

Indigenizing the Curriculum in the Classroom: A Modest ‘How to’ Blueprint

By Spyridon Kotsovilis Ph.D.
Assistant Professor (Teaching Stream)
University of Toronto Mississauga¹

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Introduction

Discussions on and efforts at decolonizing the curriculum in North American Political Science Higher Education currently underway are important as they are overdue. We have come a long way since the first calls to do so in higher education (Rodney, Saul and Arrighi 1967 – in Weber 2024), but a lot remains to be deliberated, let alone act upon. There is debate on what decolonizing the curriculum means, as answers range from metaphors and symbolic changes that would keep it a ‘vague, imagined ideal’ (Cote-Meek and Moeke-Pickering 2020) to fundamental overhaul, like ‘resisting and radically unlearning the harmful legacy of colonization, by interrogating and dismantling the power structures that carry legacies of colonialism’ (Mintz 2021).²

Indigenizing

Yet, one often underemphasized, or neglected, dimension of how to promote cultural inclusivity, reorient knowledge production, dismantle colonial power structures and create

¹ Corresponding e-address: spyridon.kotsovilis@utoronto.ca

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² See also Hewitt J. G. (2016). Indigenous Restorative Justice: Approaches, Meaning & Possibility. University of New Brunswick Law Journal, 67, 313-335 and Dei, G. J. S. (2020). Decolonizing Education: Implications for the Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy. Delmore Buddy Daye Learning Institute, Dec 18: 2020, <https://dbdli.ca/>

equitable ways of knowing in the university classroom (Gaudy and Lorenz 2018) involves indigenizing the curriculum.³ If decolonizing the curriculum suggests removing, unlearning, or undoing (Brant and Garview 2022), then, indigenizing – the decentering of colonial narratives and efforts to incorporate Indigenous knowledges and pedagogies- could, broadly, involve adding, re-apprehending, and redoing (Attas 2023).⁴

Formal Calls for Action (Canada)

Albeit extremely belatedly, by the end of the first decade of the 21st c., the Canadian government, and society at large began to reckon with past crimes and injustices against Indigenous Peoples in Canada, including redressing the systematic suppression or eradication of Indigenous cultures.⁵ In the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report (2015)⁶ 'Calls to Action' 62-65 refer to education as a vehicle for reconciliation. In particular, although indirectly, two of these point to the responsibilities and opportunities of post-secondary education towards reconciliation and Indigenization: #62ii ["Provide the necessary funding to *post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into Classrooms* (emphasis added)"], and #65 ["We call upon the federal government, through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, post-secondary

³ Gaudry, A., & Lorenz, D. (2018). Indigenization as Inclusion, Reconciliation, and Decolonization: Navigating the Different Visions for Indigenizing the Canadian Academy. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 14(3), 218-227. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180118785382>

⁴ Attas, R. What is Decolonization? What is Indigenization, Centre for Teaching and Learning, Queens University, <https://www.queensu.ca/ctl/resources/decolonizing-and-indigenizing/what-decolonization-what-indigenization> and (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QiCLSONMqU>). Both at Queen's University Centre of Teaching and Learning. The one by Attas is among many definitions of indigenization. Others, like MacDonald (2016) include 'the conscious effort to bring indigenous people, as well as their philosophies and cultures into strategic plans, government roles, academics, research and recruitment.'

⁵ In 2008, the federal government offered a formal apology for the notorious residential schools that had operated from mid-19th c. until the 1990s across Canada with the aim to replace the culture and languages of the Indigenous populations; in 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation commission that had also been established by the government determined that the residential school systems amounted to a cultural genocide of Indigenous people. The urgency of redressing this part of modern Canadian history became more apparent in 2021, when the remains of 215 Indigenous children were discovered at the site of a former residential school in Kamloops, British Columbia, and again in 2022, another 93 were potentially identified also in a BC location.

⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Government of Canada, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525>

institutions and educators, and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and its partner institutions, to establish a national research program with multi-year funding to *advance understanding of reconciliation* (emphasis added)”. Since then, Canadian colleges and universities have become more actively engaged in indigenizing efforts, and have understood the fundamental role they can play both as catalysts for change (Sedafei and Cacciavillani 2024) and in correcting wrongs for the future generation (MacDonald 2016).⁷ In particular, Universities Canada, a national organization representing 97 Canadian universities has set to advance Indigenization in accordance with 13 Principles established in 2015 so they can help lead such efforts.⁸ Among them can be found goals like institutional commitment to develop opportunities for Indigenous students; recognition of the importance of indigenizing curricula; construction of successful experiences and initiatives already in place at universities across Canada; sharing knowledge from promising practices; recognition of the importance of providing greater exposure and knowledge for non-Indigenous students on the realities, histories, cultures and beliefs of Indigenous people in Canada; recognition of the importance of fostering intercultural engagement among Indigenous and non-indigenous students, faculty and staff; and, continuation of listening to and collaborating with Indigenous communities (Universities Canada 2015).

Insufficient Progress

Still, despite notable endeavors to translate them into actionable strategies in higher education, (for example, the 13 Principles, and Pete 2016), they can vary from too little, to too fast - e.g., a ‘rush to Indigenize might do harm’ (MacDonald 2016) - to too vague and too broad. For example, while a lot of Pete’s ‘100 Ways to Indigenize and Decolonize Academic Programs’ includes many important and useful ones, they are not systematically structured

⁷ For example, see University of Toronto’s 2017 *Wecheehetowin* (Cree for Working Together) *TRC Response Report* at <https://www.provost.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Final-Report-TRC.pdf>, and Queen’s University 2022 TRC Report at https://www.queensu.ca/indigenous/sites/oiivwww/files/uploaded_files/TRCTF%20Report%202022%20Web.pdf.

⁸ McTiernan, Tim. ‘Universities will Help Reset Relations Between Indigenous and Non-indigenous People. The Globa and Mail, June 29, 2015.

and range widely in the commitment required and impact aspired; e.g., #51 asks for the recognition and naming of the historic communities in a region, while #63 invites the deconstruction of the construct of racism.⁹ This has been due not only to different geographies, types and sizes of academic institutions, as well as related structural barriers (like the low number of Indigenous students and faculty)¹⁰ but-much like the debates on decolonization- also to the general questions over what indigenizing the curriculum means for pedagogy and research (Gaudy and Lorenz 2018).¹¹ An example includes the ongoing debate about whether land acknowledgments should be part of it; on the one hand they are critiqued as ‘rote obligations’ (DuVal 2025), ‘comfortable diversity’ (Cote-Meek and Moeke-Pickering 2020), ‘moral exhibitionism’ (Wood 2021)¹², performative and forced -and providing a sense of absolution, and excuse (Native Govern Centre) without the need for anything more¹³ - yet, on the other hand, they provide a moment of visibility, recognition and awareness (Minthorn 2022). In general, results have largely been seen as inadequate, or in the case of TRC’s calls related to Education and Reconciliation ‘stalled’ (Indigenous Watchdog 2024).¹⁴ Specifically for Political Science, the picture has been even worse (Ferguson 2016; Bushby 2019).¹⁵

The Role of Instructors

What is to be done? Echoing the above debate, in principle this paper agrees that, rather than a series of fragmented, ad-on, token interventions and occasional addresses,

⁹ Pete, S. (2016). 100 Ways: Indigenizing & Decolonizing Academic Programs. *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 6, 10.5663/aps.v6i1.27455.

¹⁰ Wawmeesh Hamilton. Indigenous Ideals at University. *The Globe and Mail*, October 18, 2017.

¹¹ Also see Samson, N. Indigenization Efforts Vary Widely on Canadian Campuses, *Study Finds*. *University Affairs*, April 16, 2019.

¹² Wood, G. Land Acknowledgments are just Moral Exhibitionism. *The Atlantic Magazine*, Nov. 28, 2021.

¹³ DuVal, K. Enough with the Land Acknowledgements. *The New York Times*, Jan. 5, 2025.

¹⁴ See ‘stalled’ evaluation in Call to action #62, Indigenous Watchdog, <https://www.indigenouswatchdog.org/cta/call-to-action-62/>

¹⁵ Ferguson observes the very small number of Native American faculty, the discipline’s lack of focus on Indigenous issues, the neglect of Indigenous perspectives, and the lack of Indigenous work assigned. In Ferguson K. (2016). Why Does Political Science Hate American Indians? *Perspectives on Politics* 14(4):1029-1038. The same can be seen through an examination of the contents of main International Relations vs. other journals (see Bushby, J. (2019, September 12). Bringing Indigenous Experiences into International Relations. *The Duck of Minerva*. <https://www.duckofminerva.com/2019/09/bringing-indigenous-experiences-into-international-relations.html>)

indigenizing the curriculum in the context of higher education, and specifically in Political Science must be a sustained, continuous process that ‘dismantles and rebuilds’ (Hewitt 2016; Dei 2020) while also builds connections and bridges that include Indigenous people, histories and knowledge. At the same time, while efforts to decolonize the discipline’s planning, context and expectations optimally require concerted work undertaken by multiple institutional and community actors with committed resources and a long horizon, as well as top-down strategies, agendas and larger initiatives, nonetheless, small, curricular, pedagogical and evaluative steps and bottom-up actions taken by individual educators can also contribute to this change.

A Modest ‘How To’ Indigenizing Guide

Towards this goal, this paper presents a modest ‘how to’ guide for Political Science educators with a series of recommendations across a range of *curricular, pedagogical, research* and *professional development* categories expanding from the classroom outwards, coupled with examples applicable beyond the Canadian context.¹⁶ Besides proposing new and incorporating existing suggestions, this is meant as a repertoire that, in contrast to previous efforts, classifies, structures, and illustrates them with examples in ways that can render them tangible steps of an action plan that one can pursue systematically. The sequencing of these recommendations reflects a temporal and spatial order that (a) begins with the instructor’s own expanding knowledge on Indigenous topics, (b) is then manifested via in-classroom implementations, and continues to radiate outwards beyond it to one’s (c) institution and (d) the broader academic and social communities at large, with the impact increasing. This can be visualized as a series of three concentric circles (classroom, institution, community) intersected by four quadrants – or domains – representing the four categories (curricula, pedagogies, research and professional development). Recommendations are located within this space (figure 1, opposite page). The following pages include their brief description coupled with examples.

¹⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, 2015, https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

These are derived from courses designed and taught by the author on International Relations, International Law, and Research Methods in Political Science, from exploring Indigenous resources within and beyond the university, from examining Indigenous-topic research in Ontario, from embarking in academic cooperation with Indigenous scholars across Canada, and from related engagement with professional associations in the discipline.

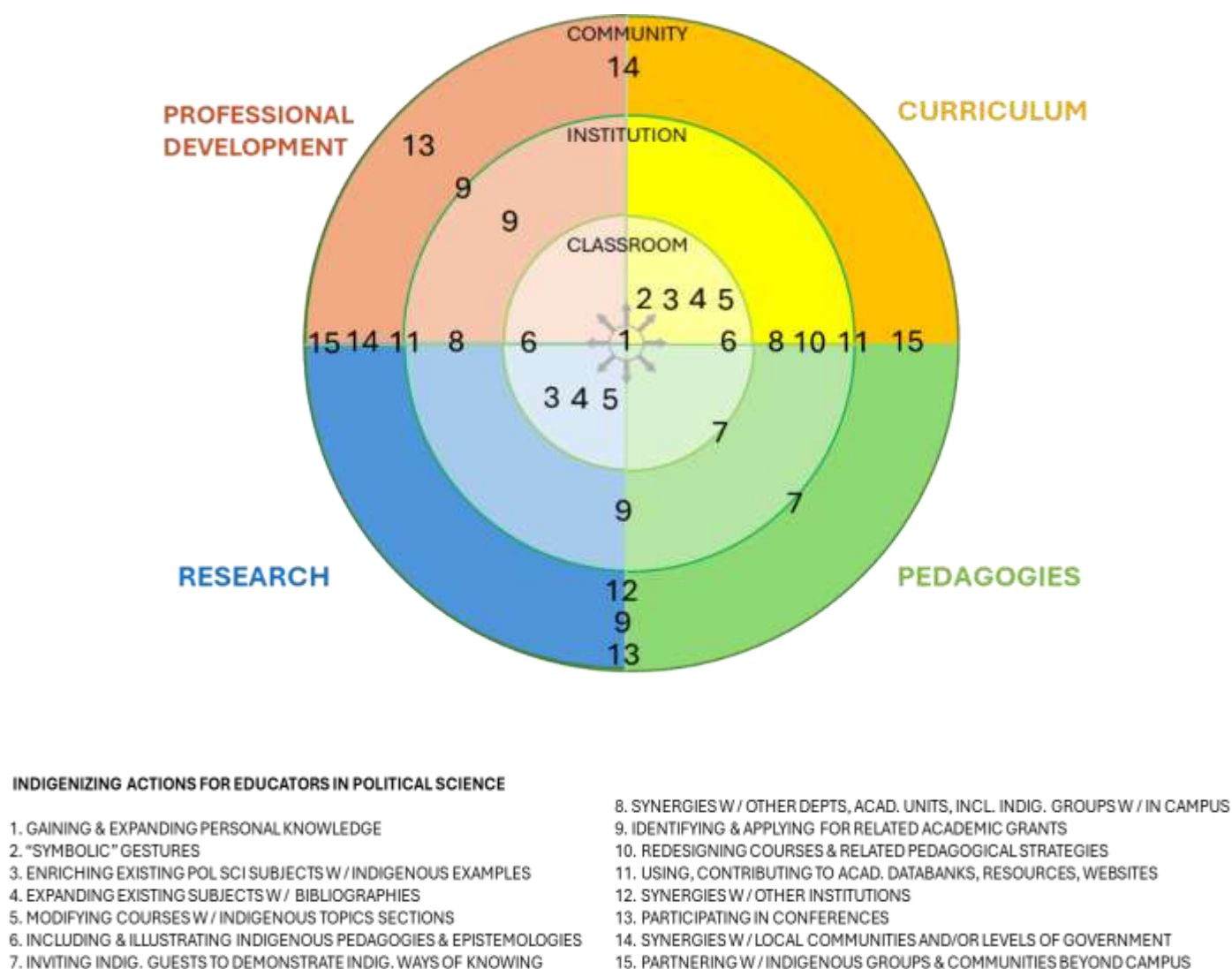


Figure 1. Indigenizing Actions for Educators in Political Science.

THE INSTRUCTOR

1. GAINING & EXPANDING PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE

It all starts with the instructor / educator - their beginning or continuing to learn about Indigenous cultures, histories, teachings, epistemologies and ontologies. Reading works that can provide or solidify a foundation upon which to build is an important first step, including academic and non-academic sources, and non-fiction and fiction. A necessarily small sample of such volumes both by Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors includes Stannard, D. E. (1992). *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World* (Oxford University Press); King, T. (2003) *The Truth about Stories : A Native Narrative* (House of Anansi Press)¹⁷; Cardinal, T. (ed.) (2004). *Our Story : Aboriginal Voices on Canada's Past* (Doubleday Canada); Blackhawk, N. (2006). *Violence Over the Land : Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Harvard University Press); Wagamese, R. (2012). *Indian Horse : A Novel* (Douglas & McIntyre); Talaga, T. (2017). *Seven Fallen Feathers : Racism, Death, and Hard Truths in a Northern City* (Anansi); Adams, H. (1975). *Prison of grass : Canada from the native point of view* (New Press); Daschuk, J. W. (2019). *Clearing the Plains : Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Indigenous Life* (New ed., University of Regina Press); Craft, A. and Regan, P. (eds.) (2020). *Pathways to Reconciliation* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press); Dion, S. D. (2022). *Braided Learning: Illuminating Indigenous Presence through Art and Story* (UBC Press); Keen, T. (2024). *Rediscovering Turtle Island: A First Peoples' Account of the Sacred Geography of America* (Bear & Company). Additional resources include free online courses, like Dr. Paul L. Gareau's University of Alberta's *Indigenous Canada*, which as of early 2025 had a cumulative enrollment of over 600,000.¹⁸

¹⁷ This is the print form of King's 2003 CBC Massey Lectures – 'widely regarded as the most important public lectures in Canada [since 1961...] these annual lectures are given by a noted scholar or public figure.' (CBC Massey Lectures website). King's lectures can be listened to here <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/the-2003-cbc-massey-lectures-the-truth-about-stories-a-native-narrative-1.2946870>

¹⁸ See Indigenous Canada, University of Alberta, <https://www.ualberta.ca/en/admissions-programs/online-courses/indigenous-canada/index.html>

THE CLASSROOM

2. 'SYMBOLIC' GESTURES

A land acknowledgement at the beginning of each course may not be sufficient but is necessary to recognize the Indigenous history of the land where one's educational institution stands. Research into which Indigenous peoples are associated with the location of an institution, their relationships to (including spiritual ones) and their stories connected to the land, as well as an understanding of the treaties and agreements is also an important step of recognition as well as learning for the non-native.¹⁹ Further, recognizing specific commemorative days is also important, like June 21- National Indigenous Peoples Day-and September 30-National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, and on the latter, people have taken to wear clothing items of orange color to mark it.

3. ENRICHING EXISTING POLITICAL SCIENCE SUBJECTS WITH INDIGENOUS EXAMPLES

This step involves including Indigenous empirical examples to illustrate concepts in Political Science courses. For example, in International Relations, the case of the 17th c. Iroquois War - the conflicts involving the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, numerous other First Nations, and French colonial forces is a good empirical example to discuss warfare, alliance formation and strategies. To demonstrate bandwagoning alternatives to balancing the example of the Spanish-Aztec War of 1519-21 following the Spanish invasion of present-day Mexico can be used – where Cortés pit local indigenous kingdoms against each other and enlisted local tributaries to the Aztec Empire against the sacking of Tenochtitlan (now modern Mexico City) in 1521. In International Law, cases like *Lovelace*

¹⁹ Amy Desjarlais - the lead facilitator, Rebirthed Teachings, in the Office of the Vice-President, Equity and Community Inclusion of Toronto Metropolitan University, speaks about four pillars of land acknowledgments (knowing treaties and agreements, knowing the stories of the land, knowing the nations of people and learn how to pronounce their names, and, know how you connect to the land). This suggests going beyond a simple reading of the acknowledgement. See New resources available to create personalized land acknowledgments at TMU, Toronto Metropolitan University, August 19, 2024, <https://www.torontomu.ca/news-events/news/2024/08/new-resources-available-to-create-personalized-land-acknowledgment/>

(1977, Supreme Court of Canada), and the *Mayagna Awas Tingni Community v. Nicaragua* (2001, Inter-American Court of Human Rights) can help illustrate Human Rights, and the examination of the Great Peace of Montreal (1701) and the Covenant Chain Wampum Belt (1764) can provide Indigenous examples of -and approaches to- treaties.

4. EXPANDING EXISTING SUBJECTS WITH BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Another step is to recommend and add to bibliographies of existing courses, sources of Indigenous content and focus. Below are some examples that can enrich syllabi in Political Science.

On global Indigenous Politics: Lightfoot, S. (2016). *Global Indigenous Politics: A Subtle Revolution*. “Worlding Beyond the West” series. Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge.

On International Relations and the history of warfare in North America: Hämäläinen, P. (2022). *Indigenous Continent: The Epic Contest for North America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Co./W.W. Norton & Co.); Chacon, R. J., & Mendoza, R. G. (2007). *North American Indigenous Warfare and Ritual Violence*. University of Arizona Press.

On International Law: Fitzgerald, O., Borrows, J., Chartrand, L. and Schwatz, R. (2019) *Braiding Legal Orders: Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press).

On Comparative Indigenous Studies – the Canadian and US cases: Borrows, J. (2010). *Canada’s Indigenous Constitution* (University of Toronto Press); Garrison, T. A. (ed.) (2014) *American Indian Sovereignty* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press)

On Research Methods: Kovach, M. (2021). *Indigenous Methodologies* (2nd ed.) (University of Toronto Press) ; Archibald, J., Xiiem, Q.Q., Lee-Morgan, J. B, and De Santolo, J. (eds.) *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storytelling as Methodology* (London: Zed/Bloomsbury).

5. MODIFYING COURSES WITH INDIGENOUS TOPICS SECTIONS

Educators can expand the range of many courses in Political Science by modifying existing syllabi and including sections on Indigenous themes or perspectives. For example, in

International Law courses, instead of Indigenous topics and cases being dispersed across weekly themes (e.g., cultural dimensions of genocide in the International Criminal Law section, Indigenous group rights in International Environmental Law and Human Rights, and Indigenous Courts in Judicial Settlements), a number could be encompassed in a stand-alone section/week on Indigenous Law.

6. INCLUDING AND ILLUSTRATING INDIGENOUS PEDAGOGIES AND EPISTEMOLOGIES

In the same spirit as the previous recommendation, one can begin expanding by introducing Indigenous pedagogies and epistemologies. An obvious place to start is with Research Methods in Political Science courses, where Indigenous Methodologies merit their own special section – not only to provide knowledge, but also to highlight contrasts with other methods and generate fruitful debates. Indigenous pedagogies – like story telling – can also be included in instruction modes for courses. One example is using Indigenous survivors’ poems and artwork to introduce students to difficult topics like the history, impact and legacies of the Canadian Residential Schools system in courses like International Law, or Canadian Politics.

7. INVITING INDIGENOUS GUESTS TO DEMONSTRATE INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING

In line with the previous two recommendations, further steps in illustrating and employing Indigenous epistemologies include inviting Indigenous guests to share their perspectives with the class. For example, in a past class taught by the author, for an in-class student debate on International Environmental Law, the guest critic invited was an Indigenous Elder, who at the end of the exercise showcases Indigenous worldviews on the environment and its mismanagement through the main ways Indigenous teaching is done: metaphor, poetry, symbolism, and story-telling conversation, towards facilitating holistic, abductive²⁰

²⁰ Abductive reasoning (Lipscomb) refers to ‘the creative, imaginative or insightful moment in which understanding is grasped’ - connected to personal experience, subjectivity and reflexivity,

interpretations and deriving at meanings. In their formal course evaluations, students were enthusiastic about this visit which, according to one ‘opened their eyes to another truth.’

THE INSTITUTION

8. SYNERGIES WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS AND ACADEMIC UNITS, INCLUDING INDIGENOUS GROUPS & COMMUNITIES WITHIN CAMPUS

Towards expanding indigenizing efforts beyond the classroom, the next level is exploring the resources one’s academic units and overall institution may have to offer, as well as potential collaborations. This can range from engaging with colleagues from other academic departments whose area of study and research may offer complementarities (e.g., History, Sociology – which may offer courses on Indigenous topics that could relate to Political Science), to units directly or indirectly working on similar subjects. For example, the University of Toronto has a Centre for Indigenous Studies, whereas its western campus (Mississauga) also hosts its own UTM Indigenous Centre under the auspices of the university’s Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII) that ‘works to mobilize University of Toronto’s commitments to Truth and Reconciliation as outlined in [... its] report [...and guides] efforts in amplifying Indigenous voices and Indigenous placekeeping on campus.’²¹ In addition, UTM’s Academic Skills Centre also has a ‘Special Projects Officer, Indigenous Curriculum and Pedagogies’, and the campus’ library includes librarians with relevant expertise. Overall, in some cases, depending on the institution’s size, geography, mandate, etc., the resources may be abundant and multiple – from courses to ceremonies and events – whereas in others, they may amount to few individuals and spaces intended to provide support as cultural hubs for indigenous students. Irrespective, one can still try to identify opportunities to engage with them and take advantage of what they can offer. Examples from the author’s own interaction, include (a) inviting the campus’ resident Indigenous Elder to visit a student debate on International Environmental Law, and provide

²¹ See UTM, Office of Indigenous Initiatives, <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/indigenous/>

concluding remarks as mentioned earlier; (b) inviting an Indigenous colleague from the Department of Indigenous Studies to a special roundtable on Indigenous Law and Reconciliation; (c) reaching out to the UTM Indigenous Centre for consultation on resources for this paper, for inquiring about the availability of Indigenous student research assistance (alas not feasible at the time); (d) being in contact for consultation with the Academic Skills Centre's Indigenous Pedagogies' expert; and, (e) cooperating with a campus librarian and inviting them to use their own Indigenous topics' expertise as an example in showcasing archival research techniques to students in a Research Methods' class.

9. IDENTIFYING AND APPLYING FOR RELATED ACADEMIC GRANTS

Within the range of resources available through Indigenous-related centers one can come across opportunities to further their indigenizing via grants. This can be either directly (e.g., grants or funding that these units can disburse), or indirectly (e.g., detailed knowledge of external bursaries, competitions, or special programs). Often there is little broad knowledge about them, so it is useful for one to seek advice on their availability and how they can pursue them. A concrete example from the author's experience involved inquiring for funding to support a special roundtable on Indigenous Law with experts from across Canada and being directed to a province-wide fund available during a specific year for this type of scholarly symposia and activities. The result was a successful PEFAL – Province of Ontario grant that was administered through the OII to the course, thereby resulting in an additional level of intra-institutional cooperation for indigenizing.

10. REDESIGNING COURSES & RELATED PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES

When one is persuaded that, however extensive, existing course syllabi revisions may still not be enough, at the institutional level, they can propose a new course that may better fit to explore Indigenous topics. From the drawing table to the Senate board to the classroom lectern can take time, as course design and approval involve multiple (including bureaucratic) steps. However, working with a variety of units can help identify feasible and

desirable goals, improve the focus on the process, and enrich the resulting course offering. At the University of Toronto, instructors are encouraged to turn to the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation for support with their course design, and many institutions offer this support. Combining it with advice from specific Indigenous Studies units can optimize such a new course's academic and pedagogical objectives.

11. USING AND/OR CONTRIBUTING TO ACADEMIC RESOURCES, WEBSITES, DATABANKS, ETC.

A further step towards getting more involved is making their own resources and expertise (at any level) available to their institution. For example, an educator's efforts to Indigenize their courses may be useful to their department towards evaluating, updating or designing departmental policies, goals and priorities. Often this expands beyond the institution, across the broader academic community (and, as a result, can also be grouped in the subsequent section). Two illustrations of this type of deepening involvement include sharing one's expertise, like UBC Professor of Education and Dean, Dr. Jan Hare's *Reconciliation Through Indigenous Education* course that is offered as a Massive Open Online Course,²² and benefiting from accumulated knowledge, like the Canadian Political Science Association's collection of Indigenous content syllabi materials.²³

THE COMMUNITY

12. SYNERGIES WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Other academic institutions may be more advanced in the range and depth of Indigenous courses and resources they provide, and are very often glad to share their expertise, both via ad hoc or more formal types and channels of cooperation. An example from the author's activities includes reaching out to experts from universities across Canada for a

²² This MOOC is available at edx.org

²³ See <https://cpsa-acsp.ca/syllabus/>

virtual roundtable on Indigenous Law to be viewed by students. This endeavor aimed to introduce a variety of aspects of Indigenous Law to the members of the class and generate discussion between them and the students-something that according to one participant ‘had not been done before outside of law schools.’ The panelists for this virtual roundtable discussion included seven scholars (six of them Indigenous) from law schools and faculties from across Canada with expertise in Indigenous Law. This special event was recorded with permission and posted on the course’s Canvas webpage for the use of the course’s members. In addition, as part of a grant, a total of six podcasts on Indigenous Law by six of the panelists answering to questions submitted by the students were produced and also posted on the course’s website; both the video and podcasts have since become material integrated to that course. An additional benefit from this project included the training, mentoring and involvement of two Teaching Assistants (Political Science) and two Research Assistants (Faculty of Law) in researching -and therefore becoming familiarized with – cases and aspects of Indigenous Law.

12. PARTICIPATING IN CONFERENCES

Identifying and participating in conferences of academic associations that are directly or indirectly related to Indigenous Political Science themes can provide additional layers of acquiring and exchanging knowledge on indigenizing one’s teaching. While not yet an organized section, the American Political Science Association includes an Indigenous Studies Network that offers panels during the annual conference to address topics like Indigenous politics.²⁴ The Canadian Political Science Association has established a Reconciliation Committee that seeks to promote topics of Indigenous nature through various means including its conference panels and workshops.²⁵ In addition, the recently founded interdisciplinary Native American and Indigenous Studies Association also provides opportunities to explore politics-related topics

²⁴ <https://connect.apsanet.org/indigenoustopics/networks-and-associations/>

²⁵ <https://cpsa-acsp.ca/cpsa-reconciliation-committee/> . For example, in the forthcoming 2025 CPSCA Conference/Congress one of the workshops offered – on Environmental Politics – includes in its sub-themes ‘the intersection of Indigenous sovereignty, treaty federalism, land back movements and new extractive bargains of the colonial state.’

via its annual conference.²⁶ An example of this type of engagement includes this author presenting their research on Indigenous Courts in Ontario in a 2023 APSA annual meeting panel on Indigenous Politics.

14. SYNERGIES WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND/OR LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

A number of opportunities examining, promoting, or celebrating civil engagement that include an Indigenous dimension in local communities and varying levels of government can also provide fertile grounds for cooperation with respect to research, interaction, participation, and prospective funding (e.g., provincial grants – like the one detailed in item #9 on this list). An example is the annual municipal celebrations of National Indigenous Peoples' Day in the city of Mississauga of the Greater Toronto Area. It is important to note that these need to be sustained and should not be considered as one-off.

15. PARTNERING WITH INDIGENOUS GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES BEYOND CAMPUS

A final, critical step in this process is the prospect of partnering with Indigenous groups, which can yield direct, active interaction of community members with an educator towards collaborations in a variety of areas, like indigenizing curricula, expanding and informing teaching pedagogies, and conducting research – what is often described as ‘the gift of learning.’ The significance of forming such connections, bridges and relationship cannot be overstated, as Indigenous knowledge is contained within cultural practices (stories, songs, dances, symbolic representations) that emit cues about the history, thoughts and behaviors in the world (Hare), and provides a unique sense of land, space and community, and the experiencing self that Indigenous communities themselves can share, communicate and transmit directly their knowledge, experience, histories, insights, and wisdom.²⁷ An example includes a research project that included the contact and

²⁶ <https://naisa.org/about/>

²⁷ Such prospective collaborations require careful and thoughtful preparations prior, during and after the partnership has concluded. In particular, one must be mindful of the four ‘R’s - respect, reciprocity, relevance and responsibility towards knowledge received (Kirkness and Barnhardt. For an example of the steps and needed input, see a short guide by the University of Manitoba at

interaction with Ontario Indigenous Court officials towards exploring this Mohawk unique legal system.

“How To’ Guide: Aspiring Usefulness

This list with recommendations is neither the first, nor claims to be a complete one towards indigenizing one’s classroom. But with existing guidelines being either too broad (e.g., TRC Calls for Action #62-#65; the ‘13 Principles’) or too dispersed (e.g., Pete), it aspires to provide an ordered, structured, achievable set of recommendations for any instructor. These are also accompanied by concrete examples that can further illustrate how one could proceed to indigenize their curricula, teaching, research and professional development in small, but incremental steps. Their visualization in this guide as a set of actions spanning three concentric, quartered circles also serves to locate, connect and justify their spatial and temporal position, and demonstrate existing and potential connections among them. Further, this diagram suggests growing and deepening levels of interaction, as well as feedback and engagement beginning with individual growth and expanding from the classroom to one’s academic institution to the community (figure 2). It can also serve as a guide, a map to consolidate their learning and expand their actions.

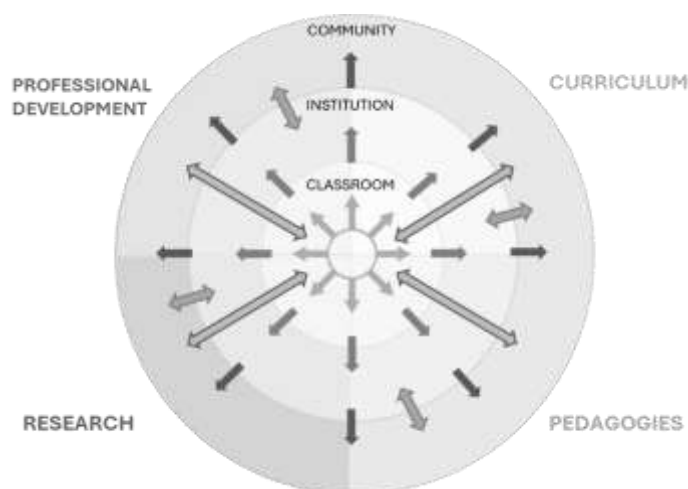


Figure 2. Expanding Indigenization: growth, interactions, and engagement.

<https://umanitoba.ca/sites/default/files/2021-05/a-pathway-for-indigenous-community-engagement-infographic.pdf>

Conclusions

The modest guide presented here is not meant as a tokenist, ‘to-tick-off’ list – that would rightly invite criticism of it as a reflex rather than the reflect it aspires to – but as part of a process. Naturally, this is not a panacea, and it remains important to reiterate that decolonizing and indigenizing Political Science necessitates concerted work undertaken by multiple institutional and community actors with adequate resources, time and strategies. This paper does not argue that educators can do it alone, and it can be easy for one to fall short or become complacent after a few steps. After all, many of the recommendations point to the links to a variety of institutional and -especially- Indigenous actors, who can play an increasing role in one’s efforts to indigenize their classroom, and whose input can be essential. At the same time, this work proposes that small and consistent, curricular, pedagogical and research steps and bottom-up actions taken by individual educators are an important place to start from. Looking at Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Committee’s calls for action, post-secondary²⁸ education institutions have a ‘fundamental role to play in correcting wrongs [...] They can be the starting point of the process of institutional decolonization’ (MacDonald 2016). Within this framework, educators find themselves on the front line and can take a series of incremental actions that can contribute to indigenizing efforts. In other words, it is in the classroom – where individual educators’ actions begin to incorporate Indigenous experiences, knowledges and pedagogies towards empowering Indigenous perspectives and enriching student learning – where the effort to indigenize the Political Science curriculum begins. And while a single individual cannot singlehandedly transform the practices of our discipline, cumulatively efforts by educators to indigenize, one classroom at a time, can add up to – and perhaps, cascade into – needed change (figure 3).

²⁸ Including in improving this guide.



Figure 3. Being part of change, one classroom at a time.

In closing, this essay wishes to emphasize that despite incidental or deliberate ways to politicize Indigenization, this is not and should not be a politicized issue, but one of (cultural) inclusion, (social) fairness, and (restorative) justice. Moreover, such efforts should not involve only or mostly Indigenous peoples, students and scholars, with many Indigenous inclusion policies expecting them ‘to bear the burden of change.’²⁹ The principle ‘Nothing about us without us’ has to be respected,³⁰ and the expertise of Indigenous students and scholars remains essential in this undertaking (Pete 2024). But, in accordance with ‘*tapwe*’ - one of the anchoring concepts of Indigenous teachings and knowledge that can be translated as truth, validity and trustworthiness, as well as dependability, integrity and personal credibility - it is all educators, not necessarily out of any political or social solidarity (as ‘non-indigenous allies’), but as a matter of responsibility, decency, morality and humanity – who must also do our part, one action at a time.³¹

²⁹ Episknew J. A. (2013). Indigenizing University Administration of Tawaw ci? (Take 2). In Smith M. (Ed.), *Transforming the Academy: Indigenous Education, Knowledge, and Relations* (pp. 64–68).

³⁰ Creating content for or about Indigenous Peoples, British Columbia, January 26, 2024, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/services-for-government/service-experience-digital-delivery/web-content-development-guides/web-style-guide/writing-guide-for-indigenous-content/creating-content-for-or-about-indigenous-peoples>

³¹ In the words of a famous 1980s song by the Australian band ‘Midnight Oil’: ‘The time has come to say fair’s fair / To pay the rent, to pay our share.’ Midnight Oil: ‘Beds are Burning’ (1987) at <https://www.songfacts.com/lyrics/midnight-oil/beds-are-burning>

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