—for their situations. It takes more than one class to unlearn social constructions built on Eurocentric colonialism and racism.

Requiring students to take Indigenous courses is an endeavour often met with resistance and pushback, and can take away from the resourcing of Indigenous studies for students who want to pursue a specialized program in Indigenous studies. Many Indigenous scholars have critiqued this approach, pointing out that Indigenous knowledge systems have their own ontology, epistemology and axiology.

What is lost when Indigenous knowledges are appropriated as symbolic content for inclusive education? Are there better ways to address Indigenous knowledges from their own ontologies, community-activated learning styles and places, and teaching and learning methods that align

better with the affirmation of Aboriginal treaty rights or the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people within Indigenous or educational institutions?

I have begun think that the decolonization of colonial knowledge systems is necessary. Decolonization involves the deconstruction of colonial knowledge systems and structures and the reconstruction of Indigenous knowledges so that the commitment and alignment of Aboriginal and treaty rights can be actualized through education.

Indigenous knowledge is the foundation of Indigenous people's survival, encompassing their languages and places and the survival and transmission of their cultural traditions. Indigenous knowledge is just not an opportunity for universities to appear inclusive and progressive.

Decolonization requires institutions to make major reforms and rethink the foundations of their learning, the languages they're using, and their assumptions of what counts as knowledge, and to hire and promote faculty based on those knowledge systems.

Indigenous faculty should have real experiences with Indigenous knowledges and traditions. Accordingly, they should also be subject to different standards for merit, tenure and promotion than those associated with western knowledge systems, and they must be allowed to grow in and with their Indigenous knowledge traditions, cultural and spiritual community knowledge.

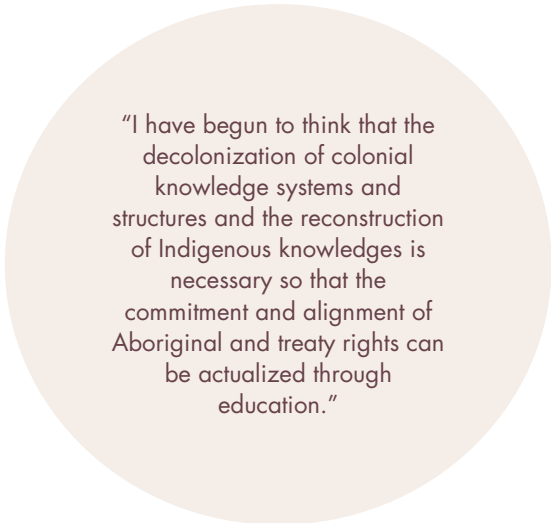
Governance in Indigenous research and education: To get there, forget what you know and listen to me

Dr. Elisabeth Kaine

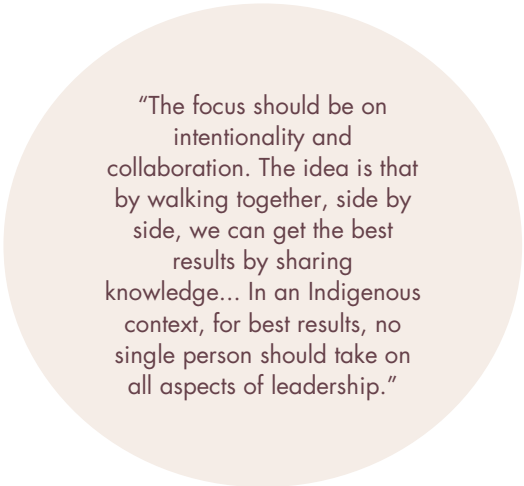
Dr. Kaine is from the Wendat Nation and is a professor of art and design at the University of Quebec at Chicoutimi, Canada. She develops collaborative methodologies for Indigenous self-representation. Through collaboration with First Nations and the Inuit, her work has focused on the production and the study of the impacts of numerous tools for cultural transmission. In 2017, she founded the UNESCO Chair in the Transmission of First People's Culture to Foster Well-being and Empowerment.

(Translation provided by Juan Marsiaj, Manager of Review and Assessment at the Indigenous Advanced Education and Skills Council)

We have the scandalous situation today of young Indigenous learners facing serious obstacles to higher education, and the significant under-representation of Indigenous students—and



"I have begun to think that the decolonization of colonial knowledge systems and structures and the reconstruction of Indigenous knowledges is necessary so that the commitment and alignment of Aboriginal and treaty rights can be actualized through education."



"The focus should be on intentionality and collaboration. The idea is that by walking together, side by side, we can get the best results by sharing knowledge... In an Indigenous context, for best results, no single person should take on all aspects of leadership."

importantly, faculty—in higher education institutions. How can we create a space that welcomes Indigenous peoples and is open to their participation?

I would argue that one approach is to focus on doing things together, becoming friends who support each other. Another is ensuring that Indigenous peoples have true governance of their own education. The work is in how to develop methodologies so that university researchers do not consider themselves the sole leaders of research. It's about becoming partners.

I am trying to develop a model that focuses on Indigenous ways of being and on relations to self, each other, land and spirit, where knowledge is transmitted across and between generations, sectors, disciplines and cultures, and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The current model is problematic because it keeps these entities separate.

The focus should be on intentionality and collaboration. The idea is that by walking together, side by side, we can get the best results by sharing knowledges. When two canoeists take turns steering during a long trip, depending on the terrain and each person's expertise, they will get where they want to go faster. Similarly, my idea is for university researchers to share the research leadership role in relationships that are based on collaboration, support and reciprocity. In an Indigenous context, for best results, no single person should take on all aspects of leadership.

Indigenous knowledge and the future of higher education in India

Dr. Sonajharia Minz

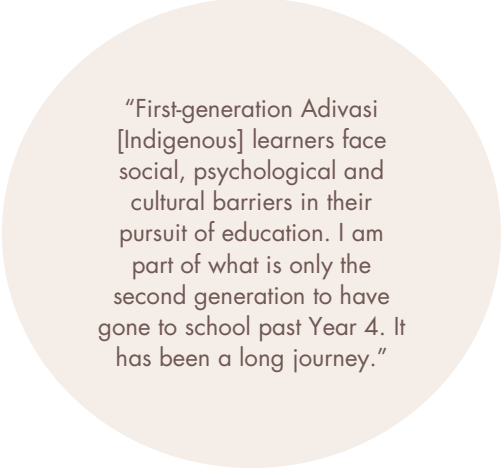
Dr. Minz is an Adivasi activist and Vice-Chancellor at Sido Kanhu Murmu University in Dumka, India. She is only the second tribeswoman to be elected as a vice-chancellor. She comes from the Oraon tribe in Gumla district, Jharkhand.

I am an Adivasi in India. The Adivasi are tribes who are considered indigenous to places in India. We make up a substantial minority population in India, close to 9 per cent, with more than 700 different tribal groups. We speak a variety of tribal languages from various linguistic groupings.

First-generation Adivasi learners face social, psychological and cultural barriers in their pursuit of education. I am part of what is only the second generation to have gone to school past year four. It has been a long journey.

In India, commission after commission has called for Adivasi primary students to be taught in their first language. Yet in some regions, they must still begin by learning the official regional language, which is often completely unrelated to the one they know.

This is frustrating because we know that language is part of the reason for the disconnect between innate ability and educational outcomes. It is not uncommon for Adivasi students to come home



"First-generation Adivasi [Indigenous] learners face social, psychological and cultural barriers in their pursuit of education. I am part of what is only the second generation to have gone to school past Year 4. It has been a long journey."

and tell their parents they are not going to keep going to school. The reason? Because “the teacher doesn’t understand me and I don’t understand them.”

We are also combatting harmful stereotypes. As a youth, I was mathematically quite bright. But I had a teacher who advised me to not study. I was Adivasi, so the assumption was that I would not be able to continue. For the record, I became a computer scientist. And I am not the only one with a story like this.

In India, groups that are “outside” the system—including both tribals/Adivasis and Dalits (once called “untouchables”)—are now counted in the census. That is a start, but it’s just numbers. Tribal peoples are still socially, politically and geographically excluded from the hierarchy of power. Their cultures, spiritualities, literatures, medicines, games, livelihoods and foods are considered subaltern.

Where do we go from here? We have to move from invisibility to recognition; from poverty to the power to negotiate; from displacement to the right to say no; from being on the receiving end to a place where we can assert our voices to reach a point where there is mutual respect and exchange. These moves and this progress can happen through education if we can overcome obstacles such as the tension between need and greed and the integration of tribal epistemology.

The future of Indigenous higher education

Dr. Elmer Guy

Dr. Elmer Guy is the President of the Navajo Technical University in the United States and Co-Chair of the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium. Before joining the Navajo Technical University, he was appointed by the Navajo Nation president to serve as both the executive director and deputy director of the Navajo Nation Department of Education. Dr. Guy was unable to attend the event. The following is a summary of his presentation notes.

There are 370 to 500 million Indigenous people living in the world today. They make up 5 per cent of the world's population, yet account for 15 per cent of those who live in extreme poverty and have a life expectancy 20 per cent lower than that of the rest of the population. Throughout the world, their educational outcomes are among the worst compared to other populations where they live.

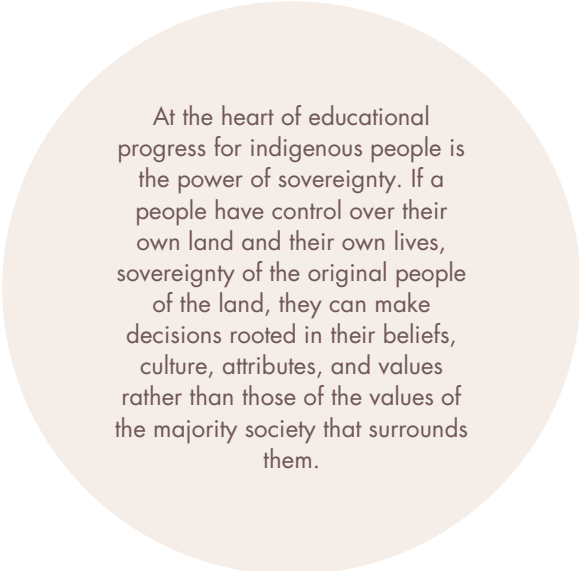
Yet Indigenous people protect 80 per cent of the world's remaining biodiversity. While Indigenous people are marginalized around the world, with needs that are greater than those of surrounding communities, they have a promise for all humankind and the Earth that has not been acknowledged. Indigenous cultures and spirituality are a powerful force that can lead to good in the world.

Education is key to addressing Indigenous communities' needs, and can lead to better lives for individuals, families and communities. But the classroom is not the whole sum of benefits that flow from strong education systems, especially in higher education.

At the Navajo Technical University (NTU), preserving and growing Indigenous language, culture, and spirituality is part of the educational enterprise. By basing the educational system on this foundation, we encourage students to recognize the strength within themselves and their heritage while mastering the knowledge, skills, value, and attributes important to success in the contemporary world. Indigenous education systems are strongest when they are built out of the Indigenous community for Indigenous students, reinforcing the role of cultural decision-making in an Indigenous context.

But preserving and strengthening culture is only one aspect of education for Indigenous communities. It is equally important to provide solutions to community challenges—for example, by training Indigenous people to become nurses and doctors who will serve their communities.

Degree "ladders" can also entice students to attend while offering them additional opportunities. For example, a student at our school arrived to become a carpenter, earned a B.S. in environmental science, and ultimately went on to obtain a graduate degree from the University of Georgia.



At the heart of educational progress for indigenous people is the power of sovereignty. If a people have control over their own land and their own lives, sovereignty of the original people of the land, they can make decisions rooted in their beliefs, culture, attributes, and values rather than those of the values of the majority society that surrounds them.

Higher education institutions for Indigenous people can develop world-class labs and research centres. For example, the Center for Advanced Manufacturing at NTU is one of the premier labs of its type in the United States. It also has an Innovation Center with an incubator space for Navajo entrepreneurs.


The power of education is key to achieving rights for Indigenous peoples

Dr. Rongo H. Wetere

Dr. Wetere is Founder and Tumuaki of New Zealand's first Maori university, Te Wananga o Aotearoa, and Vice-Chancellor of the World Indigenous Nations University. He was a key driver in establishing the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium. He was made a Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Management in 2002 and awarded the Order of New Zealand Merit in 2003. His latest contribution is as founder and CEO of the World Indigenous Nations Language Institute focused on language revitalization using the AKO TERE method for adult learning. Dr. Wetere is Maori, of Ngati Maniapoto Tribe, in Aotearoa.

New Zealand's colonial history is an important backdrop to our efforts to improve opportunities within Indigenous communities around the world who know all too well about colonizers, domination and self-interest.

I set up the first Maori university in New Zealand and supported two others. We fought the government through the nineties, and in 2000, we gained the rights to mainstream funding. The resulting changes transformed Maori education, student participation and language revitalization. I am firm in the belief that UNESCO and Indigenous people in the world need to take heed of the Maori experience in creating Indigenous higher education institutions funded as mainstream for developing and implementing courses, programs and research based on Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.



"I am firm in the belief that UNESCO and Indigenous people in the world need to take some heed from the Maori experience in creating Indigenous higher education institutions funded as mainstream for developing and implementing courses, programs and research based on Indigenous ways of knowing and doing."

The Maori movement started in the 1980s and succeeded in revitalizing our language and culture. Maori unemployment dropped to single digits. Incarceration rates plunged. Maori gained prominence in every sphere of New Zealand society. While representing 16 per cent of the country's population, Maori people now represent 50 per cent of the cabinet in Parliament.

Indigenous universities should not be built to duplicate or compete with mainstream ones. They should focus on lifting their people up from the bottom to where they should be to contribute to today's societies. There should be no blocks to entering, and less emphasis on graduate programs, which mainstream institutions are well established to offer. Indigenous post-secondary

institutions provide language revitalization, Indigenous arts and culture, expression of Indigenous knowledge and practice in business, the environment, health and governance.

We don't need to invest in huge buildings. But Indigenous universities need to work toward providing free tuition so that there are no barriers. This is the right formula for better jobs, financial stability, healthier communities and ultimately, a more balanced economy around the world. Indigenous universities need to be able to provide educations to students with low literacy and not follow the mainstream in refusing to enrol students who want to learn.

It is also time that our language speakers and knowledge keepers were recognized as qualified, skilled educators. Mainstream institutions are required to use only unionized instructors that have post-secondary degrees. However, many Indigenous fluent speakers have not completed high school yet are excellent instructors when involved in immersion programs delivered in communities. Teaching students in their dialect is absolutely key.

An Indigenous lens on transforming higher education in Ontario

Laurie Robinson


Ms. Robinson is the Chair and Executive Director of the Indigenous Advanced Education and Skills Council (IAESC).

I would like to share my experiences with the organization I lead that is trying to transform educational experiences for Indigenous people in Canada.

Colonization and the impact of western forms of education have attempted to destroy Indigenous ways of life, cultures, families, communities, knowledges and lifeways, among other things. Removing children from families to receive education in a foreign system and language is a clear example. The Indigenous lens was assaulted and has suffered tremendously. Today, many Indigenous youth in Canada do not have access to quality education.

But in one jurisdiction, there is hope: In the Province of Ontario, Canada, in 2017, a law was passed, the *Indigenous Institutes Act*. That act was co-created between the Ontario government and Indigenous peoples as represented by the institutes. It recognizes control of education by Indigenous people at nine institutes and IAESC.

The act did not create the Indigenous institutes and Council. It recognizes them in what we call Indigenous control of Indigenous education. It recognizes that the highest quality assurance is essential and recognizes IAESC. Our organization has a role in returning the Indigenous lens to higher education. We are responsible for affirming and approving institutions and programs using standards and benchmarks. Those were developed initially with a foundation (in the work of



“Colonization and the impact of western forms of education have attempted to destroy Indigenous ways of life, cultures, families, communities, knowledges and lifeways....[Today], the inclusion and reflection of Indigenous knowledge and lifeways in the governance and operations of post-secondary institutions is important.”

the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium) and also with provisions required by the Government of Ontario on matters of student interest.

The inclusion and reflection of Indigenous knowledge and lifeways in the governance and operations of post-secondary institutions is important. Community is critical to building education that will meet the needs of Indigenous learners and communities. This is how we've developed standards and benchmarks in post-secondary programs.

There is much to do to support this pillar of higher education. We invited each institute to share their goals and visions in their own words and often in their languages. We emphasized applying Indigenous lifeways in the application of the quality assurance framework in a manner that reflects the diversity of Indigenous communities in Ontario. The benchmarks and standards we have in place put learners at the centre of quality education. This approach focuses on the learner.

We as an organization are in the early, early days. We're not quite five years old yet. I want to acknowledge the experiences, advocacy and commitment of many Elders, parents, teachers and learners to make changes in higher education. It's important to bring life to the principles in article 14 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

An urban Inuk perspective on higher education

Katelynn Herchak

Ms. Herchak is VIDEA's Indigenous Governance Advisor. Her background is in Indigenous family support work. Located on the traditional and unceded territory of the Lkwungen-speaking people, she is Deputy Chair for the Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory, a member of Pauktuutit National Inuit Women's Youth Gender Equality Council, and Acting President of the National Urban Inuit Youth Council.

My dad is a Sixties Scoop survivor, so I was born and raised in this territory that is not my own, and I am the first one on both sides of my family to go to graduate school. It's a pretty big deal.

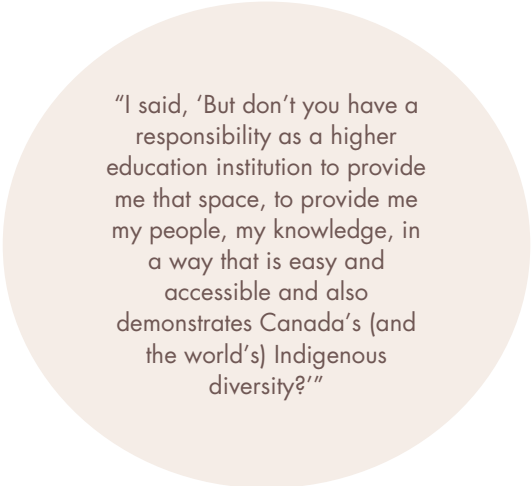
And how I got to graduate school is because I have one hell of a mother. She is tiny, she is Irish and she takes no prisoners. She raised me by herself because my father was not healthy to be a parent at the time, and she has been a big part of my education journey.

It wasn't until later in my life that I started to really dig into my ancestry and realize that there is not a lot of space for Inuit in academia. But as academics, we love to identify gaps. So I would go around to my teachers in Indigenous studies and ask, "Hey, where are the Inuit readings? Where are my Elders, where's my language?" And the teachers would say to me, "You can go and do your own research and bring that into the classroom."

Then I asked: "But don't you have a responsibility, as a higher education institution, to provide me that space, to provide me my people, my knowledge in a way that is easy and accessible and also demonstrates Canada's (and the world's) Indigenous diversity?"

These ideas led me to have big conversations with all these different people trying to integrate ways of knowing, being and doing into our classrooms for Indigenous learners. I believe it's important for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners to rebuild that nation-to-nation relationship.

I'm very thankful for everything that I've had the chance to see, do and be, and for my ancestors in the physical and in the spirit world.



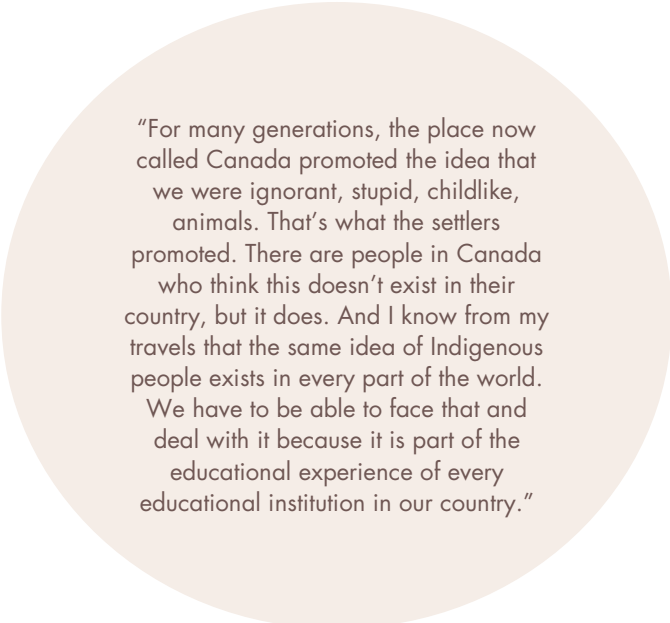
"I said, 'But don't you have a responsibility as a higher education institution to provide me that space, to provide me my people, my knowledge, in a way that is easy and accessible and also demonstrates Canada's (and the world's) Indigenous diversity?'"

The need to revitalize Indigenous languages

Dr. Lorna Wánosts'a7 Williams

Dr. Williams is from Lil'wat First Nation. She is Chair of the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation and Professor Emerita in Indigenous Education, University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada.

Support for learning Indigenous languages is not yet where it should be in universities. One stumbling block is that higher education tends to be structured in silos and disciplines, whereas to do the work that is needed in our communities, we require a much more inter- and multi-disciplinary approach. Another problem is that Indigenous languages don't have an established place in higher education—they don't fit into linguistics or second language learning or modern languages, which are the categories that exist. We need a dedicated space for Indigenous knowledges and languages.



"For many generations, the place now called Canada promoted the idea that we were ignorant, stupid, childlike, animals. That's what the settlers promoted. There are people in Canada who think this doesn't exist in their country, but it does. And I know from my travels that the same idea of Indigenous people exists in every part of the world. We have to be able to face that and deal with it because it is part of the educational experience of every educational institution in our country."

Programs also need to get better at minimizing the amount of time that Indigenous students must spend away from home. Often, students who are working on their languages—or studying social work or other programs—are important community members. Many Indigenous people have begun university only to leave because of the demands of their families and communities.

It is also a problem that there is no higher education program supporting Indigenous languages and teachers. The only language immersion programs for teachers in our province are for French teachers. But French is not an Indigenous language to our country.

Because of the work of many organizations, graduates are now going home and starting language immersion programs. But to be able to do this work, the students (and the people who develop the programs) are forced to draw on what they can learn on their own. They're counting on and utilizing the wisdom and knowledge of their Elders, the fluent speakers in their communities, who are doing this work for nothing.

We are making it too difficult for people to teach Indigenous languages. The language immersion schools hire certified teachers—people who have been educated and trained to be teachers—who know nothing about *language* learning, Indigenous languages or language revitalization. There are also people who are proficient in languages, but have no teacher certification, and are expected to miraculously know how to teach.

In my province right now, for an Indigenous language teacher to have a credential as a teacher and to teach in Indigenous languages, they need both a language degree and a teaching degree. And so often what happens instead is that they find themselves teaching an Indigenous

language (which also needs to be reclaimed and revitalized, by the way) without the recognition of a credential. They are paid as low-skilled people, not as teachers, not as the experts that they are.

We need higher education to better support our communities. They need to think about geography, funding, systemic racism, Eurocentrism. It's important that our Indigenous communities remain on the lands where their languages were born. We depend on this knowledge for our well-being. We need to consider that when we design and offer programs: that Indigenous people often live in very remote locations, usually with very little technological support.

For many generations, the place now called Canada promoted the idea that Indigenous people were ignorant, stupid, childlike, animals. There are people in Canada who think this view doesn't exist in their country, but it does. And I know from my travels that the same idea of Indigenous people exists in every part of the world. We have to be able to face that and deal with it because it is part of every educational institution in our country. There is the idea that you need to promote status and stratification, with some people at the bottom and others at the top. That concept is totally alien to the Indigenous world.

Still, we remain hopeful because we saw positive changes arise from the UNESCO Year of Indigenous Languages, and with the beginning of the decade on Indigenous languages, we have 10 years to work in this area. The barriers I have touched upon today are not insurmountable, but they will take a concerted, thoughtful, collaborative effort by Indigenous and non-Indigenous education professionals.

The decline of languages is a global crisis, but our languages are important to all of us. My language has a right to live.

Experiences and challenges as an Indigenous person in higher education

chuutsqa Layla Rorick

chuutsqa is a doctoral candidate at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada, researching Indigenous language revitalization. She supports Indigenous language learners and teaches language immersion courses in community partnership programs at University of Victoria's Indigenous Education Department. She is ḥiškw'iiᑭaqsup (Hesquiaht) from the West Coast of Vancouver Island, Canada.

I completed a master's degree in Indigenous language revitalization at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. I had a great time because we were included in the academy, yet we were also sort of "insulated activists" within it.

I say “insulated” because it wasn’t until I got to my doctorate program, which wasn’t an Indigenous program, that I realized I had shared so much in common with the people in my master’s program—things we didn’t have to explain to each other, like language endangerment or why I want to speak my language. We didn’t have to explain shared traumas from Canadian history or try to justify our stance, we didn’t have to educate people about the [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#), the marginalization and criminalization of our people.

I found it lonely and alienating. It was crushing and draining. The ideas that Hesquiaht people shared—that our knowledge is ancient and that it continues through us because of our connections to our places—were not in my classroom anymore. It became the hardest time of my life, and I went home after passing the comprehensive examinations knowing that our knowledge comes from our land and all of our relations, but also that none of that was available to me in the university despite all the measures that were in place.

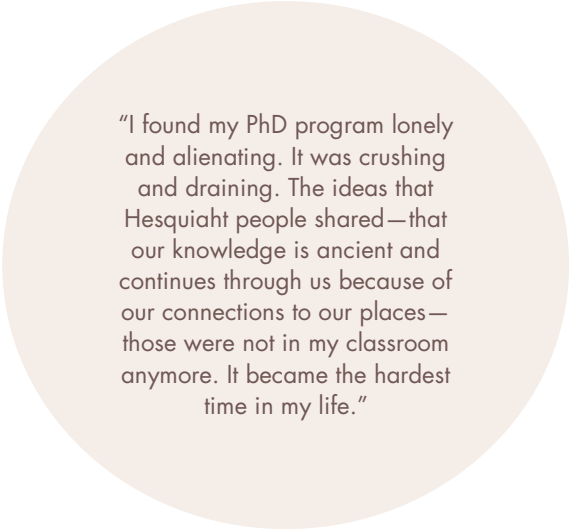
Indigenous people in British Columbia are diverse. Not everybody on campus comes from Hesquiaht. So where is the genesis of knowledge for you? Well for me, it was *not* the University of Victoria.

This is where I am still really stuck. I have a lot of pain associated higher education now.

Since I don’t have the energy to take on a service role in my community in addition to all of the stuff that I discovered I needed to contribute to the university community, I decided: I’m already from a violent community, I don’t need to join another one. I decided to go back to my community and do the work there.

I come from a strong people who have always been there and will always remain there. I gather hope from all of the talk about collaboration and co-creation, the drive to create a better space.

I do think it is going to take more than one generation to get there.



“I found my PhD program lonely and alienating. It was crushing and draining. The ideas that Hesquiaht people shared—that our knowledge is ancient and continues through us because of our connections to our places—those were not in my classroom anymore. It became the hardest time in my life.”

The challenge of Indigenous higher learning in an African neo-colony

Ndawula Wangoola Wangoola

Prof. Wangoola Wangoola is the Nabyama and founder of the Uganda-based Mpambo Afrikan Multiversity, a community-based centre for mother-tongue higher learning and the advancement of Indigenous knowledge, ways of knowing and scholarship. Mpambo Afrikan Multiversity connected with a global network of transformative praxists, scholars, activists and peoples working toward liberation, starting with education.


We came up with the concept of a multiversity that could anchor the generation of knowledge rooted in African history, worldviews, epistemology and African cognitive mapping—a learning centre to attract the best and bravest to realize the dream of the self-determined African Black nation.

In our experience, it has been necessary to develop our theory of Mpambo liberation education for oppressed peoples, nations and countries. We have had to develop and prepare our own theories, content and instruction materials because we found that we did not have existing materials or books in Uganda that would bring out Indigenous knowledge.

But liberation and education of the oppressed cannot make much headway without spirituality, so working closely with priests of African spirituality, we have come up with a belief system and a faith by which the modern African by choice can live a fulfilling modern life and walk in the light of his or her ancestors without need of the bible or the Koran—two books that have been central in subjugating us and capturing our minds. Until an African can distance themselves from the bible and the Koran, they cannot be free.

The multiversity is basically for decolonization. The goal is to build truly African centres of higher learning because, as of now, we really have no African education system. What we have is a system for the education of our children in exotic languages to ensure parents cannot reproduce themselves. We have no African university. What we have are American ideological institutions. These cannot be full centres of learning because they rely on a foreign language.

We have concluded that the way to build higher education in Uganda is to start with primary schools so that we raise our own students through the ranks. That way, we shall be able to create a critical mass of people who think Indigenously and can be weaned from the miseducation of several generations.



“We have concluded that the way to build higher education in Uganda is to start with primary schools so that we raise our own students through the ranks. This way, we shall be able to create a critical mass of people who think Indigenously and can be weaned from the miseducation of several generations.”

Findings in higher education

Stephanie Roy

Ms. Roy is Anishinaabe kwe, a member of M'Chigeeng First Nation on Manitoulin Island, Ontario, Canada, and is from the Crane clan. A researcher with the Indigenous Advanced Education and Skills Council (IAESC), she is an experienced director who has worked in the Indigenous education and training sector in Ontario for more than 20 years. She is a member of the Ontario College of Teachers and is a certified principal in Ontario.

To decolonize, western institutions must recognize that the post-secondary tradition in Canada of which they are a part is based on the assumption of Euro-western intellectual superiority and white

supremacy—and they must work to change those assumptions. As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission made clear, achieving reconciliation requires not just the development of education systems that engage in Indigenous ways of knowing and being for the benefit of Indigenous students, but also systems that will teach all Canadians the truth about Indigenous peoples’ history, culture and heritage.


In our research, the demographics of leadership and other criteria make it clear that western institutions are still working toward meaningful decolonization, and that indigenization is likely not possible for them. Indigenization means that an institution is or becomes Indigenous at its very heart: that its leadership is Indigenous, that its programs are by nature Indigenous in focus, and that its structures, systems and pedagogy primarily reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

The most obvious explanation for why indigenization is likely not possible for western institutions is that indigenization must be led by Indigenous people. As well, institutional indigenization would require changes to the core of western public institutions that go beyond decolonization. Therefore, we have argued that decolonization, rather than indigenization, should be the goal of western institutions. Western institutions have a great deal of work to do in this regard. They must address racism and recognize the sophistication of Indigenous ways of knowing.

Indigenous institutions, on the other hand, are well-positioned to engage in indigenization because they are already Indigenous at their core. They are able to offer fully Indigenous educational experiences that address the needs and desires of their partner communities. On a deeper level, they are at the core of rematriation, of Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching, learning and being.

Indigenous education has always involved assessment and evaluation. The role of a body such as IAESC is in keeping with that. Having an oversight body also supports the accreditation of Indigenous institutions and assures that other institutions and students’ employers will respect it. The vital thing is that IAESC is Indigenous-led and -governed, and therefore shares a deep cultural understanding that informs the nature of Indigenous institutions.

IAESC is working to ensure that the accredited independent Indigenous institutes’ newly developed credentials are not just a repackaging of western education, but a monumental step forward in developing Indigenous higher education.



“Decolonization, rather than Indigenization, should be the goal of western institutions. These institutions must address racism and recognize the sophistication of Indigenous ways of knowing. Indigenous institutions, on the other hand, can engage in institutional Indigenization because they are already Indigenous at their core.”

The future Inuit Nunangat University

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) is the national representational organization for Canada's 65,000 Inuit, the majority of whom live in the four Nunangat regions in Canada. The comprehensive land claim agreements settled in Inuit Nunangat form a core component of ITK's mandate. These land claims have the status of protected treaties under Canada's Constitution. ITK advocates for policies and programs that impact the health, social, cultural, political and environmental issues facing the Inuit today.

Inuit Nunangat is a geographic space in Canada that constitutes a third of Canada's land mass and is the homeland for Canadian Inuit. Voices across Nunangat are uniting in the vision for an Inuit-led university. Inuit say knowledge is not knowledge until it serves to improve the common good.

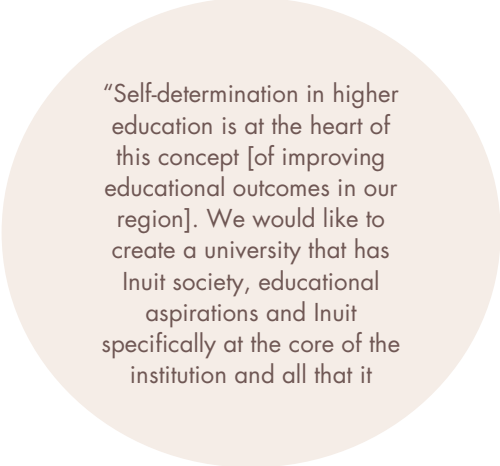
Canada's Governor General, Mary Simon, has said:

"Improving educational outcomes in the Arctic and supporting Indigenous languages to survive and thrive after years of destructive education policy is, at its core, the highest test of nation building. The road to healthy, empowered citizens in the Arctic begins and ends with education."

Nunangat University is a concept that Inuit have been talking about for several decades. Self-determination in higher education is at the heart of this concept. We would like to create a university that has Inuit society, educational aspirations and Inuit specifically at the core of the institution and all that it offers. Part of the reason why an Inuit university is so needed is the opportunity for Inuit not to run into barriers and also not to have to leave our homeland in order to pursue higher education.

We realize that we are not alone in the world as Indigenous peoples with barriers and challenges to higher education. But because of our location geographically in the world, we have barriers that many other people do not.

As Inuit, we can be experts in our own fields and knowledge systems. But we need all the support we can get from as many people as possible. We need the minds of the Inuit and those who support this initiative to come forward and help us make the most of what we can do here.



"Self-determination in higher education is at the heart of this concept [of improving educational outcomes in our region]. We would like to create a university that has Inuit society, educational aspirations and Inuit specifically at the core of the institution and all that it

Closing: Traditional Warrior Dance

Daryl Kelvin Coy Kootenay and Kyle Logan Standingready-Snow

Daryl and Kyle provided a gift of song and dance to honour the speakers, the people attending the event here in Barcelona and virtually. As Indigenous peoples in Canada, it is important to give back. By offering their song as a gift, they would like to highlight the importance of song and dance.


As a young person growing up, the powwow trail is where I learned many stories, many values and beliefs, and where I really embedded the identity of who I am and where I came from. I believe that song and dance are instrumental and foundational to higher education. They recount the stories and the history that we have lived through and survived. At one time, my ancestors could be imprisoned or hanged for doing what we are going to do right now. That is something I have never lived through, but I can still feel the importance of how much pride we need when we wear our regalia.

Song and dance teach us how to be better leaders and community members. They teach us how to engage with our Elders and our youth, our brothers and sisters and our aunties and uncles. When we dance, we are dancing for the people, for the sky, for the moon, for the women and children, for our Elders, for the winds and the grass, for the trees—and most importantly for our hearts. We dance for the people, we dance for healing, we dance for the rain, and we dance for all that is necessary for us to live a beautiful life with everyone.

The dance we are about to perform is the original dance of our people. It comes from the prairies and mountains of North America. Many family members have contributed to the regalia we are wearing today. Every bead and feather that is part of this regalia came from a place of deep listening, a place of deep connection, across generations. The feathers that we wear today are given to us through acts of due diligence, of kindness and service to our community. They represent the growth of our selves mentally, spiritually and emotionally.

Our dance will tell the story of a warrior and what he did in battle, or perhaps what he did going on an expedition or simply a walk into the woods and mountains. The song was composed by our drum brothers back home who took care of us and helped us as young men and boys. It talks about how this is the closing of a celebration. We're calling people to say, "This is your last time to dance. Come and enjoy yourselves."

But we're also saying that it's not goodbye, we will see you later.



"When we dance, we are dancing for our people, for the sky, for the moon, for the women and children, for our elders, for the winds and the grass, the trees—and most importantly, for our hearts. We dance for the people, we dance for healing, we dance for the rain, and we dance for all that is necessary for us to live a beautiful life with everyone."