INDIGENIZING THE CANADIAN ACADEMY

SUSAN PORTER, DEAN & VICE PROVOST, GRADUATE & POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES, UBC
We acknowledge that we are gathered today on the ancestral and traditional lands of the Cherokee and Shawnee peoples.
It is clearly our wisdom and our duty...to prepare the Red man for a higher civilization.

If anything is to be done with the Indian, we must catch him very young.

States shall:
• Provide redress with respect to harms done
• Combat prejudice & ensure dignity and understanding of Indigenous cultures, traditions, histories, & aspirations
• Continue to improve conditions – economic, educational, health, social...

Getting to the truth was hard, but getting to reconciliation will be harder.
It is clear that the schools have been, arguably, the most damaging of the many elements of Canada’s colonization of this land’s original peoples and, as their consequences still affect the lives of Aboriginal people today, they remain so.

—John S. Milloy, A National Crime
Reconciliation requires:
• **Public truth sharing, healing of relationships**
• **Repairing damage, providing reparations, closing gaps, committing to mutual respect**
• **Preventing any action that deprives Indigenous peoples of their cultural values or ethnic identities**
• **Preventing any forced assimilation or integration**
• **Ensuring Indigenous self-determination, culture and language revitalization**
• **Ensuring all Canadians understand the history and legacy of residential schools, treaties, rights, and positive contributions of Indigenous people**
• **Addressing ongoing legacies of colonialism**
A reconciled, just (decolonized) academy

University mostly unchanged

Diversity of faculty, staff, students; support for their adaptation, success

Reconciliation indigenization – relevant education, respect and consensus on ideals (e.g. knowledges, relationships)

Decolonial indigenization - wholesale overhaul; reorient privilege and power

University changed

A healthy academy

Effective mental health services

Early identification of mental health problems

Positive environment & culture conducive to wellbeing

*Gaudry & Lorenz (2018). AlterNative 14:218
DIVERSITY AND SUPPORT

Pre-graduate programs
Recruitment
Assured funding
Places/opportunities for learning, community
Peer and faculty support, mentoring
Academic programs
Indigenous-relevant services

Community:
- SAGE (started in B.C., 2005)
  - Indigenous grad community
  - Peer and faculty mentoring
  - Cultural practices, social activities
  - Workshops, research presentations

Academic programs across Canada:
- MBA in Aboriginal Business & Leadership
- MSW in Indigenous Trauma & Resiliency
- MA/PhD in Indigenous Studies
- MA (& other) in Indigenous Language Revitalization
- Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Nationhood
- Many more…
DIVERSITY AND SUPPORT

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Recruitment
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Indigenous places of learning, community
Peer and faculty support, mentoring
Academic programs
Indigenous-relevant services
“Inclusion is not a strategy to help people fit into the systems and structure which exist in our societies; it is about transforming those systems and structures to make it better for everyone. Inclusion is about creating a better world for everyone.”

- Kristen Pelletier, co-founder, Next Frontier Inclusion collaborative
RECONCILIATION INDIGENIZATION

- formal apologies
- renewed/reconfigured relationships with local Indigenous community/ies
- land acknowledgments
- Indigenous physical structures & modifications
- Indigenous curriculum content
- Indigenous language courses

- Transformed research approaches with Indigenous people, communities
- Process/policy adaptations – e.g., elders on supervisory committees, alternative formats/languages of dissertations, Indigenous ceremonies at defenses, defenses held in Indigenous communities
DECOLONIAL INDIGENIZATION

- Weaving with **equal** consideration Indigenous ways of learning, values, relationships, expression & epistemologies into academic culture, coursework, research, policies, structures
- Expanding what ‘counts’ as knowledge in courses, theses & dissertations, promotion & tenure criteria
- Unsettling colonial worldviews in all curricula
- ‘Requiring **all of us** to live the Seven Grandfather teachings’
  - Respect, Honesty, Truth, Humility, Courage, Wisdom, and Love
- Significant structural/political/power reorganization

“Transforming the intellectual relationship between the Indigenous and Enlightenment traditions of the academy...which is actually consistent with the purpose of the university in the first place, to expand the bounds of the human imagination and explore truth in all its forms”
imagine the grief my wife felt as she told me her story with the tears streaming down her face.

as indigenous peoples we carry the grief of colonization of many family and friends within our hearts as i carry on i am committed to maintaining my cultural/spiritual connection to my culture and its knowledge.

i am also an academic working on my fifth university degree which is amazing to me given that one generation ago the federal government only provided my mother with a grade five residential school education. in grade eight i was told that i could not be an architect.
Power and determination needed to move forward to a sustainable future

Canoe (Indigenous people) and longboat (Canadians) travelling forward side-by-side

Reconciliation Pole, UBC