

# NIUSLA SUMMIT 2025

HONOURING INDIGENOUS  
KNOWLEDGES AT  
CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES



SUMMARY REPORT



**NIUSLA**  
NATIONAL INDIGENOUS UNIVERSITY  
SENIOR LEADERS' ASSOCIATION

MAY 13, 2025

REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN

[WWW.NIUSLA.CA](http://WWW.NIUSLA.CA)

©NIUSLA, 2025. All rights reserved.

This report is the intellectual property of the National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association and is intended for academic and educational use. Portions of this work may be cited or referenced for scholarly purposes, provided proper acknowledgment is given. No part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed for commercial purposes without prior written permission.

We respectfully acknowledge the contributions of all participants, communities, and knowledge holders whose insights and experiences have informed this work. We also recognize the traditional territories on which this research and reflection took place, and we are committed to upholding the principles of respect, reciprocity, and relational accountability.

For permissions or inquiries, email: [info@niusla.ca](mailto:info@niusla.ca)

*Citation:*

National Indigenous Senior Leaders' Association. (2025). NIUSLA Summit 2025: *Hnouring Indigenous Knowledges at Canadian Universities: Summary Report.* (insert online location of link)



The First Nations University of Canada (FNUniv) allows students of all nations to learn in an environment of First Nations cultures and values. Our university is a special place of learning where we recognize the spiritual power of knowledge and where Indigenous knowledges, ways of being, knowing, and doing are respected and promoted.



The National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association (NIUSLA) exists to unite Indigenous senior university leaders from across Canada, supporting the advancement of Indigenous priorities and leadership within higher education.

## Contents

Summary.....	4
Opening Remarks .....	5
Message from the President.....	5
Message from the NIUSLA Executive Co-Chairs .....	6
Promising Practices for University Indigenous Strategic Plans.....	7
01 Indigenization: EDI on the Keemooch?.....	8
02 Voices of Leadership: Indigenous Strategic Plan Development.....	10
03 Challenges, Tensions, and Promises of Indigenous Strategies.....	12
04 Measuring & Accountability in Reconciliation & Indigenization.....	16
05 Witness Reflections .....	21

# SUMMARY

Senior leaders from Canada's Indigenous universities gathered for a landmark summit that provided a unique platform for open dialogue. They shared their successes, challenges, and innovative approaches to developing institutional Indigenous strategies. Participants benefited from powerful keynote presentations and engaged in collaborative sessions designed to drive systemic change within post-secondary institutions.

This summit was an unparalleled opportunity to engage with leaders and peers committed to advancing Indigenous knowledges within Canadian universities. It served as a transformative space for meaningful conversations that will shape the future of Indigenous education and reconciliation in Canada.

## ***Acknowledgement of Funding from the Mastercard Foundation***

In partnership with



NIUSLA extends sincere gratitude to the First Nations University and acknowledges the generous funding provided by the Mastercard Foundation. This significant contribution was instrumental in advancing our mission to unite Indigenous senior university leaders from across Canada. It enabled them to network and engage in constructive dialogue aimed at supporting the advancement of Indigenous priorities and leadership. We thank the Mastercard Foundation for their unwavering support and belief in our vision.



# OPENING REMARKS

## Message from the President

As President of First Nations University of Canada (FNUniv) and a member of the executive committee of the National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association (NIUSLA), Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann welcomed attendees to Treaty 4 Territory—the original lands of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Lakota, Nakoda, and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

It was a great honour for First Nations University of Canada to co-host the inaugural NIUSLA Summit. The event created a space where Indigenous perspectives and knowledges were not only recognized but celebrated and integrated into the fabric of post-secondary institutions. The summit stood as a testament to the collective commitment to reconciliation, systemic change, and the strengthening of relationships between universities and Indigenous communities.

NIUSLA extended heartfelt gratitude to the Mastercard Foundation for its generous support, which was instrumental in strengthening the association's capacity to drive meaningful impact across the post-secondary education system.

Dr. Ottmann expressed her hope of hosting attendees again in the future, closing with:

kika-wāpamin mīnawā nitinawēmākanak (I will see you again, my relations)  
Mizowaykomiguk paypomwayotung

Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann, Saulteaux/Anishinaabe-kwe, she/her  
President, First Nations University of Canada



## Message from the NIUSLA Executive Co-Chairs

The NIUSLA Summit 2025 marked a significant milestone for the National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association, reinforcing its role as a national platform for advancing Indigenous leadership in post-secondary education. As Co-Chairs, we were proud to welcome members from across the country to engage in dialogue rooted in Indigenous knowledges, governance, and reconciliation. The summit reflected NIUSLA's growing capacity to convene senior leaders, foster collaboration, and influence systemic change across Canadian universities. We are grateful for the continued support of our members, partners, and the Mastercard Foundation in helping us realize this vision.



**Dr. Christy R. Bressette**  
Vice-Provost & Associate  
Vice-President - Indigenous Initiatives,  
*Western University*



**Denise Baxter**  
Vice-Provost, Indigenous  
Initiatives,  
*Lakehead University*



*NIUSLA Executive 2025:*  
Shauneen Pete, RRU; Denise Baxter, Lakehead; Jacqueline Ottmann, FNUniv; Christy Bressette, WU

# Promising Practices for University Indigenous Strategic Plans

## Summary of NIUSLA Summit 2025

1. **Land as Foundation:** Land is our first teacher—legitimacy and knowledge must be rooted in land connection.
2. **Embrace Cultural Foundations:** Ground efforts in cultural principles (e.g., “the good life,” Métis values), intergenerational knowledge, and Indigenous languages.
3. **Structural Change is Essential:** Institutions won’t transform themselves—change must be Indigenous-led and community-informed. Full Indigenization of the academy may not be possible—focus on identifying harms, creating new pathways, and speaking truth to power.
4. **Reconciliation vs. Indigenization:** As Darren Thomas said, “It’s everyone’s job, but it needs to be Indigenous-led.” Reconciliation plans should include everyone; Indigenization plans must be Indigenous-led.
5. **Center Indigenous Leadership:** Indigenous-led means more than representation—it requires land-based, community-rooted knowledge and decision-making power. Embed reconciliation work beyond individual tenures—especially at the board level.
6. **Institutional Readiness:** Faculty and students must be prepared for discomfort, complexity, and long-term commitment.
7. **Authentic Inclusion:** Go beyond symbolic gestures—ensure visibility in leadership, spaces, and systems. *Be in the Room:* Indigenous voices must influence budgeting, hiring, and strategic planning.
8. **Budgets Reflect Values:** Allocate resources meaningfully; build institutional capacity and support Indigenous agency.
9. **Celebrate and Sustain:** Find joy, support one another, and celebrate small wins while staying true to values.
10. **Expand Beyond Academia:** Indigenization must address broader community needs like housing, food security, and wellness.
11. **Assessment and Accountability:** Develop culturally relevant, context-specific evaluation models that reflect Indigenous definitions of quality.
12. **Acknowledge the Process:** Mistakes are part of decolonization; accountability, patience, and persistence are essential.

# 01

## INDIGENIZATION: EDI ON THE KEEMOOCH?

### A Summary of Chelsea Vowel's Presentation

**Chelsea Vowel** is Métis from manitow-sâkahikan (Lac Ste. Anne) Alberta, residing in amiskwaciwâskahikan (Edmonton). Parent to six children, she has a BEd, LLB, and MA. Chelsea is a queer, disabled nêhiyawêwin (Cree) language instructor, public intellectual, writer, and activist educator whose work intersects language, gender, Métis self-determination, and resurgence. Author of *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis & Inuit Issues in Canada*, and the short-story collection *Buffalo is the New Buffalo*, she and her co-host Molly Swain produce the Indigenous feminist sci-fi podcast Métis in Space, and co-founded the Métis in Space Land Trust. Chelsea blogs at [apihtawikosan.com](http://apihtawikosan.com).

"On the keemooch," a Métis/Cree phrase often translated as "on the down low," framed a compelling keynote session that explored the role of Indigenization in decolonial efforts within academia. Set against a backdrop of increasing political hostility toward Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), the session examined what—if anything—distinguished Indigenization from EDI, and how it, too, could be vulnerable to political animus. Most importantly, the discussion focused on the arguments and actions that made sense when championing Indigenization in the current political climate.



### Indigenization vs. EDI: Overlap and Tensions

- **Indigenization** is a framework for incorporating Indigenous worldviews, knowledge, and responsibilities into institutions, rooted in legal and constitutional relationships rather than a specific set of universal actions. *"Indigenization is a process of highlighting and incorporating Indigenous worldviews, knowledge and perspectives*

*into non-Indigenous educational, political and social structures in recognition of exclusion and erasure; celebrating the diversity, strength, complexity, resilience and beauty of Indigenous Peoples, cultures, languages and knowledge systems.”*  
 (University of Alberta).

- **EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion)** promotes fair treatment and participation for historically marginalized groups. *“Diversity, equity and inclusion promote the fair treatment, full participation of all people, especially populations that have historically been underrepresented or subject to discrimination because of their background, identity, disability, or other characteristics or circumstances.”* (Government of Canada).
- While there is overlap, conflating Indigenization with EDI risks diluting its unique political, legal, and cultural foundations.
- Progress is cyclical—past victories (civil rights, women’s rights) must be continually defended.
- The “unnamed center” of institutional norms often reflects white, colonial values, making Indigenization inherently political.

### **Political Vulnerability and Institutional Shifts**

- Indigenization and EDI efforts are vulnerable to shifting political will, as seen in the University of Alberta’s withdrawal of its EDI strategic plan.
- Institutions may rebrand or downplay these efforts to align with public opinion, risking erasure or tokenization.
- Should Indigenization align with EDI to gain broader institutional support, or remain distinct to preserve its integrity?
- There’s a fear that inclusion efforts threaten dominant power structures, leading to resistance framed as concern over “radical” agendas.
- Language matters—terms like “on the keemooch” (on the down low) reflect how marginalized communities navigate visibility and safety.

### **Moving Forward**

- Indigenization must expand beyond academia to address community needs (e.g., housing, food security).
- Embrace cultural principles (e.g., “the good life,” Métis values) and intergenerational knowledge.
- Mistakes are part of the decolonization process—what matters is accountability and continued effort.
- Protect and revitalize Indigenous languages and ensure students know where they belong.

## 02

# VOICES OF LEADERSHIP: INDIGENOUS STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT

## A Summary of Dr. Jackie Ottmann and Dr. Shauneen Pete's Dialogue

This informal conversation explored the evolution of planning in Canadian higher education. Dr. Jackie Ottmann and Dr. Shauneen Pete discussed the transformation of consultation processes, the importance of aligning institutional goals with Indigenous knowledges, and the challenges and successes they encountered along the way. Participants gained valuable insights into fostering meaningful engagement and driving systemic change in higher education through dialogue.



### Foundations of Leadership and Motivation

- **Jackie Ottmann** was driven from a young age by a desire to create positive change. At 16, she began questioning her community's identity, which led her to research its history and uncover injustices. This research later supported legal arguments for her community. Her leadership journey has been rooted in mentorship, strategic planning, and a commitment to Indigenous-led change.
- **Shauneen Pete** viewed educational institutions as spaces for exploration and transformation. Motivated by a desire to do better, she often found herself filling in knowledge gaps for others. Her leadership path included a focus on Indigenous women

in leadership and education, and she emphasized the importance of stepping up, even when uncertain—“just do it.”

### **Strategic Planning and Institutional Change**

- Dr. Ottmann developed an Indigenous Strategic Plan using a Parallel Development approach. This included forming an Indigenous-led advisory group, incorporating traditional protocols, and gaining unanimous faculty support. She emphasized that Indigenization must be led by Indigenous Peoples, while Reconciliation requires collective responsibility.
- Dr. Pete contributed to institutional change by presenting Indigenous-informed leadership models to university Senate and building Indigenous programs. She highlighted the resistance within institutions and the need for Indigenous governance structures.

### **Decolonization, Education, and Responsibility**

- Both leaders stressed that decolonization is a shared responsibility and that reconciliation is not the same as EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion). They challenged universities to stop centering institutional needs and instead center Indigenous voices and knowledge.
- They acknowledged that most students and faculty lack foundational knowledge about Indigenous Peoples, despite decades of policy. Jackie and Shauneen noted that universities are playing catch-up, and that structural denial has prevented many from learning about Indigenous histories and realities.

### **Practical Tools and Reflections**

- Dr. Pete began creating “[\*\*100 Ways to Decolonize and Indigenize Your Program\*\*](#),” a resource to guide institutions and individuals. She and Jackie also reflected on their academic journeys, supporting each other through voice notes and shared experiences.
- They posed reflective questions to the audience: *How did you learn about Indigenous Peoples? Where do you start?* These questions are meant to spark personal and institutional introspection.

### **Key Takeaways**

- **Mentorship, community engagement, and Indigenous leadership** are essential to meaningful strategic planning.
- **Reconciliation Plans** must include everyone, but **Indigenization Plans** must be Indigenous-led.
- Institutions must prepare faculty and students for this work, be patient, and embrace discomfort.
- The work is ongoing, and we must be fierce, committed, and collaborative in our efforts.

# 03

## CHALLENGES, TENSIONS, AND PROMISES OF INDIGENOUS STRATEGIES

### A Summary of Dr. David Newhouse's Panel and Presentation

#### Panelists:

Lori Campbell (University of Regina)  
 Dr. Florence Glanfield (University of Alberta)  
 Dr. Darren Thomas (Wilfrid Laurier University)

This panel explored the complex journey of developing, approving, and implementing Indigenous strategies within post-secondary institutions. NIUSLA members shared their lived experiences, highlighting the leadership required to move from planning to action. Through personal stories, they reflected on the successes, tensions, and ongoing challenges they faced in translating strategic intentions into meaningful outcomes. The session offered valuable insights and practical advice for those undertaking similar leadership work in advancing Indigenous priorities.



#### Historical Context and Institutional Evolution

- **Dr. David Newhouse** began university in 1972, when Indigenous presence in academia was virtually nonexistent. Over the decades, Indigenous initiatives have grown, but visibility and influence remain uneven.
- His metaphor of **“Extending the Rafters”**—from longhouse traditions—symbolizes expanding institutions to include Indigenous knowledge and people. His research across 97 Canadian universities shows progress, but also gaps, especially in small, religiously affiliated institutions.
- **Indigenous governance structures** (e.g., senates, advisory committees) exist but are often hidden or under-resourced. Land acknowledgments are common but frequently buried on websites, reflecting symbolic rather than substantive inclusion.

- Indigenous faculty are now seen in **three generations**:
  - **1st Generation (1969–1996)**: Trailblazers in Indigenous academia.
  - **2nd Generation (1997–2016)**: RCAP, Institutional integration and expansion.
  - **3rd Generation (2017–present)**: TRC, Working across disciplines and beyond Indigenous studies; 200 new faculty members since TRC

### Leadership, Representation, and Structural Change

- **Lori Campbell** emphasized that leadership matters, especially at the board level. Leadership turnover means that reconciliation work must be embedded beyond individual tenures.
- She stressed the importance of being in the room where decisions are made and ensuring Indigenous voices influence budgeting, planning, and hiring. Her work promotes outward education to non-Indigenous communities to reduce harm and build understanding.
- Budgets reveal priorities, and responsibilities must be distributed across institutions to build capacity. Indigenous scholars should have agency over their roles, and non-Indigenous faculty must be educated to work respectfully with communities.



### Methodologies, Metrics, and Institutional Resistance

- **Dr. Darren Thomas** critiqued the reliance on Western logic models to measure Indigenous initiatives. While useful for communicating with non-Indigenous stakeholders, they often reinforce colonial structures.
- He emphasized that we will never fully Indigenize the academy as it stands. Instead, we must identify harms, mitigate them, and speak truth to power. This includes

encouraging Indigenous students into graduate programs and exploring non-traditional credentialing to create new pathways.

- Darren advocates for institutions that center love, compassion, and Indigenous philosophies, and he reminds us to find joy in the work, support one another, and ask: *What are you afraid of?*

### Strategic Planning as Living Practice

- **Dr. Florence Glanfield** described her experience implementing an Indigenous Strategic Plan (ISP) that was fully endorsed by faculty. She emphasized that the ISP is a living document, shaped by community engagement and evolving over time.
- From [\*Braiding Past, Present and Future: University of Alberta Indigenous Strategic Plan\*](#): *"The plan is grouped into three categories, or "strands," symbolizing the responsibilities of the Sweetgrass Teachings: Looking to the Past, In-Powering the Present and Imagining the Future. These three groupings represent a sweetgrass braid and the accompanying prairie- and parkland-based Indigenous understandings, to reflect where the University of Alberta is primarily – though not only – located."*
- [Alignment to Braiding](#): Since its release in 2022, the Indigenous-led direction offered in Braiding Past, Present and Future has been taken up in diverse strategies across the University of Alberta. Colleges, faculties and portfolios at the University of Alberta are working to operationalize the accountabilities outlined in Braiding Past, Present and Future. This includes work across the institutional mandate – curricular change, research frameworks, student experience and policy development.
- She highlighted the importance of storytelling, connection, and non-linear progress, noting that reconciliation work is ongoing and deeply relational.



## Key Takeaways

- Indigenization alone is insufficient—true transformation requires decolonization, reconciliation, and redistribution of power.
- There's been a shift from defending Indigenous methodologies to actively applying them, reflecting growing acceptance and confidence in Indigenous scholarship.
- Visibility must go beyond symbolic gestures—physical spaces, websites, and leadership roles must reflect genuine inclusion and influence.
- Institutions will not transform themselves—change must be Indigenous-led, community-informed, and structurally supported.
- Celebrate small wins, stay true to your values, and build supportive communities.
- Love, joy, and authenticity are central to this work. As Dr. Darren Thomas said, "It's everyone's job, but it needs to be Indigenous-led."



# 04

## MEASURING & ACCOUNTABILITY IN RECONCILIATION & INDIGENIZATION

### A Summary of Presentations by:

- President Gabriel Miller, Universities Canada
- Dr. Robina Thomas, UVic, Peyton Juhnke and Julianna Nielsen
- Maria Morrison & Dr. Jillian Seniuk Cicek



### President Gabriel Miller, Universities Canada

Universities Canada, representing 97 member institutions, primarily collaborates with university presidents to address shared challenges. The organization's reconciliation initiatives have been guided by commitments made in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report in 2015. In 2023, these commitments were reaffirmed through six key priorities:

1. Integrating reconciliation into institutional policies and governance.
2. Supporting Indigenous student success.
3. Enhancing teaching and learning about reconciliation.
4. Developing research partnerships with Indigenous communities.
5. Engaging with communities to co-create reconciliation agendas.
6. Providing support for Indigenous students and faculty.

Two primary accountability mechanisms were highlighted: the annual reconciliation forum and an Indigenous survey that tracks progress since 2015.

Recent survey results indicated notable advancements:

- 90% of member institutions had developed strategic plans for reconciliation.
- 75% of universities with relevant programs had implemented mandatory Indigenous content.
- 98% offered targeted support services for Indigenous students.

Despite this progress, President Miller emphasized that substantial work remained. He noted that as Canada navigated political transitions and socio-economic shifts, maintaining accountability in reconciliation efforts must remain a national priority.

He concluded by posing two critical questions for the coming decade:

- How can the educational opportunity gap for Indigenous students be closed?
- How can government accountability in fulfilling TRC commitments—particularly in education—be ensured?

## Reflections on Accountability & Measurement

### Xw̱kʷənəŋistəl | W̱CENENISTEL: Helping to move each other forward Indigenous Plan (2023) University of Victoria

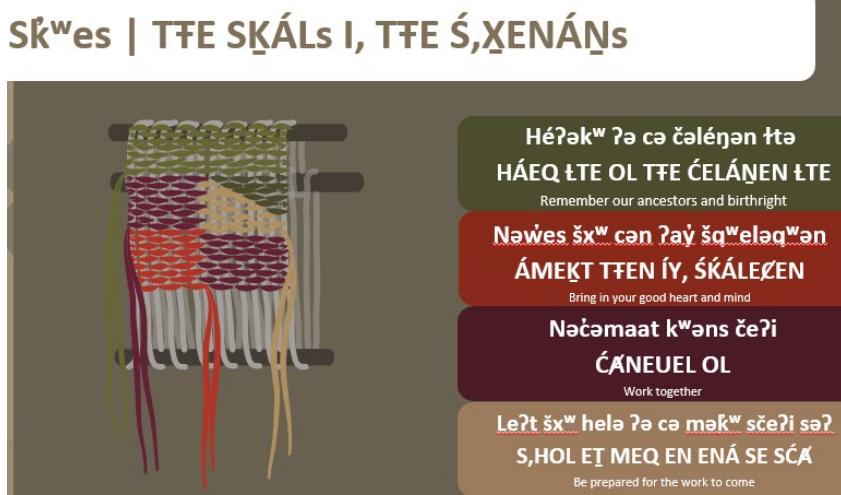
**Dr. Rob Hancock, Julianna Nielsen**  
University of Victoria

In 2023, the University of Victoria launched its second Indigenous Plan, reaffirming its commitment to Indigenous rights, relationships, and responsibilities. The first biennial reporting cycle has just concluded, with reports being reviewed and shared with the province and community partners. This process is grounded in accountability to the Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Language Champions who guided the plan's renewal and shaped its use of Indigenous languages, laws, and teachings.

The plan is structured around Coast Salish teachings, likened to the warp and weft of a woven blanket—where teachings provide the strength and structure, and priorities are woven through them. Four key teachings—remembering ancestors and birthright, working together, bringing a good heart and mind, and preparing for the work ahead—guide implementation and reporting.

These teachings have helped shift the university's approach from asking *"how are you Indigenizing your portfolio?"* to *"how is your portfolio upholding Indigenous laws and philosophies?"* This reframing encourages a more holistic, relational, and accountable approach across all areas of the university.

As much as this is a process of centralizing data, it's also been about reinforcing that these priorities are not just those of the Office of the Vice-President Indigenous (OVPI) or Indigenous units, but shared responsibilities across every unit and portfolio. Reports will be returned to Elders, the Indigenous Community Engagement Council, and Indigenous members of the UVic community.



The process also aims to identify overlaps between initiatives, foster collaboration, and inform executive-level planning.

Key lessons include the importance of integrating assessment and accountability early, securing campus-wide buy-in, and aligning with existing evaluation practices to support long-term success.

University of Victoria's second Indigenous plan includes:

- Measurable goals and KPIs
- Alignment with UNDRIP and provincial frameworks
- Full integration across executive portfolios

## Framework for Assessing Indigenizing and Reconciliation Initiatives in Higher Education Institutions

**Maria Morrison, M.A. (NIUSLA)**

**Dr. Jillian Seniuk Cicek**, University of Manitoba

- Developed through a systematic literature review exploring documents on the assessment, measurement, and quality standards related to Higher Education Institutions' (HEIs) efforts in advancing reconciliation and Indigenization.
- Guided by the theoretical framework, Etuaptmumk, Two-Eyed Seeing (Bartlett & Marshall, 2010).
- Use the proposed framework to
  - assess Indigenization and reconciliation practices and progress in HEIs
  - establish a baseline for measuring improvements
  - encourage HEI faculty, staff and students to continuously evolve, mature, and improve the quality of their programming and their relationships with Indigenous peoples

### Framework Elements

Western Quality Concept Model (Schindler et al. 2015)

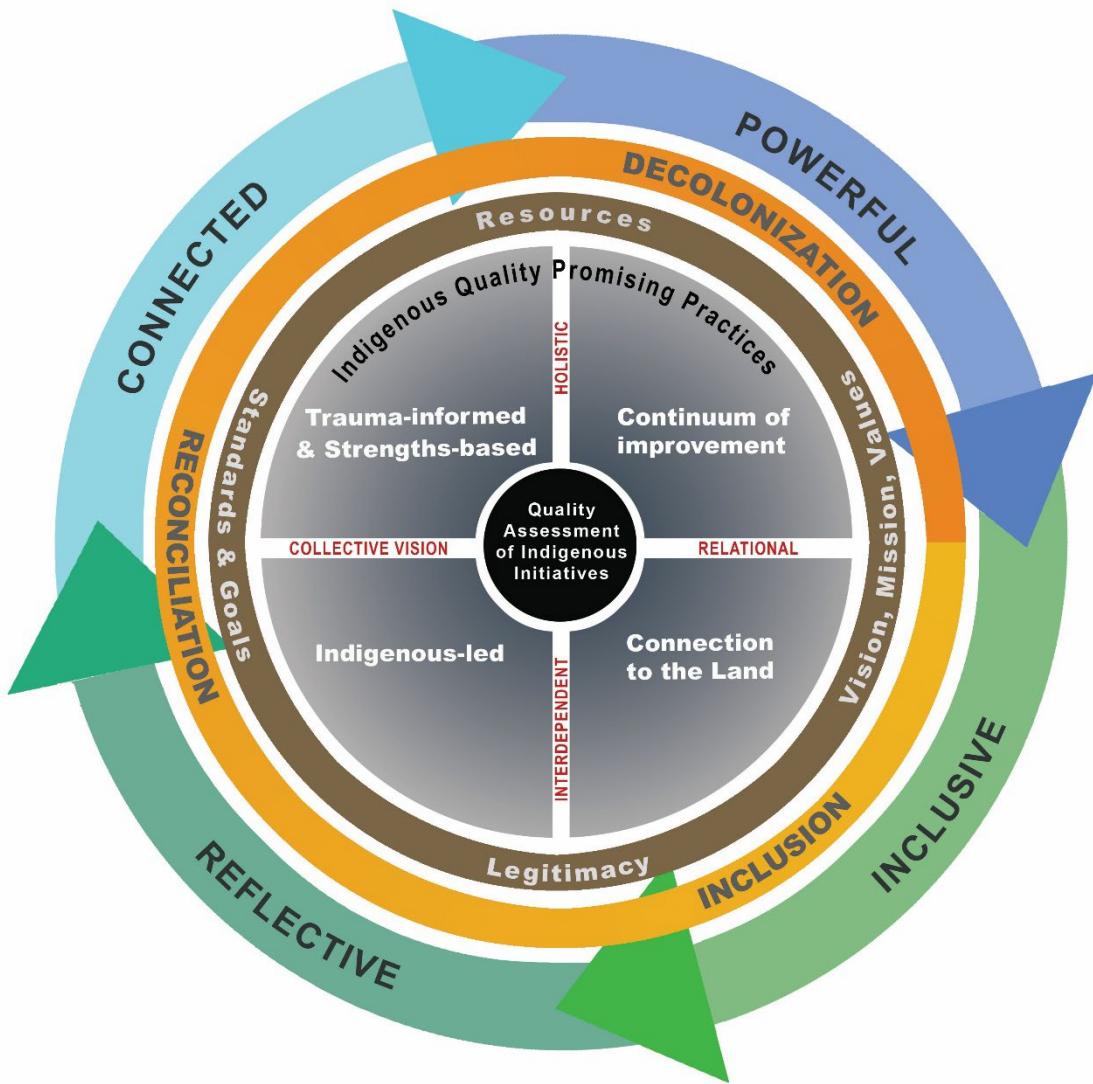
A set of four quality indicators to support HEIs commitment to reconciliation and Indigenization pertaining to the functions of an institution: 1) Relevant vision, mission and values statements; 2) Establishing institutional legitimacy; 3) Achieving internal/external standards and goals; and 4) Allocating enough resources (financial and human) for institutional performance.

### Indigenous Quality Promising Practices

Four practices to guide the principles of holism, relationality, interdependence, and creating a collective vision: 1) Recognizing the deep spiritual connection to the Land; 2) Ensuring initiatives are Indigenous-led; 3) Using trauma-informed and strength-based approaches; and 4) Conceptualizing Indigenization as a continuum of improvement.

### Indigenization Continuum (Gaudry and Lorenz, 2018)

Indigenous and reconciliation initiatives can be viewed along a continuum from inclusion to reconciliation to decolonizing work to gauge actions and measure progress.



### Transformative Learning Capacity Maturity Model (Barker, 2020)

A four level strengths-based model combining a holistic transformative learning approach with a maturity model to measure competency and capacity in HEIs.

Level 1: Inclusive. The lowest level of maturity, indicated by creating educational space. Is local, enrollment-driven, and quantitative.

Level 2: Reflective. Transformative learning. Is inclusive and includes reflection and reciprocity.

Level 3: Connected. Indicated by networks of collaborative learning and sharing.

Level 4: Powerful: Rarely achieved; includes first three levels and can meet social justice and decolonization goals.

## Key Take Aways

- **Legitimacy** is essential for meaningful reconciliation and institutional change.
- **Land connection** is foundational—land is our first teacher and the source of Indigenous knowledge.
- **Indigenous-led efforts** must go beyond tokenism, centering land-based, community-rooted knowledge systems.
- **Trauma-informed and strength-based approaches** are critical to supporting Indigenous communities.
- **Western metrics** often fail to capture Indigenous definitions of quality and success.
- **No standard TRC impact assessment** exists—stitutions lack consistent accountability.
- **Effective evaluation** requires strong leadership, transparency, and community engagement.
- **Context-specific, culturally relevant models** are needed to assess progress meaningfully.
- **Authentic, community-centered efforts** are the true measure of quality and impact.



## References

- Barker, T. (2020). Moving Toward the Centre: Transformative Learning, Global Learning, and Indigenization. *Journal of Transformative Learning*, 7(1), 8–22.
- Bartlett, C., & Marshall, A. (2010, March). Two-Eyed Seeing science curricula. Paper presented at the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey: "Language and Culture". *Community Education Strategic/Operational Planning Symposium*, Dartmouth, NS.
- Gaudry, A., & Lorenz, D. (2018). Indigenization as inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization: navigating the different visions for indigenizing the Canadian Academy. *AlterNative*, 14(3), 218–227. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180118785382>
- Morrison, M., & Seniuk Cicek, J. (in review). Assessing the Quality of Indigenization and Reconciliation Initiatives in Higher Education: A Systematic Literature Review. *Thrivance*, 36 pp.
- Schindler, L., Puls-Elvidge, S., Welzant, H., & Crawford, L. (2015). Definitions of Quality in Higher Education: A Synthesis of the Literature. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, 5(3), 3. <https://doi.org/10.18870/hlrc.v5i3.244>

# 05

## WITNESS REFLECTIONS



Earl Einarson, Katie Antone, Ella Morris, Karla Green

### **Inspiration and Validation**

- Witnesses felt deeply inspired by hearing from Indigenous leaders in higher education.
- *“It was encouraging to hear about their journeys and what drives them—it was validating.”*
- *“I am honoured to take up my portion of this work of Indigenization and Decolonization.”*

### **The Power of Community**

- Community emerged as a central theme, offering strength and connection. *“The importance of community is a theme that stands out to me.”*
- *“Having a community like NIUSLA is empowering... I felt empowered, seen, and heard.”*

### **Indigenous Leadership and Influence**

- Student witnesses emphasized the need for Indigenous voices in decision-making roles. *“Indigenous Peoples need to be in the room where decisions are made.”*
- *“Seeing Indigenous leaders in senior roles showed me how important that is for student support.”*

## Distinction Between Indigenization and EDI

- Several reflections noted the importance of keeping Indigenization distinct from EDI.
- *"This work is distinct from EDI and must be protected from political shifts."*
- *"Thinking about Indigenization vs. EDI is something I hadn't encountered before, but now it's my next research interest."*

## Mentorship and Role Models

- Students appreciated the opportunity to learn from and connect with Indigenous scholars. *"I loved hearing Chelsea Vowel—her talk was validating and engaging."*
- *"Lori Campbell's use of only Indigenous women's scholarship was inspiring."*

## Emotional Impact and Motivation

- The Summit left students feeling hopeful, motivated, and ready to contribute.
- *"I felt uplifted. The passion in the room was palpable."*
- *"I'm excited and hopeful to be on the building team for the next generation."*

## Final Reflections

- Students recognized the ongoing nature of the work and the importance of love, joy, and collective effort.
- *"There's no one way to get things done—locality matters, and support systems like NIUSLA are powerful."*

## Student Witnesses

### Earl Einarson, MA

Ktunaxa First Nations and a member of the ?Aq'am community  
Doctor of Social Science student, Royal Roads University

### Katie Antone

Oneida Nation of the Thames  
Master's of Art student, Lakehead University

### Ella Morris

Red River Métis  
PhD Candidate, University of Manitoba

### Karla Green

Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nations  
Doctor of Education in Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice Candidate, Western University

# ABOUT US

**The National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association (NIUSLA) exists to unite Indigenous senior university leaders from across Canada, supporting the advancement of Indigenous priorities and leadership within higher education.**

NIUSLA unites Indigenous senior leaders from academic institutions to network, collaborate, and discuss leadership roles.

- Participate and contribute to the Canadian post-secondary policy landscape on Indigenous priorities
- Network and engage in constructive dialogue and actions to advance issues and concerns of Indigenous peoples
- Share experiences, resources, information and processes that support Indigenous leadership
- Honour Indigenous knowledges systems

[www.niusla.ca](http://www.niusla.ca)

©NIUSLA, 2025