

Lálém ye mestíyexw: Re-envisioning a Structure for Indigenization
University of the Fraser Valley
February 2019

A. Overview of discussion:

Indigenization is a key strategic priority of the University of the Fraser Valley. As stated in Board Policy 200.05: Fulfilling Our Commitment to Aboriginal Peoples, UFV

embraces its responsibility to peoples of Aboriginal ancestry to provide respectful, relevant and responsive post-secondary education and training that support their personal development, career success, and their participation in the social, cultural and economic development of our communities. The University is also committed to promoting knowledge of and respect for aboriginal history, language, culture, values and indigenous ways of knowing in its educational, research and service programs, and to including Aboriginal voice in its planning and decision-making.

Goal Four of Learning Everywhere: The UFV Education Plan, 2016-20 is to Develop Local and Global Citizenship:

Part of being a UFV citizen also involves responsibility to our communities and environment. Locally we work on the unceded territory of the Stó:lō people and the Indigenization of UFV is a priority. Indigenization informs everything we do at the university in every program, department and service area, through the inclusion of Indigenous content, perspectives, and ways of knowing.

There is increasing expectation and demand on UFV, along with post-secondary institutions across BC and the country, to answer the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action. The Witness Blanket exhibition and associated events in the Fall of 2017 confirmed the interest and demand for honest and open dialogue on reconciliation and taking action from within UFV. In addition, the response from the community in the Fraser Valley, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, demonstrated the leadership role that UFV can play.

It is within this context that a group of administrators and academic leaders, whose portfolios significantly relate to Indigenization, met four times in the Fall of 2017 (September 6, September 11, September 15, and November 28). The purpose of the discussion was to 1) identify the relationships and linkages among various units delivering Indigenous programming and support; and 2) explore strategies to strengthen relationships and build capacity.

The group consisted of: Shirley Hardman, Eric Davis, Peter Geller, Adrienne Chan, Ken Brealey, Sue Brigden, Tracy Ryder-Glass, Jacqueline Nolte and Sylvie Murray. While this relatively small group provided for in-depth discussions, we recognize that input from other areas will need to be considered (see below for recommendation on consultation). We wish to acknowledge the key visionary role that Shirley, as Senior Advisor on Indigenous Affairs, played in conceptualizing the work that is presented here.

The discussion provided opportunities for:

- sharing of documents (e.g., 2007 Draft Strategic Plan on Indigenizing the Academy; TRC's Call for Action and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; report produced by Indigenization Committee of Senate; Indigenous Student Transition Coordinator report)

- ☞ sharing of information about initiatives related to Indigenization at UFV (included programming, student support, governance bodies in general and in specific faculties)
- ☞ review of where units responsible for Indigenous initiatives sit in organizational charts of other universities.

The main conclusions reached are that:

- ☞ it is important to move away from a hierarchical/traditional organizational structure to adopt instead an Indigenous organizing structure
- ☞ a substantial amount of work and activities are currently taking place
- ☞ capacity is limited; in particular, the need for more Indigenous faculty, staff and administrators is stressed, and they need to be at the table where discussions, direction-setting and decision-making take place
- ☞ more non-Indigenous faculty, staff, and administrators are to be encouraged to become Indigenized (have the background, knowledge, and community connection)
- ☞ interaction and consultation with community is paramount (Indigenization Committee of Senate is to play a key role in coordinating community consultation)
- ☞ there is a need for greater coordination and integration among units.

B. Recommendations:

***Lálém ye mestíyexw* (“House of the Peoples”)**

Throughout the discussions, the idea of a *Lálém ye mestíyexw*, or “House of the Peoples” as translated from the Halq'eméylem, emerged as a main theme to address our purpose. *Lálém ye mestíyexw* provides a home for Indigenization in which people come together to strengthen their presence and relationships.

Recommendation #1: Create an Indigenous organizing structure for UFV

As visualised in Diagram 1, *Lálém ye mestíyexw* is inspired, informed, and guided by Indigenous voice and vision, which sits in the centre of the circle.

Diagram 1 also sets out the four Circles of Indigenization at UFV, which emerged from an analysis of activities and initiatives identified in the Fall 2017 discussions. These four circles, which will be more fully described below, are Students; Academic Curriculum and Programming; Recruitment and Retention of Faculty, Staff and Administrators; and External Relationships and Partnerships. The diagram shows how the *Lálém ye mestíyexw* can serve to better connect and bring together these four elements in a holistic way. The vision includes coordination and communication among the circles through regular meetings.

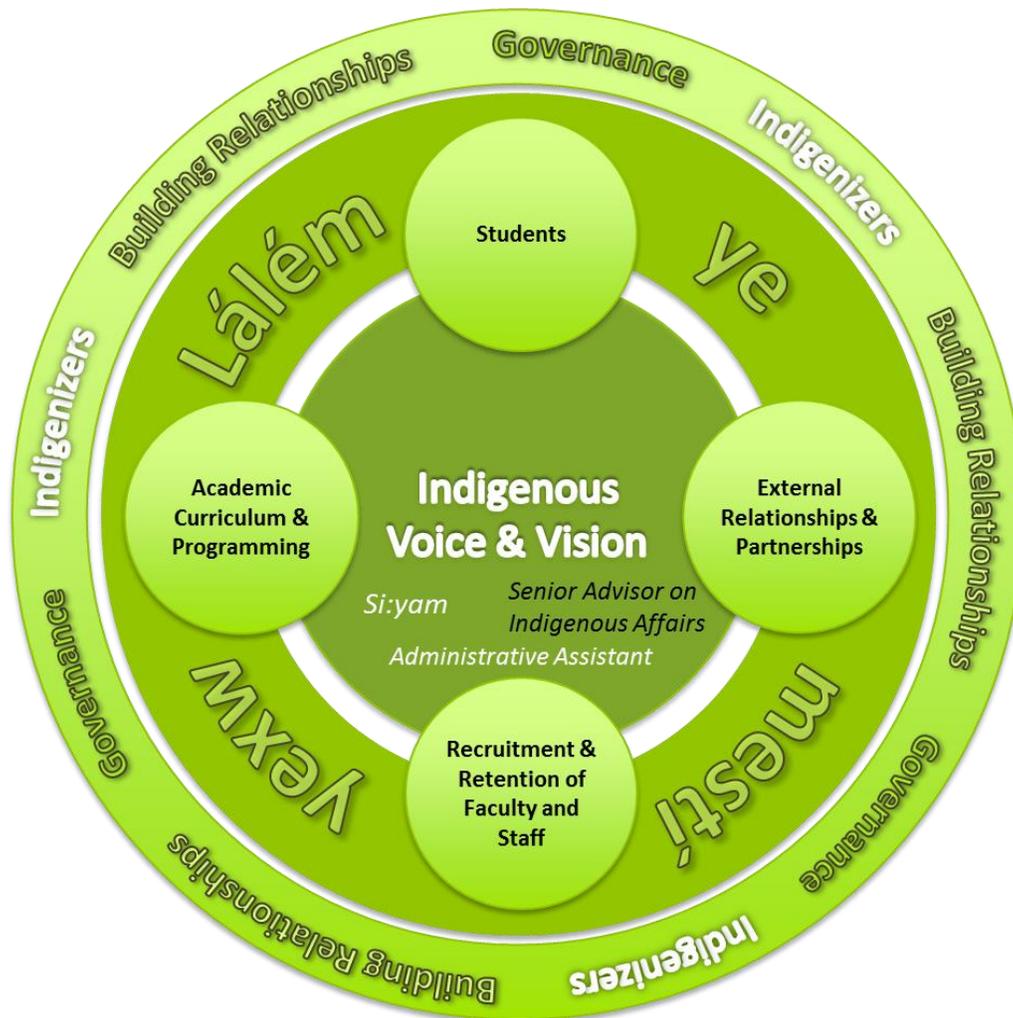


Diagram 1: Vision of *Lálém ye mestiyexw*

It is important to note that the concept of *Lálém ye mestiyexw* was identified in the *Indigenizing our Academy Plan* developed in 2007. The work from this earlier planning document provides a starting point for understanding the vision of the *Lálém ye mestiyexw* within UFV:

Vision Statement: An Indigenized post-secondary learning environment that promotes Indigenous peoples’ goals for self-determination and well-being.

Mission Statement: To provide culturally relevant Indigenous programs, research initiatives and services that meet the diverse yet unique needs of Indigenous people and communities within a post-secondary academic setting that is both reflective and inclusive of Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching, and learning.

Further developing the work of Indigenization at UFV, the Indigenization Committee of Senate (ICS) was established in 2015. The ICS developed the following Vision and Mission in 2017:

Vision Statement: In the spirit of reconciliation, the University of the Fraser Valley and the Indigenous peoples in S’olh Temexw ye Stó:lō will establish an authentic, collaborative and respectful relationship to deliver the expressed educational needs of Indigenous peoples.

Mission Statement: The University of the Fraser Valley and the Indigenous peoples of S'ólh Temexw ye Stó:lō will collaborate to transform the university to:

- Deliver programs and services consistent with the expressed wishes of the Indigenous peoples;
- Recruit and support Indigenous and Indigenized faculty, staff and administrators; and
- Measure and make adjustments to these efforts through continuous dialogue with Indigenous peoples in S'ólh Temexw ye Stó:lō.

In terms of the *Lálém ye mestíyexw*, in the inner circle, inspired by an Indigenous Voice and Vision, is the Senior Advisor on Indigenous Affairs (see Diagram 1). This position plays a key role in providing guidance to the university in our ongoing journey of Indigenization.

As the *Lálém ye mestíyexw* comes into sharper focus in the next several years, an additional Indigenous leadership role was identified.

Recommendation #2: Create a new position of Si:yam

The Si:yam ensures coordination and communication among the four circles.

Si:yam is the Halq'eméylem word for “trusted leader” and includes the following characteristics:

- 👂 A Si:yam is the main leader of a family.
- 👂 A Si:yam is selected by their families to represent their interests.
- 👂 A Si:yam traditionally was hardworking, knowledgeable, wealthy, and generous.
- 👂 A Si:yam has the respect of the community. If they do anything to bring shame or disrespect to their family or community, another family member would replace them.

The good qualities of a Si:yam include:

- 👂 respected
- 👂 familiar with Stó:lō culture and tradition
- 👂 respectful of others
- 👂 be a positive role model
- 👂 honest
- 👂 good at dispute resolution
- 👂 fair minded and impartial
- 👂 a good listener
- 👂 humble
- 👂 recognized as a leader; and
- 👂 confident.

UFV would need to receive guidance from the UFV Stó:lō Cultural Committee for a fuller understanding of the roles, responsibilities and qualities of the Si:yam. (The Stó:lō Cultural Committee, an initiative of Indigenous Affairs, provides cultural teachings and protocols to guide UFV activities and events with community cultural advisors as members.)

Recommendation #3: Create a new position for administrative support

As the focus on Indigenization and Reconciliation increases so do the number and extent of activities, events and initiatives. The ability to effectively plan and manage these activities and initiatives, including the elements of promotion, liaising with various departments in UFV and with the Indigenous community, and carrying out the ceremonial components requires considerable administrative support which has stretched existing resources. This administrative assistant position would provide this dedicated support to Indigenization, assisting the Senior Advisor on Indigenous Affairs and the new position of Si:yam once it is established. This position would positively impact on the coordination of Indigenization at UFV.

In addition to the inner circle, the structure for Indigenization at UFV includes an outer circle, which encompasses the work undertaken within and across the four Circles:

- 🌀 Building Relationships: this includes within and beyond UFV; communications is an important element.
- 🌀 Governance: internal to UFV, this includes formal governance through the Board and Senate (including the Indigenization Committee of Senate) and through Faculty Councils; this also includes the realm of policy and policy-making.
- 🌀 Indigenizers: this is meant to evoke the shared responsibility for Indigenizing at UFV. The idea here is a decentralized approach to Indigenizing, which requires building capacity, reaching inward and outward, and learning and listening from the heart. The “Indigenizers” may be specific individuals identified within the different areas and departments of UFV; at the same time, all members of UFV, be they faculty, staff, administrators or students, have a responsibility to take on this role.

Circles of Indigenization

The four Circles of Indigenization at UFV represent the main areas of activities and initiatives, and the key positions. The circles, while distinctly represented, are connected (see diagram 2).

Students and student learning is at the heart of what we do at UFV. In terms of Indigenization and the *Lálém ye mestíyexw*, recruitment, retention and provision of culturally relevant services for Indigenous students is a core element. Currently much of this activity is the responsibility of the Indigenous Student Centre (ISC), which includes:

- 🌀 Outreach to prospective students
- 🌀 Support Indigenous students’ transition
- 🌀 Assist prospective and on-going students to identify educational goals and learning needs
- 🌀 Support students by working with external agencies and other UFV departments
- 🌀 Provide cultural activities and organize cultural events
- 🌀 Elder support for students (UFV Elders-in-Residence)

In terms of the role of individual academic and service units, there is considerable collaboration with the Indigenous Students Centre to support Indigenous learners. A few programs at UFV have seats reserved for Indigenous students. In addition to supporting students, the UFV Elders-in-Residence can also be available to support instructors and departmental/Faculty events and activities.

The Director of the Indigenous Student Centre is noted in Diagram 2. This is an area where no additional leadership position is recommended.



Diagram 2: Circles of Indigenization

Academic Curriculum and Programming encompasses the development and delivery of curriculum (courses and programs) and programming (events, workshops and professional development activities). As conceived in response to the Truth and Reconciliation's Calls for Action, they are designed to educate, build awareness, and develop capacity for Indigenization and Reconciliation at UFV. Responsibility for development and delivery of these activities is shared by the departments, schools and interdisciplinary programs across all Faculties. The Teaching and Learning Centre, including through the new position of Teaching and Learning Specialist (Indigenization Speciality) and the Senior Advisor on Indigenous Affairs, offer support and guidance, as resources allow. The Indigenous Studies Curriculum Committee (ISCC) is mandated with the development of Indigenous Studies curriculum and programming at UFV, as well as maintaining communication between the various academic units on curricula.

Recommendation #4: Create a new position of Director of Indigenized Curriculum and Programming

Expansion of our activities in this area has been significant in the last few years and, while the ISCC's mandate and make-up as a cross-faculty committee is designed to provide the coordination that is needed university-wide, our current Indigenous faculty capacity is not sufficient to support the work. The role of the Director would be to coordinate and enhance Indigenized curriculum and programming through the following activities and responsibilities:

- 🔗 Create and maintain an inventory of relevant activities, and publicize through website, social media, and other platforms and means
- 🔗 Advise on gaps and priorities for development of new programs with Indigenous content and/or perspectives, and enhanced Indigenization of existing programs
- 🔗 Coordinate relevant programming, including faculty development opportunities, in liaison with Teaching and Learning, and various groups/individuals (e.g. RAN, department/school and faculties/College)
- 🔗 Acts as a resource for, and advises, relevant UFV committees (related to curriculum)
- 🔗 Teach one to two courses
- 🔗 Facilitate and support articulation and educational partnerships, and remain apprised of best practices elsewhere

Recruitment and Retention of faculty, staff, and administrators supports both student learning and development and delivery of curriculum and programming. Activities and responsibilities in this area are shared between the various units and Human Resources. They include:

- 🔗 Enhance recruitment of faculty, staff and administrators who are Indigenous and Indigenized; and
- 🔗 Develop and deliver mentorship and professional growth programs for Indigenization of faculty, staff, and administrators.

Although no new position is recommended for this area, we recognize the need for improvement in our practice for achievement of increased results.

Recommendation #5: Develop a strategy to consolidate and intensify recruitment and retention of Indigenous faculty, staff and administrators

In order to plan and implement this strategy, it is proposed that a newly-formed *Indigenizing Recruitment and Retention Steering Committee* be established, made up of key HR personnel, the Senior Advisor for Indigenous Affairs, and Indigenous faculty, staff or administrators. Responsibilities would include:

- 🔗 Review recruitment policies, procedures, and practices and recommend relevant modifications
- 🔗 Inventory and coordinate with deans and other administrators positions (new and planned) targeted for Indigenous/Indigenized hiring, and assist with recruitment.
- 🔗 Promote appointment of Indigenous Visiting Scholars, Adjunct Professors and Research Associates

External Relationships & Partnerships

UFV has an established record of developing and delivering curriculum, engaging in research and community service, and organizing conferences and events in partnership with local, regional and provincial Indigenous communities and organizations. This has included working with Stó:lō leaders, educators, knowledge keepers, and Elders. Examples include:

- ☞ First Nations Studies and Halq'emeylem language courses; the BA, major and minor in Indigenous Studies
- ☞ Funding initiatives for Indigenous programming and services (Federal, Provincial, and other external sources)
- ☞ Delivering programs in community settings, including in Sts'ailes, Seabird Island, Shxwhà:y Village, Saik'uz, and Nuxalk Nation (Bella Coola) as well as the Stó:lō Nation Coqualeetza site in Chilliwack; and
- ☞ Community-based and student research funded by CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC.

This is an area that crosses over many portfolios and where no additional position is recommended. The Senior Advisor on Indigenous Affairs and the Si:yam play key roles in this area, and would be supported by the new administrative assistant position (see Recommendation #2).

Timeline and Consultation

The following timeframe is proposed for establishing the *Lálém ye mestíyexw*, which includes time for consultation, administrative/budgetary considerations, and decision-making:

- ☞ Working committee - electronic consultation - February 2018
- ☞ Senior Academic Leadership Team (SALT) - March 2018
- ☞ President's Advisory Committee - September 2018
- ☞ Indigenization Committee of Senate - October 23, 2018
- ☞ UFV Faculty and staff - March 2019
- ☞ Community consultation - Winter/Spring 2019 (led by Indigenization Committee of Senate)
- ☞ Senate and Board - Spring 2019

Summary of recommendations:

In order to create a *Lálém ye mestíyexw* the following is recommended:

1. Create an Indigenous organizing structure for UFV
2. Create a new position of Si:yam
3. Create a new position for administrative support
4. Create a new position of Director of Indigenized Curriculum and Programming
5. Develop a strategy to consolidate and intensify recruitment and retention of Indigenous faculty, staff and administrators

It is envisioned that the *Lálém* can be resourced over the ensuing 2-3 years.