



INDIGENOUS
STRATEGIC PLAN

➤ 2019 Community Report ◀

Mount Royal University is located in the traditional territories of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the people of Treaty 7, which includes the Siksika, the Piikani, the Kainai, the Tsuut'ina, and the Îyârhe Nakoda. We are situated on land where the Bow River meets the Elbow River, and the traditional Blackfoot name of this place is "Mohkinstsis," which we now call the city of Calgary. The city of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation.

WORKING TOWARDS A SHARED FUTURE

We are privileged to be living and learning on Treaty 7 lands, and we honour the strength and resilience of the people who have survived genocide, epidemics, residential schools, and the loss of economic and political systems through settlement and colonization. Decolonization is a difficult lesson for institutions to learn and practise. We are humbled by those who provide leadership to the academy as we attempt to move from inclusion to indigenization.

This community report includes narratives for each of the five goals of the Indigenous Strategic Plan 2016–2021. It is a sampling of the multiple initiatives spanning terms and academic years that demonstrate positive action and commitment by the institution.

These stories tell about the enthusiasm, thoughtfulness and dedication to indigenization by students, faculty and staff. We position our actions as learners and rely on partnerships with the community in applying the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and responding to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to advance Indigenous students' success.

Mount Royal is committed to renewing and advancing the Indigenous Strategic Plan while honouring the historical foundations on which it is built. In 1978, what was then Mount Royal College stepped away from its satellite campus as Siksika Nation rightfully assumed control of education. Today, we are partnering with Old Sun Community College and other First Nation colleges and universities to initiate culture and language courses.

In 1992, an Indigenous educational community group came to Mount Royal and partnered to initiate the Aboriginal Education Project. Today, the Indigenous University Bridging Program offers prerequisites to diploma and degree programs for more than 90 students each term. The Graduation Pow Wow introduced by the Students' Association more than 25 years ago is now the longest running post-secondary Pow Wow in Canada.

The leadership and commitment shown by the Students' Association reached a milestone with the recent election of its first First Nation president, Spirit River Striped Wolf.

We look to the future during changing and challenging times. The Office of Academic Indigenization will be reorganized, enabling a new, key leadership role to guide and influence reconciliation work across the University. We will engage the community to advise on renewing our Indigenous Strategic Plan, on protocols and processes, and on the ways that we can work together that will take us into our shared future.



John Fischer
Executive Advisor, Indigenization



Mike Quinn
Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President,
Academic



GOAL 1

INDIGENIZING MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY

Cultivate respectful and welcoming environments that prevail over the legacy of colonization

Permanent art installation acknowledges the harm caused by residential schools

A permanent installation called *Fallen Feathers* was installed in a courtyard near the Iniskim Centre and the Office of Academic Indigenization in October 2018. The installation was conceived of by an employee in Mount Royal's Grounds department, Carmela Amoroso, whose mother is a residential school survivor.

Amoroso arranged for an artist from Tsuut'ina to carve large feathers into the trunks of seven trees damaged during the September 2014 snowstorm. The carvings are a tribute to everyone affected by the residential school system, honouring those who directly experienced residential school, or whose families were harmed by them and continue to suffer intergenerational effects.

Fallen Feathers was officially opened on Orange Shirt Day as part of events across Mount Royal to acknowledge the harm done to 150,000 children and their families.



CULTURALLY RESPECTFUL INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

Foster respect for Indigenous ways of knowing and knowledge-production and increase capacity for Indigenous scholarship

I Tsi Pookawa Ksim Tani / Nīhtawekita The birth of an idea

A team of Elders, researchers, leaders and learners helped create the Kimma Pi Pitsin online resource, a living tool to help faculty, staff, students and others engage in reconciliation through Blackfoot and Cree teachings. The interactive resource emerged from an inter-generational, inter-nation research project and knowledge mobilization strategy on implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Calls to Action, bringing together three generations of Siksika, Cree, Métis and settler changemakers: Elder Roy Bear Chief, Grandmother Doreen Spence, Jillian Bear Chief, Andrea Kennedy PhD, Katharine McGowan PhD, Mohamed El-Hussein, Stephen Price PhD and Dion Simon.

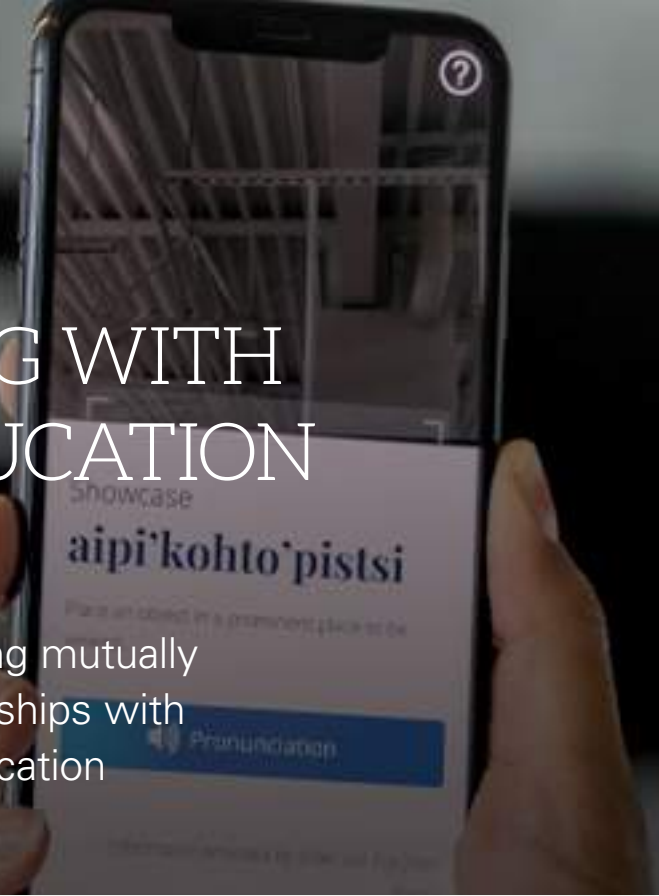
The tool was the result of the respectful engagement of Elders, traditional Western academic research, and the blending of new technology with Indigenous ways of doing, knowing and being. It represents the Seven Sacred Teachings, and Kimma Pi Pitsin and A Tso Tsi i Ka Ki Maan, and relates to wider trends and conversations around changemaking, indigenizing higher education and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. These teachings are offered to help advance reconciliation in the academy by promoting caretaking (collaborative, non-hierarchical co-learning) and the need for Elders to guide our efforts.

The project considered different ways of thinking about reconciling research knowledge mobilization and institutional structures. The aim is to support Mount Royal academics engaged in community-informed scholarship and Indigenous-related projects, as well as those who are interested but still unsure about their role in indigenization. The tool teaches reconciliation through kindness and compassion, and explains the value of speaking and listening openly as lifelong co-learners.

GOAL 3

BRIDGE-BUILDING WITH INDIGENOUS EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS

Build strong relationships by forging mutually supportive and productive relationships with all stakeholders in Indigenous education



Way-finding app guides visitors through the Riddell Library and Learning Centre in Blackfoot

Using augmented reality (AR), a new app translates Blackfoot signage in the Riddell Library and Learning Centre (RLLC) into English to help non-Blackfoot speakers understand the meaning behind the words. Blackfoot way-finding signage was installed when the RLLC was built in 2017.

The app — called DeciphAR — includes an audio pronunciation guide, a video with Elder Leo Fox from Red Crow College in Lethbridge, as well as descriptions of the terms and concepts.

The app was designed to be accessible to anyone, regardless of background. The first time a user opens the app, a tutorial on how to use it appears. Signage throughout the building includes QR codes that people can scan with their phones, which will take them to the iOS or Android app stores to download the app.

When a user points their phone at a Blackfoot sign, an 'info card' will pop up in the app. The cards provide the explanation, the English and Blackfoot terms, and a button to listen to the pronunciation.

Future iterations of the app may include additional Kainai Blackfoot speakers and other Indigenous languages that are not currently represented in the building. The technology and platform will be shared with Red Crow College and other First Nations colleges in Alberta.



GOAL 4

SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS LEARNERS

Work with our communities to enhance the academic, personal and cultural experience of Indigenous learners

Donation doubles Indigenous family housing

A generous donation of \$300,000 from well-known Calgary philanthropists David and Leslie Bissett enabled the capacity of the Indigenous Housing Program to double from four family units to eight. The gift funded necessary upgrades to bathrooms and kitchens, including appliances and basement storage in every unit. Family units are in a quiet area of campus, providing a small, family-friendly community.

Indigenous learners often come from rural areas far from Calgary and report feeling more loneliness and isolation than non-Indigenous students do. Indigenous students with children face an even more difficult road when trying to earn a degree.

The Indigenous Housing Program, which is run through the Iniskim Centre, provides cultural supports and single- and family-unit housing for students who self-identify as First Nations, Métis, Non-status or Inuit. Residents of family units live on campus year-round with their children, with access to the wellness centre, child care centre and recreation. Students qualify for housing based on academic readiness, academic and career goals, and financial need.

The Bissetts' donation also funded bursaries to make housing more affordable for students in the housing program.



GOAL 5

RESPECTFUL AND INCLUSIVE CURRICULA AND PEDAGOGIES

Promote culturally responsible and respectful curricula that integrate Indigenous pedagogies and ways of knowing

Online Treaty 7 course under development to help fulfill Indigenous curriculum requirement

The Academic Indigenization Advisory Committee continues to work with departments across the institution to create a three-credit course equivalent. Mount Royal has set a goal that every student graduates with the equivalent of one course in Indigenous curriculum.

The Office of Academic Indigenization (OAI) has partnered with Hidden Story Productions and Indigenous Studies faculty to develop an online Treaty 7 course. Gabrielle Lindstrom PhD, a member of the Kainaiwa First Nation and an assistant professor of Indigenous Studies, is leading the development of the course, and brings an approach grounded in creating, fostering and sustaining good relationships between student and teacher.

With an overarching goal of fostering a transformative learning experience in students, the course is a challenging undertaking in curriculum development. The approach to teaching and learning seeks to bridge technology with Indigenous relationality — that is, an environment of mutual respect and learning. The approach is not simply the course content, but how the material is shared and taught through dialogue, which is more challenging to accomplish in an online course.

Relying on adult learning perspectives around curriculum theory and online learning, this course, when complete, will offer a novel opportunity for educators to nurture dialogical learning online. The goal is to have the course available to students in 2021.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The following indicators were developed to help measure the goals of the Indigenous Strategic Plan (ISP) and were approved by the ISP Implementation and Monitoring Committee after consultation within the University. The self-identified Indigenous student population at Mount Royal reached 6.1 per cent as of 2018/19, and is steadily growing towards our goal of 7.0 per cent of the overall student population by 2025.

We are at the beginning of our journey of measuring our progress in supporting student success and indigenizing our campus. There’s work to be done. When dealing with small numbers, small changes can look big, but measuring progress and paying attention to shifts help us strengthen our efforts and sharpen our focus on specific needs and opportunities.

As we work towards indigenization we learn more about what this means and the answers to the questions we are asking may shift. This is important to inform the work being done and to continue to work towards the goals of the ISP. These indicators will continue to be monitored throughout the life of the plan.

Performance indicator

Baseline Updates

Increase the percentage of employees (faculty, staff, administration) who identify being of Aboriginal or Indigenous ancestry of Canada (e.g., First Nations, Inuit, Métis) ¹	2016/17			
	4.28%	<i>A date to gather new data has not yet been determined.</i>		
Increase the percentage of self-identified Aboriginal or Indigenous employees who agree with the statement “at my organization [institution], I am treated fairly and with respect” ²	2016/17			
	73.53%	<i>A date to gather new data has not yet been determined.</i>		
Increase the proportion of qualified self-identified Indigenous student applicants for credit-term programs ^{3,4}	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
	74.9%	76.4%	77.0%	79.9%
Increase the proportion of self-identified Indigenous students who register in credit-term programs, of those who were accepted ⁵	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
	59.3%	62.4%	58.1%	60.0%
Increase the overall proportion of self-identified Indigenous students who attend Mount Royal University ⁶	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
	5.2%	5.3%	5.7%	6.1%

Performance indicator	Baseline		Updates
	Fall 2015 cohort	Fall 2016 cohort	Fall 2017 cohort
Maintain the retention rate of self-identified Indigenous students from first to second year in degree programs only, at a level proportionate to non-Indigenous students ⁷	Indigenous: 84.4% Non-Indigenous: 82.3%	Indigenous: 84.5% Non-Indigenous: 82.9%	Indigenous: 85.9% Non-Indigenous: 83.5%

NOTE: Numbers subject to slight change due to late applications for graduation.

Maintain the percentage of self-identified Indigenous students' agreement with the statement "I feel as if I belong at this university," at a level that is comparable to non-Indigenous students ^{*8}	First-year students		
	2015/16		
	Indigenous: 93% Non-Indigenous: 92%	Due to survey changes, comparable data is not available.	
	Middle-years students		
	2013/14	2016/17	
	Indigenous: 85% Non-Indigenous: 87%	Indigenous: 88% Non-Indigenous: 89%	
	Graduating students		
2014/15	2017/18		
Indigenous: 92% Non-Indigenous: 85%	Indigenous: 81% Non-Indigenous: 89%		

Increase the percentage of self-identified Indigenous students who say their experience at MRU has contributed to their growth and development in their <i>self-confidence</i> ^{*9}	Middle-years students (% much/very much)		
	2013/14	2016/17	
	66%	51%	
	Graduating students		
	2014/15	2017/18	
76%	52%		

NOTE: Consistent with institutional results.

Increase the percentage of self-identified Indigenous students who say their experience at MRU has contributed to their growth and development in their <i>spirituality</i> ^{*9}	Middle-years students (% much/very much)		
	2013/14	2016/17	
	23%	30%	
	Graduating students		
	2014/15	2017/18	
24%	24%		

NOTE: Consistent with institutional results.

**Due to the relatively small number of self-identified Indigenous students who participate in these surveys, slight changes in these measures year over year can have a significant impact on overall percentages year over year.*

Performance indicator	Baseline	Updates
	2015/16	2016/17
Self-identified Indigenous senior students ¹⁰ participate in at least one high-impact practice comparable to the percentage of non-Indigenous students ¹¹	Indigenous: 75.0% Non-Indigenous: 87.1%	Indigenous: 76.0% Non-Indigenous: 84.3%

NOTE: New data available in summer 2020.

Increase the percentage of graduating students who said they had taken at least one course during their program that included Indigenous content or perspectives ¹²	2017/18	
	82%	No new data

Increase the number of Indigenous field schools that meet the requirements of the Indigenous Studies minor ¹³	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
	1	2	3	3

Maintain the proportion of Indigenous University Bridging Program (IUBP) graduates who enrol in a Mount Royal credit program the next academic year ¹⁴	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
	75%	94.4%	79.3%	84.2%

NOTE: Due to the relatively small number of students enrolled in, and who graduate from, IUBP per academic year, slight changes in the number of graduates, or number of graduates who enrol in credit programs, can have a significant impact on overall percentages year over year.

Contact information

For more information about these measures, or Mount Royal's indigenization activities in general, please contact:

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Endnotes

- ¹ Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) Employee Diversity and Inclusion Survey
- ² CCDI Employee Diversity and Inclusion Survey
- ³ Includes all MRU full-load equivalent (FLE) generating programs, excluding Transitional Vocational Program (TVP) and English Language Program (ELP)
- ⁴ Indigenous Applicant Funnel Report
- ⁵ Indigenous Applicant Funnel Report
- ⁶ Indigenous Enrolment Report
- ⁷ Institutional Analysis & Planning Retention Visualization
- ⁸ Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC) surveys of degree-seeking students
- ⁹ CUSC surveys of degree-seeking students
- ¹⁰ Degree students who are in the fourth year of their degree program
- ¹¹ National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) survey of degree-seeking students
- ¹² CUSC MRU custom question, survey of degree-seeking students in their graduating year
- ¹³ Office of Academic Indigenization, based on number of courses with curriculum developed (i.e., Treaty 7 Field School, Environmental reconciliation and Indigenous Studies Field Course and Indigenous Hawai'i Field School)
- ¹⁴ Iniskim Centre report of IUBP graduates and Banner enrolment data

