



CONCORDIA
UNIVERSITY
OF **EDMONTON**

| Faculty
of Education

Embedded Approach to Indigenous Peoples' Historical and Cultural Topics

Bachelor of Education (After Degree) Program

(May 2017)



Rationale: A Duty to Learn

A ruling by former Justice Lance Finch of the British Columbia Court of Appeal emphasizes that legal scholars and practitioners have a 'duty to learn' about Aboriginal legal orders (Askew, 2014)¹. In the same way, educators have a duty to learn about Indigenous historical and cultural topics to ensure that their instructional approaches acknowledge and seek to eliminate colonial pedagogical practices (Battiste, 2013)². This must be undertaken with the direct assistance and support of local Indigenous leaders, scholars, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Cultural Advisors.

Concordia University of Edmonton engaged Indigenous consultants (4FAKT Consulting) to support the development of an institutional Indigenous strategy. Through the use of talking circles and relationship building, the consulting group provided recommendations to Concordia University of Edmonton (CUE). Two critical actions being planned are to enhance and support the university experience of Indigenous students, and to enhance the Indigenous cultural and historical knowledge of faculty, staff, and students at Concordia.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) event in Edmonton (March 2014) and the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*³ provided critical provocations for the Education Faculty to work more closely with local Indigenous communities, scholars, and leaders towards the goal of enhancing the knowledge and experience of the faculty, staff, and students in the Bachelor of Education (After Degree) program. The Bachelor of Education (After Degree) (BEd(AD)) is a two-year elementary generalist program leading to a degree that fulfills the requirements for certification as a teacher in Alberta. The focus of the BEd(AD) is to support pre-service teachers in their development of theoretical and practical knowledge of the field. This knowledge includes knowledge of histories and cultures of Indigenous communities in Alberta and in Canada. To support this important work, the Faculty of Education in its delivery of the BEd(AD) program has adopted an Embedded Approach to Indigenous Peoples' Historical and Cultural Topics. It is our duty to learn.

¹ Askew, H. (2014). Indigenous Legal Traditions and the Challenge of Intercultural Legal Education in Canadian Law Schools. Retrieved March 29, 2016, from http://www.oba.org/CBAMediaLibrary/cba_on/pdf/Foundation/StudiesFellowshipHannaAskew.pdf

² Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*. Saskatoon, SK, Canada: Purich Publishing Ltd.

³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action. (2015). Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Retrieved from http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf



Objectives of the Embedded Approach

The objectives are:

- to engage with local Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Cultural Advisors, and scholars to seek their guidance and wisdom about program content and delivery;
- to embed topics and concepts related to Indigenous Peoples' histories and cultures in Alberta and in Canada in all courses of the BEd(AD) program;
- to raise intercultural awareness and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples of Canada.

Current Actions

The Embedded Approach within the BEd(AD) requires ongoing professional learning on the part of faculty and staff. Actions have been undertaken to address the findings of the TRC and the *Calls to Action* in respectful and honouring ways. Selected topics are embedded within BEd(AD) program courses. This Embedded Approach ensures that Indigenous Peoples' historical and cultural topics are examined in an intentional manner over the two years of the program. As well, this approach ensures continuity across the courses. To date, several historical and cultural topics have been included within BEd(AD) courses:

- Year One
 - Treaties (6,7,8) and Métis Settlements of Alberta (EDUC 551)
 - Current educational achievement of Indigenous children and youth in Alberta (EDUC 551)
 - Connection with local Indigenous artists and writers, and their work (EDUC 511)
- Year Two
 - Oral traditions (EDUC 521)
 - Traditional knowledge systems and ways of knowing (EDUC 523)
 - Residential schools and impacts of trauma (EDUC 524)
 - The Blanket Exercise – in conjunction with the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Unit of the Edmonton Public School Board (EDUC 542)



Relationship Development

Dr. Edgar Schmidt, the designated Faculty of Education Lead for the Embedded Approach to Indigenous Peoples' Historical and Cultural Topics, has established and continues to develop relationships with local Indigenous organizations, leaders, scholars, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Cultural Advisors. These relationships are essential to ensure that the approach is respectful and honouring of Indigenous peoples.

Current and potential relationships with local Indigenous organizations, and other education stakeholders, include:

- Edmonton Public School Board – First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Unit
- Edmonton Catholic School District – Aboriginal Learning Services
- Alberta Education – First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Department
- Advanced Education
- Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)
- Bent Arrow Healing Society
- 4FAKT Consulting (Principals - Faron Cahoon, Lewis Cardinal, Damian Abrahams, Paul Beach)
- Other provincial school districts

In addition, the wisdom and knowledge of Indigenous scholars continue to inform the Embedded Approach adopted by the Faculty of Education.

Action Plans

CUE has been provided funding from Alberta Education for the **FNMI Readiness Project for Teacher Education**. The purpose of the 18-month project is to develop the knowledge, experience, and instructional approaches of our Faculty of Education faculty and staff about Indigenous Peoples' Historical and Cultural Topics, which in turn is to support pre-service teacher education in the province and across Canada.

Our Faculty of Education recognizes the critical mandate of what Justice Murray Sinclair, the Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) terms 'education for reconciliation.' Our Faculty of Education is undertaking an extended period of study and reflection about Indigenous Peoples' Historical and Cultural Topics that will lead to our personal and professional 'education for reconciliation'.

Our Faculty of Education's specific role is to undertake our duty to learn, as citizens of Canada and as instructors to the next generation of educators who will teach in Alberta, across Canada, and around the world. We recognize that in undertaking our duty to learn, we are taking action to be knowledgeable as citizens of Canada and as instructors of pre-service teachers. Charlene Bearhead, the Education Lead with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) talks about 'ReconciliACTION.' She credits Stan Wesley, an Anishnabe mentor from Ontario, with the



term 'ReconciliACTION' and notes that it is through action that we bring about change. We recognize that it is through our actions as faculty and staff members that we support the critical work of reconciliation in our country.

The faculty and staff in the Faculty of Education are working together with other Concordia colleagues and with Indigenous organizations, leaders, and scholars to:

- deepen faculty and staff's knowledge and experience about Indigenous Peoples' Historical and Cultural Topics;
- become familiar with local Indigenous Peoples' cultural and ceremonial protocols as a component of experiential learning;
- address the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in courses;
- develop promising pedagogical practices in preservice education;
- increase pre-service teachers' understanding of current educational achievement of Indigenous children and youth;
- expand the inclusion of Indigenous topics across all BEd(AD) program courses, and extend into undergraduate Education Minor courses (e.g. the inclusion of HIST 369 *Indigenous Peoples and Canada Since 1800* in the Education Minor and the Early Childhood Education Minor – commencing in the Fall semester 2016);
- extend access to appropriate instructional resources (i.e. children's literature, professional resources) for pre-service teachers to use in their coursework and in their field experiences, through Concordia's Embedded Librarianship program;
- identify foundational knowledge about Indigenous Peoples' Historical and Cultural topics for inclusion in CUE's proposed Master of Education in School Leadership degree.

Accountability and Monitoring for Effectiveness Process

The faculty and staff of the Faculty of Education seek evidence in the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes of faculty and staff related to the Embedded Approach. The accountability process requires the Faculty of Education to:

- engage in a process of study and reflection, as individual instructors and as members of the Faculty of Education about Indigenous Peoples' Historical and Cultural Topics;
- review all course syllabi to ensure that Indigenous Peoples' Historical and Cultural Topics are addressed and that supports for instructors are provided (e.g. Indigenous scholars and leaders as presenters, and resources, both online and print);
- ensure that key concepts and topics are integrated across all courses offered within the Faculty of Education;
- review annually the effectiveness of the Embedded Approach with faculty and staff in the Faculty of Education through processes such as the Education Faculty Annual Report and each faculty member's Annual Report on Professional Activities;
- establish a research program to examine student foundational knowledge, attitudes, and understanding of Indigenous Peoples' Historical and Cultural Topics at the beginning of Year One and at the conclusion of Year Two of the BEd(AD) program, to monitor growth over the duration of the program.

