



FIRST NATIONS
UNIVERSITY
OF CANADA



NIUSLA
NATIONAL INDIGENOUS UNIVERSITY
SENIOR LEADERS' ASSOCIATION

Volume 01

National Indigenous Identity Forum - March 2022

INDIGENOUS VOICES ON INDIGENOUS IDENTITY

20
22

WHAT WAS HEARD REPORT

WHAT WAS HEARD REPORT

20
22

Cohosted by:

First Nations University of Canada (FNUniv)

FNUniv is a unique Canadian institution that specializes in Indigenous knowledge, providing post-secondary education for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike within a culturally supportive environment.

National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association (NIUSLA)

Announced in January 2022, NIUSLA was created to unite senior Indigenous administrators at Canadian universities. The association's mandate is about building a supportive network in which senior leaders can share experiences and challenges and produce systemic change at their institutions. It is also about ensuring that Indigenization reaches every corner of the university – from procurement to human resources and beyond.

Additional Sponsors:

Queen's University
University of Saskatchewan
Brandon University
York University

MESSAGE FROM DR. JACQUELINE OTTMANN	1
ABOUT THE FORUM	4
THE DISCUSSIONS	5
WHERE COULD WE GO FROM HERE?	6
FRAMING AND WHY WE MUST MOVE BEYOND SELF-IDENTIFICATION IN INSTITUTIONS	7
ELDER'S PERSPECTIVES ON KINSHIP AND IDENTITY	8
ELDERS' VOICES	9
LEGAL PERSPECTIVES ON INDIGENOUS IDENTITY	10
IDENTITIES	12
FACULTY PERSPECTIVES ON INDIGENOUS IDENTITY IN THE ACADEMY	14
CURRENT ISSUES AND WISE PRACTICES FROM INSTITUTIONS	16
CONVERSATION CIRCLES	20
SPEAKER AND PANEL PROFILES	25
PARTICIPATING UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES	35
FORUM STATISTICS	36
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	39

Message from Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann

As President of First Nations University of Canada (FNU) and as the co-chair of the National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association (NIUSLA), I would like to say that it was a great honour for First Nations University of Canada to co-host the inaugural National Indigenous Identity Forum with NIUSLA on March 9th and 10th, 2022. Early last fall, we began receiving phone calls about the need to have a national dialogue in a safe place. There are few post-secondary institutions like FNU across Canada. We are a First Nations owned post-secondary institution, our foundation are Indigenous knowledges, and Indigenous peoples on our campuses don't have to advocate for significance. With this positionality, we were able to deeply support this forum through Indigenous perspectives and traditional practices.

The National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association are Indigenous senior administrative leaders from academic institutions across 'Turtle Island'. NIUSLA members have a university or university faculty/college/school-wide mandate. In other words, they have a wide circle of influence across university systems. It was important for NIUSLA to co-host this forum because a mandate for the association is "to network and to engage in constructive dialogue and actions that pertain to the roles and responsibilities of leadership within the academic university context." I would like to acknowledge the guidance that NIUSLA members provided for the forum. This is truly a powerful group of Indigenous leaders, and they are an inspiration.

To make the gathering manageable, we took Senator/Chancellor Murray Sinclair's advice to limit the dialogue to the Indigenous community that are directly connected to post-secondary institutions – First Nations, Métis, Inuit students, staff, faculty, kêtê-ayak (Elders), and leaders with the goal of opening the circle to other sectors after this initial dialogue. This was a challenge because of the significant interest and impact that this topic has had on all Canadian organizations (e.g., governments, corporations, and not-for-profit and for-profit businesses etc.). This was also not the typical university forum on an Indigenous subject; this event was invitation only and only for Indigenous peoples connected to post-secondary institutions in Canada.

I would like to recognize the many people that came together to make this amazing event happen. To begin, I am so grateful to our kêtê-ayak (Elders) Council at the First Nations University of Canada for preparing a sacred space for this gathering of nations to converge and engage in a very important dialogue. The members of Elders Council are Gilbert Kewistep (Saulteaux, Yellow Quill First Nation), Preston Gardypie (Beardy's Cree Nation), Florence Allen (Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation), Rose Bird (Thunderchild First Nation, Cree), Margaret Reynolds (English River First Nation, Dene), Judy Pelly (Cote First Nation, Saulteaux), and Elder Mary Lee (Pelican Lake First Nation, Cree) who closed both days of the Forum for us in prayer. The Pipe Carriers who ensured that both days began in a good way were William Ratfoot (Loon Lake/Makwa Sahgaiecan First Nation, Cree), Dennis Omeasoo (Maskwacis Cree), Rod Apsis (English River First Nation, Dene), Virgil Bear (Dakota), Betty Peepeekoot (Loon Lake/Makwa Sahgaiecan First Nation, Cree) as the grandmother in the ceremony, and escowpayo Roland Kaye (Zagime (Sakimay) Anishinabek First Nation). Despite the virtual platform, the kêtê-ayak were keenly aware of the national scope of this forum and their ceremonies reflected this context.

I am very grateful for the gracious support and guidance that we received from the Honourable Chancellor Murray Sinclair (Peguis First Nation, Anishinaabe) as we prepared to host this Forum in a good way. He generously shared his personal team MediaStyle to support the planning. We could not

have planned this event within the short timeframe without their help. Miigwetch, Caitlin Kealey and Megana Ramaswami.

We had an amazing planning committee at FNUniv. This team was led by Meika Taylor (Métis Nation of Alberta) and included Elder Florence Allen (Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation), Bonnie Rockthunder (Plains Cree and Dakota from Piapot First Nation), Zoey Briggs (Cree), Denise Kaiswatum (Piapot First Nation, Cree), Kim Fraser-Saddleback (Mistawasis Cree Nation), Roland Kaye (Zagime (Sakimay) Anishinabek First Nation), Justin Easton, Rebecca Morris-Hurl (George Gordon First Nation), Shelley Walker (Okanese First Nation), and Debbie Venne (Muskeg Lake Cree Nation). They faced the obstacles that we encountered with tenacity that was driven by a strong sense of purpose.

Because the concept of identity is complex and the lived experiences associated with it vast, we had a Wellness Support Team available for participants that needed their help. Tala Tootoosis (Plains Cree, Lakota Sioux and Haudenosaunee), Rebecca Harvey (Métis), Eileen Cuthand (Cree and Saulteaux from Little Pine First Nation) and Robyn Morin (Saddle Lake Cree Nation) made up this team. They volunteered their time to ensure participants in this Forum had a safe space to process any feelings that may have been triggered during the event. Neal Kewistep (Fishing Lake First Nation, Saulteaux), Susannah Walker (Waganakising Odawa / Santee Sioux Dakota), and Colby Delorme (Métis) were our very competent emcees. I appreciated their humility, humour, and ability to navigate unforeseen challenges over the two days. Thank you to the Indigenous students from across Canada and FNUniv staff that facilitated and were notetakers in the afternoon conversation circles. Their work culminated in this report that was drafted by Dr. Marie Delorme (Métis) and Colby Delorme (Métis) from the Imagination Group of Companies.

Finally, we had brilliant Indigenous Elders, scholars, lawyers, and leaders who expanded our minds, hearts, and spirits with their knowledge, expertise, and lived experiences. They are Elder Maria Campbell (Cree and Métis), Elder Sol Sanderson (Chakastaypasin Cree Nation), Elder Millie Anderson (Inuk), Elder Willie Ermine (Sturgeon Lake First Nation, Cree), Jean Teillet (Métis), Marilyn Poitras (Métis), Leah Ballantyne (Mathias Colomb Cree Nation), Chris Andersen (Métis), Niigaanwewidam Sinclair (Anishinaabe, St. Peter's/Little Peguis), Kim TallBear (Dakota, Cheyenne, Arapaho), Marie Battiste (Mi'kmaw), Winona Wheeler (Fisher River Cree Nation), Brenda Macdougall (Métis), Angela Jaime (Pitt River and Valley Maidu), Deborah Saucier (Métis Nation of Alberta), and Kanonhsyonne Janice Hill (Mohawk). The Forum ended with four Witnesses: Linda Manyguns (Siksika Nation, Blackfoot), Lynn Lavallee (Anishinaabe-Métis), Dustin Louis (Carrier Nation), and Moses Gordon (George Gordon First Nation). Their stories were poignant and powerful. I look forward to the retelling of their experiences at our next forum.

This was a collective nation building exercise for all who attended, and the dynamic energy and good intention was tangible and felt in virtual spaces over the two-day forum. We heard that many participants felt like this was the first time we fully connected and gathered as one during the past two years - the virtual platform posing no barrier. I was captivated by the rich and vibrant perspectives and conversations, and many teachings linger for me to process.

So, where do we go from here? It is clearer than ever that the time has come to waniska! To wake up! It is time to wake up to our Indigenous knowledges, wake up to the land, and wake up to our communities if we are to thrive in this everchanging world, if we are to meet current and future challenges with confidence and fierce resolve. In this case, if we are to assert First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives of identity and citizenship within the post-secondary context. We were reminded of wahkohtowin – the

interconnected relationality of all things – that include practices of kinship and community citizenship. Our Indigenous philosophies and teachings will guide a path forward because they are as applicable today as they were hundreds of years ago. From the feedback that we’ve received, we learned that we have just begun the dialogue at this forum and that more dedicated *Indigenous space* is needed for our academic communities to continue the conversation. Because First Nations University of Canada has been identified as a safe space for the Indigenous invitation-only forum, we welcome the opportunity to host the forum until the circle is opened to a larger group.

The next National Indigenous Citizenship Forum will be hosted in Regina, SK, and virtually in a hybrid model in October, 2022. Like the first Forum, this event will be invitation only and for Indigenous peoples connected to post-secondary institutions in Canada. Invitations will be extended through the National Indigenous University Senior Leaders’ Association. In the meantime, you may want to re-watch or catch up on any panel presentations that you may have missed at the first Forum. These sessions were recorded and uploaded online to our [website](#).

We look forward to hosting you again soon!

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
Co-Chair, National Indigenous Senior Leaders’ Association

About the Forum

Co-hosted by the First Nations University of Canada and the National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association (NIUSLA), and held on March 9-10, 2022, this virtual event brought together Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Chancellors, staff, students, scholars, and academics from across Canada to discuss wise practices for validating Indigenous identity for Indigenous specific opportunities within the scope of Universities Canada institutions.

The event provided participants with an opportunity to gather and to constructively and respectfully dialogue and plan for ways to ensure that Indigenous peoples receive Indigenous-specific opportunities. The overarching question posed at the Forum was

How can post-secondary institutions ensure that positions, grants, scholarships, and other opportunities designated for Indigenous peoples are not taken by 'pretendians'¹?

An Indigenous only safe space, the Forum brought together over 400 post-secondary connected Indigenous peoples² to discuss best practices for validating identity for Indigenous specific opportunities at academic institutions. Some of the topics addressed were sensitive and contentious, requiring thoughtful and respectful consideration of many perspectives.

Ultimately, the goal was to collaboratively discuss tangible processes and practices that ensure Indigenous specific academic opportunities are rightfully given to Indigenous peoples, not pretendians or race shifters. This spirit and intention are characterized in the words of one of the speakers.

We come together with our hearts, our spirits, and our intellect to share opinions on Indigenous identity. We will not all agree. We will not all say the same thing. This is not only important, it is necessary. We are not the homogenized caricatures that we have been painted to be. Individual identities and teachings and guidance are crucial. We are here to learn, to understand, to contribute and protect. Over the next few days listen with your hearts and minds and do not be exclusionary.

Marilyn Poitras

In this era of Truth and Reconciliation and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples where more spaces are being made available to Indigenous peoples in mainstream institutions, the number of high-profile Indigenous identity fraud cases are increasing. The time has come to gather as Indigenous peoples to outline wise practices and processes for determining who meets Indigenous citizenship or ancestry requirements within the Canadian post-secondary context.

The U15 Group of Canadian research universities have made it clear that they are not in the business of determining Indigenous status for post-secondary institutions and will look to Indigenous communities for guidance.

The March 2022 National Indigenous Identity Forum was a starting point. Future events will continue these important discussions.

¹ Pretendian. A person who falsely claims to have Indigenous ancestry, who fakes an Indigenous identity, or who digs up an old ancestor from hundreds of years ago to proclaim themselves as Indigenous. Source: APTN News. January 2021

² Upon advice of legal counsel, the list of Forum attendees will not be included in this report since explicit consent was not obtained to post their names publicly (and Indigenous identity was a Forum precursor).

The Discussions

Plenary presentations and smaller break out groups were asked to address several fundamental questions and issues designed to inform the discussion.



Where Could We Go from Here?

The intent of the Forum was not to be prescriptive, but rather to share and explore ways to move forward. A summary of discussions for possible post-secondary pathways includes:

Define identity. There are many definitions of identity. This is hard, uncomfortable work, but is an articulation of Indigenous laws and requires capacity on part of Nations to fully engage.

Terms matter. There may be a more relevant word than identity. Citizenship, relationship, and kinship speak to who claims a person, not who the person claims. Look for the markers of identity – a name or clan, responsibilities, the ability to give gifts, and accountability.

Move beyond self-identification. Request community references. Build questions into the interview and selection process that focus on Indigenous knowledge and traditions.

Build relationships with communities. Rather than relying on self-identification as the only basis to understand claims to Indigeneity, work with local community leaders to build strong relationships.

Focus on service. Understand how Indigenous faculty, staff, and students are impact the community. The connection to community is fundamental to understanding what is meant by Indigenous identity.

Recognize Elders and Traditional Knowledge Holders. Traditionally, these were the people who would validate a newcomer's claim to identity. Change collective agreements to recognize Elders as full faculty members for their deep wisdom, teachings, and knowledge.

Establish Indigenous Expert Panels. This creates a safe space for Indigenous academics to engage in meaningful discussion, sharing, and collaboration. Indigenous panels are an important resource for post-secondary institutions.

Enact vetting policies. Establish policies and procedures to assess the identity of all Indigenous candidates applying for academic or research positions. These processes must be Indigenous led, provide a safe space, and truly work for and with Indigenous peoples.

Create Committees to validate applications. Include distinguished and respected local Indigenous community members, students, researchers, scholars, and faculty to examine applications and validate claims of Indigenous identity.

Clearly outline consequences for fraudulent claims. Ensure that policies include possible reprisals for fraudulent claims of identity, which may include a spectrum of redress, reparation, or in extreme cases criminal charges.

Identify legitimate and fake organizations. Create lists of legitimate Indigenous organizations. If people cannot meet the identity requirements of these organizations, then they have not met the bar.

Provide training. It is unrealistic to expect Indigenous faculty to engage in every identity issue. Hiring committees and boards need to be trained so that they know who Indigenous people are, how we define ourselves, what legitimate documents look like, and how stories and connection to community inform processes.

Validate claims of Indigenous identity. Verify claims of connection to a community through the Nation or organization that holds the registry of members. Request advance consent and include a notice to applicant that their identity will be verified with the Nation to which they claim attachment.

Align collective agreements. Establish Indigenizing principles for collective agreements and mobilize an understanding of what an Indigenous scholar is, how Indigenous peoples are recruited, and reciprocal relationships and engagements with Indigenous communities.

Framing and Why We Must Move Beyond Self-Identification in Institutions

The Honourable Murray Sinclair spoke of identity in the context of Indigenous peoples at the post-secondary level. Participation in ongoing conversations is foundational to universities, colleges, and other training institutions building understanding and determining the right direction. Identity starts at of birth. The grandmothers speak of the importance of talking to children from the time of conception, as language and song contribute to the evolution of life and the child's development. Women are the first teachers of our children and have the important role of developing a child's sense of connection to family, mother earth, and creation.

The issue of developing one's sense of identity, one's sense of connection to family, one's sense of connection to community, one's sense of connection to creation is reinforced on a daily basis throughout the life of that child. So, identity is very, very important. We cannot take it for granted.

The Honourable Murray Sinclair

When a child reaches the age of seven or eight it is recognized that they are ready to pass on to the next stage of their evolution as a human being. They enter their next level of responsibility and identity is reinforced.

Although formal, western-based education is an element of our journey, it is only part of the journey. Identity is based in life experiences, talking with Elders, and spending time with people who can convey teachings about where we come from, why we are here, and where we are going. Ceremony and storytelling help us learn about what has come before and what we need to be. This is the essence of knowing who we are as Indigenous peoples.

"I know where we come from, I know about our heroes, and our past. Our people traveled and where they went, I know how they used to live before the white man came here. Because they know some of those stories, people willingly share them with me. And then I know about where we're going. But what happens to us after we die, humans go to the next world, they know that story of the Spirit Road journey. They know about how to do that. And I know about the naming. The naming ceremony is part of the answer. But understanding why we're here. Because in that ceremony, he talks about the fact that that spirit, that spirit name that you are given is not a name that is going to you just because you're alive, but it's a name of the Spirit that came to you because you were created as a spirit. That spirit was sent to you in order to help you to become part of your committee to do something for people. And so, I know what my spirit name is, because I know the name of the Spirit. Therefore, because I know the story of the purpose of that spirit, I know the story of my purpose."

In all elements of our identity there must be a place for ceremony, a place that can contribute to quiet and calm, a place to teach and learn. The lessons are taught in a gentle way. Those claiming Indigenous identity have to be able to show that their identity has been part of their life since the beginning of their growth. Identity is based in the questions "who are your teachers and where did you learn this". Identity is not about claims to be traditional, nor is it about opportunities for status, financial gain, or power. Indigenous peoples not only say their name and where they came from, but also talk about who their parents, grandparents, and great grandparents were; they talk about their Elders. This is a validation of Indigenous identity.

Every institution for whom the issue of Indigenous identity is important, should have Elders and traditional people involved in the process. These are people who are recognized as the knowledge keepers from their communities. Traditionally, these are the people we would have in place when people appeared in a community to make claims to who they were and what they did. The first questions asked of strangers is, "Tell us who your family is. Tell us about your parents. Tell us what they did." In doing this, they are called upon to examine their own claim. We cannot be victimized by people who claim to be who we are; we cannot permit this to happen as it hurts Indigenous peoples.

Our young people are seeking their desire for culture. Their desire to know who they are is a strong, powerful, and overwhelming desire. If we don't give it to them, then they will fall back. We cannot allow that to happen. If we are not careful about how we go about this, that we can leave them as victims to those who make false claims. Self-identification is not enough. We need the process of verification to give that direction to our youth.

This needs to be done carefully and properly in order to succeed.

Elder's Perspectives on Kinship and Identity

Elder Maria Campbell discussed the importance of Indigenous peoples knowing who they are and the impact of residential schools and foster care on the connection to community. We all come from a place and place is central to identity. When we meet somebody the first questions are always "Who are your people and where do you come from?" More important than one's name, is one's relatives.

Equally important is history – the stories that go back for generations. These connections enabled Indigenous peoples to know who they were and to whom they were related as relatives were called by their kinship terms.

For a community to be healthy the children must be brought together; all the children we have lost and who are trying to find their way home. We make a place for them and develop courses, histories, and art. We find as many tools as we can to be able to mend wahkohtowin³ as this is so broken. We won't ever be healthy until the children are healthy. We must stop thinking about how much we are hurting and ensure that our children do not hurt.

Elder Sol Sanderson inherited the generational knowledge of his Cree Nation. Traditionally, language, and culture distinguished one Nation from another. Kinship is a process that all Indigenous Nations have through their clans, which in some ways are similar to a democratic system of government that has the legislative, executive, and administrative branches. Under the clan system, women had the powers to make laws and rules for the home and the community. These highly structured systems of governance and society were taken away by the church and government.

Indigenous self-governing processes must be reinstated. Reclaiming inherent rights starts with understanding those rights and the related duties and responsibilities. Chiefs and councils cannot do anything without laws that are derived from our inherent legal system and Treaty rights.

Governance rests with families and communities, not Councils. A major change is required in the education system to ensure Indigenous control of our own education. Rights are not limited by the boundaries of a reserve. Rights are recognized at the community level as well as regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Elder Millie Anderson was born in the Northwest Territories on the shores of the Beaufort Sea. Her learnings came from her grandmother, grandfather, and parents. Language was passed on from one generation to the next. The Elders always said that the people should be proud of who they are as Inuit and that kindness was an important element of the culture.

You visited all of your relatives whether they were on the reserve or on the road allowance. Each time we visited we heard stories in our language. We lived off the land so were able to retain language as there was nobody there to force you to stop until you went to school.

Elder Maria Campbell

³ wahkohtowin is a Cree word that refers to the interconnectedness of relationships, communities, and nature. Its literal meaning is "kinship".

Youth should have the opportunity to be educated, both in western ways and land-based learning. Knowing one's traditional practices such as hunting as taught by parents, grandparents, and traditional knowledge holders connects Indigenous peoples to their culture.

Elder Willie Ermine spoke of the word Indigenous, which describes people from the land and a certain kind of lifestyle and character that is attached to that lifestyle. The land is interconnected with every aspect of life - the trees, the plants, the animals, and the wind. Identity is a measure of the people with whom we identify. We care about other people and about the character of our community. It is this that makes us so.

Life is different today than it was in a time of no electricity, having to cut wood to make fires, hauling water, and providing daily meals of rabbits, moose meat, and potatoes. This is what growing up in a land-based experience is; it is powerful to have this identity cemented into one's being.

Our health and wellness is a spiritual matter, particularly for our children and grandchildren. Wellness is reflected in children laughing and smiling. There is a reason for spirituality, for understanding ceremonies and protocol. The purpose is to give the individual, their family, their children, and grandchildren health and wellness, to be happy and to have a good life.

Elders' Voices

Elder Conversation Circles were held at the Saskatoon Campus and Northern Campus. These circles were not recorded. Indigenous students acted as conversation leaders and note takers. Elders met at First Nations University of Canada campuses in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert.

The Elders voiced their appreciation for being included in the discussion on Indigenous identity and expressed their understanding of how challenging the issue of identity is for those in leadership positions to address. They speculated on whether Indigenous faculty and staff are being taken advantage of and if these positions are token in nature. When fraudulent claims of identity do not result in action by institutions a message is sent that Indigenous people should be silenced or not speak up at all.

This needs to change. Go back to the drawing board with consultation and involvement of Elders and communities. Build on Indigenous values and life experiences and reflect these in the workplace.

Elders are concerned about the protection and wellness of whistleblowers as it appears there is little recourse for bringing identity issues to light. There is greater safety for individuals when many voices come together.

In smaller centres there is less of an opportunity for people to misrepresent their identity, however in urban centers and large institutions where people come from many places, it is important to ask about connections to community. Institutions have the right to question those claiming to be Indigenous about their identity, and to ask for evidence supporting that claim. If help is required, Elders can be consulted and involved in the process.

Misappropriation of identity is an attempt to take away knowledge that has been passed down through the generations; it is disrespectful of the ancestors. Race-shifting has damaged Indigenous peoples and is a continuation of traumas inflicted by residential schools. It breaks trust and causes hurt and anger. The Elders observed that there are few Indigenous people holding top jobs in post-secondary institutions and that some who do hold these positions may have misrepresented their identity. Cultural identity is derived from teachings, which comes from Elders and Traditional Knowledge Holders. One can only teach what is known and teaching comes from the heart. Elders expressed fear that those who falsely purport to know the culture will do away with what has been built for generations.

In discussing the role that kinship plays in Indigenous identity, Elders explained that *wahkotowin* is the connection of all things in nature - relationships, communities, the land, and all natural systems. *wahkotowin* is kinship.

wahkotowin (kinship) is more than family. It is the relationship to all things. When you start speaking the language, this all makes sense.

On the issue of those Indigenous people who come from other countries, the Elders acknowledged that newcomers bring their own culture, language, and belief systems. This presents opportunities for mutual learning.

Some actions put forward by the Elders for consideration by post-secondary institutions included:

- Establish Indigenous task forces
- Consult with Elders and communities
- Engage Elders in all aspects of the academy in a meaningful, not tokenistic, way
- Implement policy changes
- Engage unions as resources and supports
- Ensure the hiring process includes the question “who are your people?”
- Include identity verification processes in collective agreements

During this Forum we have talked about the problem. We now have to look to the future so that in twenty years we can say we had the conversation and look at where we are now.

Legal Perspectives on Indigenous Identity

Jean Teillet, Marilyn Poitras, Leah Ballantyne

There are two sides to the legal issues. **Jean Teillet** explained that Indigenous laws are about identity and citizenship and there are settler laws; there must be a way to find an interface between the laws. Indigenous peoples and Nations all have their own laws about citizenship and understanding who their people are. Indigenous laws and customs need to be articulated and communicated to institutions to let them know about our laws and customs. This is not a singular responsibility, but rather must be shared between Indigenous peoples and settler institutions.

Indigenous identity is not an individual right. Settler law gets this wrong as the Western liberal idea focuses on individual rights and that these rights are unassailable. Challenging an individual’s claim to identity frightens institutions because of employment laws and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, Indigenous identity exists only from the connection to a collective. Although there is some aspect of an individual right, the major issue is that one cannot exist as an Indigenous person disconnected from the people from whom you have come. Of course, there are issues that must be navigated around those who have been forcibly taken away or alienated from our communities.

The terminology of identity is problematic as this is an individual concept where someone can make themselves into whatever they want to be or claim to be. Our peoples are citizens of Nations, not members.

There is confusion about the meaning of self-determination. This is a collective right, not an individual right. The primary foundational concept in domestic, international, and Indigenous law is the right to determine who are citizens of the collective.

Citizenship is not necessarily about blood. Nations should be able to determine who their members are according to their own laws and traditions. Nations may choose to bring in people who are not connected by blood according to their rules and customs. These rules encompass adoption and citizenship. However, this does not refer to adoption by a family; rather the individual is not a citizen unless the Nation adopts them. This is a critical distinguishing element between the familial concept and Nation citizenship.

There is a difference between the local community and the Nation. If we accept that Indigenous peoples are Nations as political entities, there is the right of self-government according to our laws and traditions. The community, the family, and the individual are subsets of the Nation and should not bypass the rules of the Nation.

If an individual is putting themselves forward as Indigenous, are getting work based on that claim, and are benefitting from that claim, there is no legal right to privacy.

We must have these discussions about place, community, and people. The discussion with the academy is setting processes for how they can understand who people are in a fair way. This is not simply about possessing a card.

Jean Teillet

Marilyn Poitras stated that many Canadians express opinions on who they see are the Indigenous people and who have been determined to be Indians as defined in the Constitution. These opinions often perceive Indigenous people in simplistic terms and constructs. Often, Indigenous peoples are viewed as a minority who have been dependent on the government for hundreds of years. This version of the Indian is one that is colonial and does not consider identity, cultural, history, privilege, or at the creation of the Indian persona. The cost of oppression and suppression is disempowerment of the family and the community.

The issues related to identity are complex and although Indigenous peoples are not the ones doing anything wrong, we are expected to address the problem, to do the clean-up work. We are living with the issue of a crisis of identity. We ask ourselves where we come from, why we are here, who we are, and where are we going.

We are at a time when the question of indigeneity as a credential is being reviewed institutionally all over the country. This work is emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical. This issue has evolved to a point where Indigenous people have had to band together to identify who is preying on our genealogies, our spiritual existence, and our connectedness, to our detriment. This threatens our language, ceremonies, customs, land, and families. This places Indigenous peoples in survival mode and we need to get better at this, not take out the wrong people. We are asked to speak with kindness, wisdom, and love.

However, fraudulent claims of non-Indigenous people are not an Indian problem. Indigenous people are not trying to claim the seat, the power, the job, the funding, and the promotion based on fraudulent identity and expertise. This is a non-Indigenous problem but because those fraudulently claiming Indigenous identity are not subject to legislation, policies, or sanctions, it falls on Indigenous people to do the research and blow the whistle on what needs to be protected. Post-secondary institutions have benefitted from the acclaim of non-Indigenous people claiming Indigeneity, so there is little incentive to address the issue of identity and credentials.

Historically, proof of Indigenous identity was controlled and regulated by systems that were incomplete, often inaccurate, paternalistic, and often corrupt. The mass destruction of identity was further enabled by the intentional dismantling of families, kidnapping of children, and eradication of culture and language.

Until now, it has been easy to say you were Indigenous because documented proof was not as institutionalized as it is today.

This has opened a back door to those who lay claim to an identity that is not theirs.

Marilyn Poitras

Reliance on customary law as a vehicle to claim Indigeneity does not make one Indigenous. While there is no shame in being customarily adopted into an Indigenous family, or being made an honorary member of a community, the reality is that this is an honorific, and it does not make one Indigenous.

Leah Ballantyne, in speaking to the issue of the harm caused by stolen Indigenous identities to advance one's academic career, explained that false claims are a white-collar crime that constitute fraud, and which require redress. False claims of Indigenous identity inflict harm on those who legitimately occupy academic positions and

take away opportunities that rightfully belong to Indigenous people. Universities must address the issue publicly, with consequences, and reparation to the Indigenous communities who have suffered harm.

Post-secondary institutions must take immediate action on vetting Indigenous candidates applying for academic or research positions. This requires establishing policies to guide the process and which outline consequences for fraudulent claims. Trusted and distinguished Indigenous community members, students, researchers, and faculty must be engaged in the vetting and validation of Indigenous candidates.

Universities are urged to consider a charge of fraud for false claims of Indigenous identity during tenure or research. Failure to do so is perpetuating a calculated crime.

Misrepresentation of identity for personal or professional gain is fraud and must be met with consequences that are proportionate to the offence. The harm caused to the Indigenous community and to the post-secondary institution requires redress that is commensurate with the offence. Legal recourse exists across a spectrum. Under employment law, a false claim may be viewed as misconduct for dishonesty. This is a breach of the trust relationship and may result in disciplinary measures.

Leah Ballantyne

Whistleblower issues are challenging in the legal arena. Although they have called out the establishment, these individuals are often “tarred with the brush that they raised” and suffer impacts to their reputations. However, when many whistleblowers raise an issue, change is more likely to happen in an institution.

Redress for committing a wrong that harms the community may be addressed through consequences that serve to both educate and to repair the relationship and which engage the community in defining how the perpetrator should make amends for their actions.

Post-secondaries may also contact Nations to validate claims of Indigenous identity. If a candidate identifies as Indigenous on application or scholarship or a position, calling the Nation or organization for verification purposes does not breach privacy laws. The application should contain a notice that the candidate’s claim will be verified with the Nation to which they are attached. This notice also includes advance consent, enshrined in policy, that if a candidate at any time claims to be Indigenous, such claim will be verified with a community, a Nation, a membership body, or a previous post-secondary institution. The applicant’s signature is confirmation of consent.

Developing policies, processes, and relationships is the most effective way to avoid litigation. The work must happen with Indigenous peoples – nothing about us without us.

Identities

Dr. Chris Andersen, Dr. Kim TallBear, Dr. Niigaanwewidam Sinclair

What role does genetics or DNA and blood quantum play into indigenous identity?

Dr. TallBear noted that genetics and blood quantum are not the same thing, and that identity is a problematic word. Dr. TallBear read from a chapter entitled Identity is a Poor Substitute for Relation in a 2021 Indigenous studies volume published on Routledge Press and written with five co-editors.

Identity as a concept in popular usage does not necessarily imply ongoing relating. It might imply discrete, biological conjoinings within one’s genetic ancestry. Genetics can spur alliances but identity can also exist as a largely individualistic idea, as something considered to be held once and for all unchanging within one’s body. Whether through biological or social imprinting, identity is often considered as one’s body’s property. I don’t want us looking too much within our own persons, our own individual persons, including our genetics, for a definition of who we are. Rather, I want us to remember that we are always becoming in relation not only to genetic and cultural ancestors, but to one another,

continuously and in relation to the geographies of political economies we inhabit whether by choice, or by circumstances we may have had little choice in. If we remember that we are what we become as much or more than we are who our biological properties determine us to be I suspect that will help us focus on more carefully with one another as beings in the world.⁴

There are basically two kinds of genetic testing or genetic ancestry that come into play in assertions of Indigenous identity or belonging. The first kind, that most people are most familiar with is genealogical research. Genetic ancestry tests like 23andMe are not applicable, nor are they used by Indigenous governance structures. They are not used for band membership or status in Canada. These tests focus on tracing the migrations of populations around the world and are focused on immigration and migration narratives. These are not the narratives of Indigenous peoples as the tests do not link an individual to named ancestors.

There is a second type of test called a DNA profile which links, with a high degree of probability, close biological relatives and which is more commonly known as a paternity or parentage test.

The question is larger than identity fraud. Dr. TallBear explained that there is a risk to Indigenous well-being with a structural trickle down that occurs when non-Indigenous people with non-Indigenous standpoints who pose as Indigenous and who are invested in sustaining that deception, rise through the ranks to represent us and theorize Indigenous peoplehood, sovereignty, and anti-colonialism. These people become thought leaders, institutional decision makers, and policy advisors to governmental leaders who have regulatory and economic power over our peoples. They then shape academic and public discourse about who we allegedly are, what our lives allegedly look like, and what they think should be done about into us. Playing Indian has consequences for our well-being and for our very survival.

Settlers stole our lands, our minerals, our water, and our children. They have worked long and hard to extinguish our governance and our kinship systems. When they steal our identity, or they insist that they are us they are attempting to determine who we are and that is a final act of colonization. They are continuing to steal and replace.

Dr. Kim TallBear

What role does kinship play in determining identity?

Dr. Sinclair explained that kinship is where we come from, our communities, our ancestors, our songs, and our stories. We credit the long history of our intellectual property that involves the pedagogy of our people in relation to what we might refer to as material culture, but which is an intellectual tradition.

Kinship is grounded within place and family and is most often seen in our relationship with clans. A crucial way to think about identity is about what something does, not what something is, because identity is not something that is fixed. It is about a constant series of actions and responsibilities that are about what you are doing rather than what you are.

Describing Anishinaabeg citizenship requires defining people according to a long history of different circumstances. Thus, there are many Anishinaabe people who do not have blood from the community. In different circumstances and at different times in the historical record, they have earned the relationships within the community and for all intents and purposes are Anishinaabeg. All blood gives is the opportunity for a relationship; it is not the defining feature of identity. This becomes complicated in a world that is defined by blood and a fixed notion of identity.

Kinship is earned and is not something that is given, and particularly not with blood. Because one has been born with something, they have an opportunity to earn their relationship with others. This is illustrated in the giving and receiving of tobacco. Kinship is a constant series of growth and regrowth over a longer period of time. In Anishinaabeg culture, identity is not about the markers of identity but by that which has been earned, given, and

⁴ See Kim TallBear's "Identity is a poor substitute for relating: Genetic ancestry, critical polyamory, property, and relations" in Routledge Handbook of Critical Indigenous Studies, Edited By Brendan Hokowhitu, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, Chris Andersen, Steve Larkin (2020) for more information.

recognized by community. These include names which may come with a family or clan, responsibilities, the opportunity give gifts. Accountability informs each of these elements and failure to be accountable has repercussions.

This is about who claims you, not who you claim. This is one way to think about identity. It is not always fixed with blood as blood gives one an opportunity to earn kinship.

What impact do claims of Metis identity have on the Métis community?

Dr. Andersen outlined that we should be moving away from talking about identity to talking about citizenship. This is important as we tend to think about identity in terms of self-identification. We are only beginning to grapple with the idea that people would claim to be something that they are not. The idea of what counts as race or ethnicity is far more primordial. When people make claims to an identity there is not really any race-shifting going on other than some form of white possessiveness that is at the root of those making the claims.

In a Métis context, or an Indigenous context more broadly, the question is to think about is what the difference is between a white person with Indigenous ancestry and an Indigenous person with white ancestry. These are two different things, although they can be the same person at different points in their lives.

In a post-secondary context, we often take genealogical criteria as the basis for people's claims to identity and don't talk or ask so much about what role ongoing kinship relationships actually play.

The implications of self-identification intergenerationally will have significant implications in the coming years. In the 2015 Census, there are approximately 500,000 people who identify as having First Nations ancestry but who do not identify as First Nations. It will be interesting to see how this plays out in the context of race-shifting.

There are arguments to be made for reinstating more traditional ways of addressing citizenship.

Identity is complex as many people have been ripped from their communities through residential schools, adoption, the child welfare system, incarceration, and forced removal from communities. They are trying to come home, and they begin that process by self-identifying. Of course, this is not how our teachings operate as the relationship must be earned in order for a living kinship to exist.

Faculty Perspectives on Indigenous Identity in the Academy

Dr. Winona Wheeler, Dr. Marie Battiste, Dr. Brenda Macdougall

How is your Institution working through Indigenous identity challenges right now?

Much of **Dr. Battiste's** work on this subject has been on the colonization of education, the impact on Indigenous peoples, and how we need to proceed to understand reconciliation and decolonization of education. Now at Cape Breton University, she is trying to understand what institutions have done and what can be done in the future.

For 50-plus years Indigenous scholars around the world have been mobilizing, activating, and urging public education to engage in the enhancement of Indigenous people's knowledges, languages, and cultures. These aspirations have been clearly aimed toward the self-determination of their Nations' communities and futures. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report noted that Aboriginal participants recognize that children's education should lead to them becoming engaged citizens of their communities and Nations, support self-determination, and continue to advance their languages, cultures, and ontologies for the seventh generation. Indigenous identity, traditions, and customs through education have been firmly enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In 2021, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act came into force. As a result, provinces and territories are beginning to align their policies with the Act. The time is right for post-secondary institutions to make clear statements on Indigenous identities.

The situations post-secondaries are experiencing today with Indigenous identity issues are a direct result of Eurocentric colonial traditions that have affected who has been seen as Indigenous. What we are now seeing is the result of the complicities of these institutions. Equity, diversity, and inclusion focus on addressing and ameliorating issues of injustice and discrimination that various groups of people have experienced. Provincial governments have prioritized the inclusion of Indigenous peoples and academics have directly benefitted from metrics resulting from self-identification. As seats were created, opportunities opened for Indigenous peoples. This also created an incentive for misrepresenting identity and the opportunity for institutions to “check the Indigenous box.”

It is really imperative that we as senior leaders in the institution operate to figure out with senior leaders how we are going to make those changes. The biggest thing we can do is establish Indigenizing principles for collective agreements and begin to mobilize an understanding of what is an Indigenous scholar.

Dr. Marie Battiste

Post-secondary institutions can enhance collective agreements through establishing principles for the recruitment and advancement of Indigenous peoples. Reciprocal relationships and engagements with Indigenous communities need to be founded on these kinds of principles. A fundamental issue in the academy is that Indigenous scholars are not given credit for their service to Indigenous communities nor for their Indigenous research. Advocacy for the recognition of what counts is as important as the identification of Indigenous scholars. The language used in collective agreements can be used to privilege certain elements and activities.

Identity in the academy has focused on self-identification. The academy can add to this by requesting community references, outlining specific skills and knowledge that are built around Indigenous knowledge and traditions. These types of questions can be built into the interview and selection process. At Western [University], the collective agreement outlines that appointments and search committees must include Indigenous scholars who have an arm’s length relationship with the candidate.

Dr. Wheeler outlined the need to shift thinking from this being an Indigenous identity issue to the problem of cultural appropriation. When Indigenous identity is problematized, all the weight and burden fall on Indigenous people.

When students discover that their supervisor or others are falsely claiming to be Indigenous the impact is devastating. In addition to the emotional toll, the student has many other considerations and decisions to make about continuing with the supervisor and about the legitimacy of what they have read in their studies and cited in their research.

Indigenous voices are often silenced and marginalized by senior management in the academy. One of the most critical issues for university administration is engaging the knowledge of Indigenous scholars. There is an increasing demand for Indigenous faculty which makes the recruitment and retention of Indigenous peoples a priority. Falsely claiming Indigenous identity is not only academic misconduct, but also impacts the image and integrity of the institution.

Dr. Brenda Macdougall acknowledged the trauma and pain that fraudulent claims of identity causes for communities. This requires thinking about how we move within systems, our values about who we are, and how we recognize each other as central to hiring, tenure, and promotion processes. There is no one size fits all as every institution and region will have complicated needs and distinctions. However, generalizations can be made.

The issue poses several challenges. On the one hand, administrators see themselves as liberal and attend to the idea of human rights and do not want to be seen as racist. Human rights are very much about an individual experience although it can be about the collective, but this is primarily an individual process. This requires thinking about

collectivities, responsibilities, the place where we exist, as well as where we come from. These, and issues of language and tradition, inform the hiring process. This requires moving beyond self-identification as that process and system is not working.

There are two kinds of identity structures – people with paperwork and those who do not have documentation like treaty cards, status cards, and Métis Nation citizenship cards. There are also people who do not have that documentation, do not want that documentation, or cannot have that documentation.

We know when something does not ring true and is wrong. Indigenous faculty need to be part of the processes that starts the conversation. However, it is simply unrealistic to expect Indigenous people to be on all hiring committees. We need to engage in a training process with hiring committees and hiring boards so that they know who Indigenous people are, how we define ourselves, and how to recognize legitimate documentation. If stories are to become central to the hiring system, then communities must be engaged. This is not about evaluating identity, personal experience, or retraumatizing anybody. Asking people who they are should not be traumatizing. An individual's CV is full of information about the person but does not typically reflect references to community. If people are being hired for Indigenous-specific positions, then credentials matter.

All universities have some form of Indigenous leadership who are entrusted with the experience they have. If you put people in those positions, universities need to take them seriously when they are saying that there is a problem.

Dr. Brenda Macdougall

We must start thinking differently and deploying our resources. The language of equity, diversity, and inclusion is about people who have been marginalized. However, the original people have a different relationship with the institution. The discourse of EDI does not make sense for us. Indigenization, decolonization, and reconciliation must take precedence over issues of diversity.

The issue of fraudulent representation is not only about individuals making claims. There are also fraudulent organizations. Legitimate organizations must be identified and if people cannot meet the documentation requirements, then they simply have not met the bar. They have a story of displacement and that is legitimate conversation to have.

Current Issues and Wise Practices from Institutions

Dr. Angela Jaime, Kanonhsyonne Janice Hill, Dr. Deborah Saucier

In her introduction, **Kanonhsyonne Janice Hill** explained that sharing where she comes from, her clan, and family has taught her to always be mindful in any decision-making to consider seven generations before and the seven generations to come. As a clan mother, she has been trained to listen and to be attentive to the needs of those in her circle. This is reflected in the way she conducts business at Queen's University.

Her work is to support, promote, and protect all Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and community partners with peace, strength, and a good mind, ensuring mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. These are her guiding principles.

In June 2021, an anonymous document entitled Investigation into False Claims of Indigenous Identity at Queen's University, sparked renewed public outcry, and calls for measures to verify Indigenous identity within post-secondary education institutions. Specifically, the document recommended setting up an inquiry led by Indigenous faculty and community members, not normally associated with Queens, to gather anonymous feedback from Indigenous faculty, staff, community members who work with Queens, about policies and practices that must be put in place to address the flood of individuals with fraudulent claims to Indigenous identity who are taking up positions reserved for Indigenous persons at Queen's.

In 2011, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario released the Aboriginal Self-identification and Student Data in Ontario's Post-Secondary System report. In 2013, the Council of Ontario Universities released the Aboriginal Self-Identification Project Final Report to guide their institutions in the creation of Aboriginal self-identification mechanisms. Subsequently, Queen's developed and implemented an Aboriginal students' self-identification mechanism in its student information system. This system provides additional opportunities for self-identification among all Queen's students in any year of their educational career.

However, as has been pointed out, mechanisms for students, faculty and staff have relied solely on self-identification, with no required means of validation either requested or required. In September 2021, Queen's University contracted with First Peoples Group, an Indigenous-led consultation group, to provide services related to guiding Queen's conversations concerning Indigenous identity by reviewing and reevaluating policies, procedures, and practices related to Indigenous identity. An inclusive public engagement process was designed to chart a pathway forward regarding the issue of Indigenous self-identification, and identity within the university. The engagement plan introduced a four-step process for engaging with Indigenous communities, elders, and citizens in the areas surrounding both Queen's, Kingston, and beyond. This included students, staff, faculty, and alumni in an all-inclusive manner, with the objective of developing community-led solutions and recommendations that will be proposed to Queen's University as guidelines on how to address tensions regarding Indigenous identities.

From the beginning, First Peoples Group has been guided by traditional teachings about the importance of collaboration, including traditional Indigenous ways of coming together as community to solve issues, which will be shared with all engagement participants as a way to encourage respectful deliberation. The main focus of the dialogue sessions has been to explore opinions, solutions and recommendations of the Queen's communities with respect to Indigenous identity and self-identification at the university.

Participation has been relatively lower than anticipated. This may be because of accessibility of the sessions, personal connection to the issues, and feelings of lack of safety.

The purpose of this process is threefold. To develop a strategy that will be proposed to the university on how to address the issue of Indigenous identity, to build common ground to ease tensions and reconcile competing interests, and to identify and advise Queen's on additional actions that can support the university on its journey towards reconciliation and truth-telling. A further goal is to develop indicators that can be used to assess the effectiveness of the proposed recommendations, if implemented. Final decision-making power rests with the university.

Emerging themes include self-declaration and identity, who claims you versus who you claim, relationships, the importance of traditional protocols, and just what constitutes an Indigenous community.

There is a clear opinion that the university needs to be bold and take strong, clear, and solid steps towards ensuring that all future hiring includes a thorough and detailed assessment of all claims of Indigenous identity.

While it is not clear what should be done, it is clear that something must be done. We have heard about the need for consistency across the university in vetting Indigenous student identity at Queen's specifically with regard to eligibility for benefits such as admissions, bursaries, scholarships, and targeted programming.

Kanonhsyonne Janice Hill

Dr. Angela Jaime, in recognizing that she is a visitor to this land, acknowledged her ancestors for their sacrifices, strength, and support and that she sits on the shoulders of those who have come before. She further acknowledged her great grandmother and grandmother who survived Indian boarding schools in California.

The University of Saskatchewan Taskforce and Advisory Circle has been gifted with the name *deybwewin* (Saulteaux) | *taapwaywin* (Michif) | *tapwewin* (Cree). The name translates to “truth”. Elders and Knowledge Keepers are helping to guide the university through the process of creating policy, procedures, and an implementation plan for Indigenous membership / citizenship verification. These will be ongoing, living documents.

The taskforce is made up of Indigenous peoples and partnerships inside and outside of the university and is comprised of four Indigenous faculty, four Indigenous staff, five Knowledge Keepers and Elders, a graduate student, an undergraduate student, the office of the Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement, Senior Director Provost Indigenous Initiatives and Community Outreach. The taskforce also includes community representatives from the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, the Saskatoon Tribal Council, Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, and the Prince Albert Grand Council. An advisory circle that sits on the outside of the taskforce is made up of portfolios that are impacted by the decisions of the taskforce.

This work is about the importance and significance of protocols. Protocols are acknowledged before, during, and after meetings. This work is a reminder of the connection to each other, respect for each other, and of working together.

Self-declaration is no longer acceptable to secure Indigenous space. Indigenous voices direct this work and are at the centre of this respectful circle.

The taskforce is not talking about identity. It is not determining or verifying a person's identity. Identity is personal, cultural, and multi-dimensional and is something that is for the individual to determine. What is being looked at are the many different scenarios that define membership, citizenship, and clanship and what that means for verification. The university's policy will have Indigenous membership verification that includes documentation.

The taskforce is hearing stories from community Elders and Knowledge Keepers and ensuring that those narratives are visible within the policy. The work encompasses both national and international Indigenous peoples at the University of Saskatchewan. The taskforce is ensuring that space is created to help scholars who are coming to the university and who are still searching for their identity and their community. A process is also being developed for Indigenous document verification for faculty, staff, undergraduate, and graduate students.

After the final draft of the policy has been developed it will be peer reviewed by a panel of internal and external Indigenous peoples.

An action plan will be created to continue the work through a Standing Committee made up of Indigenous peoples to help further the ongoing conversation, create university structures, and create systemic change.

The work related to Indigenous identity is hard and the road has been rough. Indigeneity, Indigenous citizenship and membership is happening in the United States as well as other parts of the globe. So these are not new issues. The conversation has caused divisions in the Indigenous community, thus it is important to do the work collectively and to value and uphold Indigenous principles over personalities.

Dr. Angela Jaime

Dr. Deborah Saucier joined the virtual panel from the traditional and unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw People. Vancouver Island University is one of only a handful of universities that has both an Indigenous Chancellor and an Indigenous President and Vice Chancellor. While the university has not had to deal with the challenge of someone falsely claiming Indigenous identity that they know of, they have the challenge of preventing that from happening. The university has formed committees to discuss the issue.

Many of the university's students have been raised in the child welfare system and are learning and exploring who they are as an Indigenous person. This journey involves learning from others, course work, and being part of the community. The Indigenous mentorship program connects students with Indigenous faculty, advisors, counsellors, and navigators.

VIU is just beginning the conversation around Indigenous identity and is dealing with these issues in each individual hiring process. It is an obligation to consider this in each and every hire as fraud harms students, colleagues, and the institution.

When the university first hired Elders in the mid-1990s it became clear that traditional employment privileged western knowledge and the PhD over everything else and did not value the or respect Indigenous knowledges and expertise. This is why VIU changed the collective agreement and made Elders full faculty members recognized by the academy for their deep wisdom and the teachings and learnings that they share with students. The university did not throw out the academic structure but rather expanded it to make it more inclusive. When an Elder is retiring, they are asked for their recommendations from their community for another Elder to take their place.

The university is guided by an Indigenous Council called Hwulmuxw Mustimuxw Siiem which acts an advisory body to foster innovation and programming to address student needs and support their success. The Council as well as the Elders in Residence Council must approve a new Elder in Residence.

The university is currently hiring an Associate Vice President of Indigenous Education and Engagement. The issue of identity was front and center from the beginning of the hiring process. The starting point was a discussion with British Columbia about whether the university could actually say that it would only hire someone who was Indigenous, because in British Columbia an exception is required to do a specific hire rather than a general hire. The posting for the position included the statement that applicants must be Indigenous and asked them to self-identify in their cover letter. If the cover letter was unclear, the university communicated to the applicant that selection is reserved for candidates who are Indigenous. By agreeing to proceed, candidates were advised that they confirmed they are Indigenous. The hiring committee is comprised of primarily Indigenous people. An Elder serves on the committee and of the seven members only one, the provost, is non-Indigenous.

In the interview the candidate is asked to tell about their lived experience as an Indigenous person, who they identify with as their community, how they belong to that community, and who they identify as their mentors, elders, and influencers. Applicants put this in writing in their application. Every interview with candidates begins with protocol and introductions. In the second interview, candidates meet with a number of Indigenous offices and groups and with Elders, who then provide feedback to the hiring committee.

With the guidance of the elders, doing things in a good way, with a practice rooted in ceremony and culture, Dr. Saucier believes that the university can take an all my relations approach to this and proceed in a good way.

An issue as complex as Indigenous identity has the potential to harm rather than lift up people, especially those who need this kind of help in our communities. Relying on the Indian Act to define who we are gives Canada the final say on who is or is not Indigenous and does not respect our ways of knowing who our kin and all our relations are.

Dr. Deborah Saucier

Conversation Circles

Forum participants were invited to join interactive breakout rooms to engage in discussions on four primary questions. These small group discussions were a safe space to examine the issue of identity, share ideas, and explore possible approaches in the academy.

The conversation circles were hosted by Indigenous post-secondary students who acted as discussion leaders and note takers. The circles were not recorded. The students' notes, as presented in this section, are reflected in the context of each question. It should be noted that no frameworks, checklists, or formal processes for implementation came out of the conversation circles. This was an initial invitation to gather and reflect and preliminary themes and comments have been summarized below.

Why is it important now to question identity?

Two themes that emerged from the question related to the importance of having dialogue focused on identity: it is an assertion of Indigeneity and there is a strong desire to address false claims to Indigeneity by Indigenous peoples.

Participants expressed that Indigenous identity and citizenship is an inherent right and a demonstration of self-determination. Indigenous identity and citizenship are central to our humanity, communicates our distinct sovereign place in Canada and situates us in connection to community. Indigenous citizenship translates to belonging to place and people, and the question of 'who claims you?' emerged throughout the forum.

There was recognition that false claims to Indigeneity have been occurring for centuries, and that these have gone unaddressed for too long. It was noted that talking about this issue enables Indigenous people to gain capacity and agency and there is now a strong sense of urgency to act on these violations. The 1982 Canadian Constitution, Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), among other legislations and policies, were seen as motivators of change resulting in the increase of false claims to Indigeneity and 'pretendians' for the purpose of gaining employment, research and artistic grants, scholarships, and designated seats – taking recognition, voice, and further displacement of Indigenous peoples. *"...some institutions have focused on increasing their Indigenous numbers rather than recruiting those with knowledge."* Overall, false claims to Indigeneity and the response (or non-response) by organizations have deepened mistrust and frustration by Indigenous peoples. The hope is that financial (scholarships, grants, employment, etc.) resources designated for Indigenous people go to Indigenous people, and it was stated by many that "now is the time".

Those who falsely claim identity affect the ability of Indigenous peoples to access spaces, resources, research, and scholarship opportunities.

What are the complexities related to Indigenous identity?

As have been identified throughout learning institutions and organizations throughout the country, there are many complexities related to validating Indigenous identity and citizenship beginning with who has the right to question and validate these. 'Since time immemorial', Indigenous peoples engaged in and continue to engage with identity development and citizenship practices. It was noted that colonial legislation, such as the Indian Act, has deliberately and systematically challenged these practices, and non-Indigenous peoples have asserted policies and practices without or with very little, tokenistic, Indigenous engagement. Because of the Indian Act, federal and provincial policies (e.g., 60's scoop, foster care practices), anti-Indigenous racism, and for survival purposes, many Indigenous people have hidden and have separated from their community, consequently losing their sense of identity, language, and cultural knowledge. We now have people who are finding their way back to community,

There are layers of complexity related to identity. The 60s Scoop, addictions, adoption, and colonization have all been barriers to establishing Indigenous identity.

and it was agreed that the Indigenous community embrace and support the journey of those returning home.

Some conversation was focused on the cultural adoption of non-Indigenous people into families. From the perspective of nation citizenship, this was viewed as family not nation membership or citizenship. In essence, this form of cultural adoption, in general, did not make the non-Indigenous participant Indigenous nor, be given the right to speak for Indigenous peoples. There were also conversations that focused on mixed heritage and the question of “how far back can one go to claim Indigenous citizenship?” A strong theme that emerged was that we all need to understand the difference between Indigenous identity, citizenship, and community membership.

A general conclusion to this question was that Indigenous communities must lead these processes and that self-identification is no longer an option. Some participants stated that validation methodologies were not clear and that, where Indigenous Knowledges are required, validation needs to go beyond membership and citizenship documentation but must include evidence of traditional knowledge acquisition from respected elders, and/or community leaders and members.

Participants shared stories of the conflict that occurred as a result of the questioning of Indigenous identity and citizenship processes, many of which have led to divisions in the workplace and within Indigenous communities. Furthermore, whistleblowers that have called out ‘pretendians’ have experienced negative repercussions within their institutions – this should not be the case.

What role does kinship play in Indigenous identity?

Kinship has multiple meanings to Indigenous peoples and the English word cannot adequately capture the wholistic nature of the term in Indigenous languages, but it was indicated that kinship philosophies and practices influence identity and promote deep forms of belonging. Kinship creates bonds that inspire people to care and learn from one another. To foster and deepen kinship to community and a sense of belonging to people and place, it is essential to learn Nation, community and family stories, and the origin and creation stories. Indigenous kinship encompasses so much more than the ‘nuclear family’. It’s about real and meaningful relationships, knowing one’s history, ceremony, and shared community values. There is an assurance that comes from knowing that a community claims an individual and affirms and confirms family lineages and stories. *“Indigenous identity is not just about who you claim to be, but who claims you.”*

It was stated by many that numerous connections and relationships to family and community have been lost because of historical injustices, colonial legislation, and policies. For those who are raised outside of the community or who were not raised traditionally, establishing kinship to community may prove extremely difficult but when these relationships are restored, anxieties may be eased. We were also reminded that urban centers may have different perceptions of kinship, and that strong Indigenous communities exist away from First Nations reserves and Métis settlements. Finally, kinship cannot be contained to blood quantum or blood relations; it is more complex and contextual. Once again, requiring Indigenous insight and leadership.

Who has the right to question identity and to what end?

This was a challenging question to ask, but an important one for those responsible for allocating resources for Indigenous peoples. As was commented in the legal panel, since citizenship is an Indigenous

These divisions are forced upon us. When one fakes Indigenous identity, it creates awkward tension when interacting with others claiming Indigeneity and who are not easily identifiable. These may be people without documentation or those who do not physically look Indigenous.

Kinship is key to identity. The roles we play as Indigenous people in our community create and shape who we are. Kinship begins the day we are born.

Institutions need to clearly define what kinship is, because individuals may claim kinship to a community, but that community may not recognize them.

community/nation inherent right and sovereign responsibility and because First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples are community-oriented, individual ‘rights’ to citizenship is a contradictory concept. With this, it was identified by some that any Indigenous community or Nation to which an individual claims membership has a responsibility to question identity. Shifting the terminology from ‘who has the right’ to ‘who has the responsibility’ came up repeatedly. One person said, “*It is a sacred responsibility to speak up when things are not as they should be.*” Another person commented, “*When someone says they are my relative, I have an obligation to find out how.*” For organizations, participants felt that validation of Indigenous identity should be obtained whenever compensation is being expended (e.g., research and scholarship funding, awards), for hiring, admission of students, recognition, and tax exemption purposes. Importantly, the responsibility to question and verify identity and citizenship at the pace and on the timelines of mainstream academic institutions, cannot be achieved without resources being diverted to the Indigenous communities/Nations to which this labour is required from, or institutions need to curtail their expectations of expediency since many Indigenous communities/Nations are already stretched thin administratively.

Anyone administering an equity benefit not only has the right to ask, but probably a duty to ask to ensure they are doing their job correctly.

How do we navigate these spaces and the complexities within our institutions?

For some Indigenous peoples, non-Indigenous organizations are difficult to navigate and, in some cases, non-welcoming, non-supportive, and intent on maintaining the status quo which leads to upholding systemic and structural racism⁵. It was recommended that Indigenous presence be evident in meaningful ways throughout the entire learning institution, and that university Indigenous leadership, faculty, staff, students, and Elders be integral to, and a part of, decisions that affect Indigenous peoples. “Nothing about us without us”. It was also suggested that more Indigenous peoples be appointed to university boards and senates, and that universities co-create, collaborate, and partner with Indigenous Nations and communities on policy development, etc. Some participants commented that post-secondary institutions, especially mainstream institutions, be careful when using the terms such as “Indigenous led”. Overall, Indigenousizing the academy meant amplifying Indigenous voices to create systemic change, not simply adding more Indigenous bodies to the employee complement.

Advocacy positions to protect and support Indigenous peoples were identified as critical to processes that are sensitive and challenging, and many felt that investigation processes should be conducted with care, caution, respect, and kindness.

This is heart work; it is the basis of who we are as Indigenous peoples.

For future forums on Indigenous identity and citizenship, it was recommended that the Indigenous-only dialogue continue as many participants appreciated the safety of the Indigenous-only space, and a significant response was that the conversation was still just beginning. Other suggestions included: more student involvement, engagement with a broader representation of Indigenous peoples and eventually non-Indigenous people (e.g., selection committees, senior administration, and leadership), and opportunities for sharing wise practices and case studies. The sentiment was that this issue needed to be brought to the forefront and no longer “swept under the rug”.

How is your institution dealing with race shifting? (Race-shifting: a phenomenon where members of dominant populations claim Indigenous identity based on a tenuous, imagined, or invented connection to Indigenous communities.)

Post-secondary institutions are at different places in addressing, creating, implementing, and evaluating policies and procedures that move beyond self-identification. Some universities have just begun the conversation, others have

⁵ Systemic and structural racism are forms of racism that are pervasively and deeply embedded in systems, laws, written or unwritten policies, and entrenched practices and beliefs that produce, condone, and perpetuate widespread unfair treatment and oppression of people of color and Indigenous peoples. Source: <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2021.01394>

created task forces and begun community consultations, and a few have drafted ethnic identification, self-identification, and citizenship policies.

Examples of practice included extending invitations to potential and new Indigenous leadership, faculty, staff, and students to a sharing circle by the on-campus Indigenous community for introductions and inquiries about kinship, citizenship, and traditional knowledge understanding. Some participants said that students that self-identified for awards undergo verification process. Once again, meaningful engagement of communities was emphasized.

Addressing race shifting can be dangerous for those involved in the questioning; the person who brings up the question and the one being questioned. If the allegations were proven false, these individuals' reputations and wellbeing are at stake.

How does race shifting impact you, other Indigenous peoples, and communities? Should institutions treat individuals differently depending on whether or not they are engaged in Indigenous work or benefiting from their claim of Indigeneity?

This question conjured intense emotions as Indigenous participants shared stories of betrayal, pain, sadness, silencing, anger, frustration, resentment, and re-traumatization as a result of false claims of Indigeneity and the resourcing and recognition of these individuals. Many expressed that this issue was emotionally demanding, conjured suffering, was very harmful, violent, insulting, hurtful, unfair, and disempowering for Indigenous individuals and communities, and that university and community reputations, and relationships were jeopardized and damaged. One citizen of the Métis Nation commented, "Every time one of these mixed fraudster cases is highlighted in the media, it makes me question my own legitimate Indigenous identity and citizenship with my Nation invoking a dual imposter syndrome. Do I belong in academia? Am I Indigenous enough? – every single time it happens, even though I know I do belong, and I am enough."

"Race shifting has been enabled through generous policies or lack of policies relating to identification. Self-identification is rewarded."

Further, the misdirection of institutional funding to undeserving individuals (often called fraudsters or pretendians in the discussions) limits actual Indigenous individuals and communities from accessing benefits intended for them, and inhibits or overshadows the successes of Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and communities. We also heard that these cases caused harm and confusion for Indigenous people who have been separated from and want to return to their family and community. Neglecting, overlooking and/or discounting the long struggle by generations of Indigenous peoples to make opportunities available to current and future generations of Indigenous peoples within the academy was seen as disrespectful, further contributing to mistrust from Indigenous faculty.

"This is a white-collar crime, because if there was no incentive, people would not do it."

What other options exist to determine Indigenous identity in our institutions other than self-identification?

Participant examples related to this question focused on:

- Canadian Government issued identity cards (e.g., status cards)
- Verification from communities that may include Nation issued membership cards, reference letters from Elders and/or community leaders, and narrative descriptions of kinship connections and relationships with Elders, families, and communities.

Another theme that emerged was the importance of making Indigenous resources available for individuals who are seeking to verify their identity for specific benefits and purposes.

It cannot be overstated that Indigenous community leadership and guidance is essential for the development of these processes.

What could our institutions realistically achieve in addressing issues of Indigenous identity?

The themes that emerged from the conversation circles related to the importance of developing relationships based on trust, leadership, reciprocity, and engagement of Indigenous peoples at the outset of initiatives (to inform the structure and process) as well as at decision making spaces, the importance of creating and implementing policies that protect Indigenous peoples from, and inhibit, false claims to Indigeneity. Many participants recommended that University leadership build relationships based on trust with Indigenous students, faculty, staff, Elders, leaders, and community members. Suggestions for building trust included creating Indigenous councils comprised of Elders, faculty, staff, and students, and including Indigenous peoples on committees that determine benefits (e.g., employment, grants, recognitions, scholarships, etc.). It was noted that this work cannot be done in silos and by one or few Indigenous individuals in a unit or institution. System wide change should include hiring more Indigenous peoples to reflect the national population statistics, implementation of anti-racist principles, and allyship that amplifies Indigenous voices (but does not speak for Indigenous peoples) in this work. Policy development in this area was identified as a priority, as was diligence in implementing and evaluating the policies – again with strong Indigenous engagement. Unions were also encouraged to begin the process of amending collective bargaining agreements to support Indigenous staff and faculty. Finally, some people felt that it was important for those falsely claiming Indigenous citizenship to face the Indigenous community on campus, suggesting restorative justice.

It is exhausting to fight these battles from the bottom up; policies need to change.

What role should Indigenous peoples from outside of Turtle Island hold within our institutions? For instance, in New Zealand would a Cree person be given the opportunity of a leadership role over Maori person.

It was agreed by many that this question was challenging – complex, yet clear – and more dialogue was needed using a welcoming, respectful, and “walk softly and with kindness” approach. It was commented that, where colonization has been experienced, “...our struggles are the same” and “there are great lessons to be shared from outside of Turtle Island. Hearing from other Indigenous peoples broadens our understanding.”

With this, some participants encouraged people from beyond Turtle Island (North America) to be allies and advocates, to learn regional cultural protocols, histories, and stories, to be respectful of, take lead from, and, in some cases, to step aside, and make space for the original peoples of these territories to take lead. Again, the concern was that accessibility and resources were shifting away from First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Native Americans to people outside the local lands and territories, bringing the focus back to the scarcity of resources.

Tread carefully when working on someone else's territory as knowledge and experiences are different depending on one's origin.

Speaker and Panel Profiles



Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann is President of the First Nations University of Canada and is Anishinaabe (Saulteaux) from Fishing Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan. Prior to her academic career, Jackie was an elementary, high school teacher and principal. She remains an engaged scholar alongside her responsibilities as a senior academic leader. Ottmann has been recognized as an international researcher, advocate, and change-maker whose purpose is to transform practices inclusive of Indigenous leadership, methodologies, and pedagogies. Jacqueline is driven to create schools and communities that foster a deeper sense of belonging and appreciation for Indigenous peoples – their histories, stories, ways of knowing and being. Ottmann is also the first Indigenous person to become President of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education.



Dr. Chris Andersen is Métis from the parkland region of Saskatchewan and a Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta. He is the author of *Métis”: Race, Recognition and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (UBC Press, 2014), which won the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association’s Best Subsequent Book Award for 2015. Andersen was a founding member of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association Executive Council, is a member of Statistics Canada’s Advisory Committee on Social Conditions and is editor of the journal *aboriginal policy studies*. He was named to the inaugural class of the Royal Society of Canada’s College of New Scholars, Artists, and Scientists.



Elder Millie Anderson is Inuk and was born in the Northwest Territories on the shores of the Beaufort Sea. She is a gifted beader and storyteller and has been sharing her knowledge with First Nations University of Canada Students for the last few years.



Leah Ballantyne is a Cree Iskwew Lawyer with a demonstrated history of working with First Nations organizations in both For-Profit and not-for-profit corporations. Skilled in legal advocacy, barrister-at-law, Notary, Governance, Management, Research, Policy Analysis, Government relations, Indigenous and diversity issues, and Strategic Planning. She holds law degrees from both Canada (UBC -LLB) and the United States (U of Hawaii at Manoa-LLM).



Dr. Marie Battiste is Cape Breton University's Special Advisor to the Vice President Academic and to Unama'ki College on decolonizing the academy. She is a Mi'kmaw educator of the Potlotek First Nation, Professor Emerita at the University of Saskatchewan, a 2019 Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation Fellow, and an Honorary Officer of the Order of Canada. Her passion, research, and scholarly work for decolonizing education, protecting Indigenous knowledges, cognitive justice through balancing diverse knowledge systems and languages have earned her graduate degrees from Harvard and Stanford Universities, as well as four honorary degrees from the University of Ottawa, Thompson Rivers University, University of Maine and St. Mary's University.



Elder Maria Campbell is a Métis author, playwright, filmmaker, teacher, community worker, Elder, mother, grandmother, and great grandmother. Campbell was born in 1940 in northwestern Saskatchewan on a trapline and grew up in a road-allowance community. She is also a lifelong advocate and contributor to Indigenous and Canadian letters, arts, and politics. Maria is best known for her 1973 bestselling memoir *Halfbreed*, which was re-published in 2019. She has published 7 other books, the most recent *Keetsahnak Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters*, co-edited with Kim Anderson and Christi Belcourt. She is currently finishing her 8th book. Maria was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2008.



Elder Willie Ermine is a member of First Nations University of Canada k̓êhtê-ayak Council. He is from the Sturgeon Lake First Nation in the north-central part of Saskatchewan where he lives with his family. He has published numerous academic articles and contributed reports to the Tri-Council Panel on Research Ethics. He has presented at various national and international conferences and symposiums on topics such as education, research and in particular, the nature of Indigenous thought. He promotes ethical practices of research involving Indigenous Peoples and is particularly interested in the conceptual development of the ‘ethical space’—a theoretical space between cultures and worldviews.



Dr. Florence Glanfield is currently Vice-Provost (Indigenous Programming and Research) and a Professor of Mathematics Education in the Department of Secondary Education. She is an Affiliated Faculty member with the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development at the University of Alberta. She earned her PhD in 2003 studying mathematics teacher understanding as an emergent phenomenon. Dr. Glanfield is a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta and from Northeastern Alberta. Dr. Glanfield’s research interests explore the experiences that individuals (teachers and learners) as well as collectives of learners / communities have with mathematics and learning mathematics. Dr. Glanfield collaborates with colleagues and has engaged in research projects with Indigenous communities, urban Aboriginal youth, elementary & secondary mathematics teachers, and teachers and teacher educators in Tanzania and Rwanda.



Moses Gordon is from the George Gordon First Nation. He holds a Master of Public Policy, a Bachelor of Arts in History, and a Certificate in Economics from the University of Regina. Moses is currently a doctoral student with the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy as well as a Senior Analyst with the Indigenous Peoples’ Health Research Centre (IPHRC). Before assuming these roles, he served in various leadership and professional capacities within IPHRC since initially joining the research centre in 2018. While his foray into Indigenous health is a recent one, Moses arrived from a multidisciplinary background in research on Indigenous development, governance, and nation building. Prior to working at IPHRC, Moses spent three years working in research at the First Nations University of Canada.



Dr. Michael Hart is the vice-provost (Indigenous engagement) at the University of Calgary and holds a BSW, MSW and PhD in Social Work from the University of Manitoba, as well as a BA in Psychology from the University of Manitoba. Dr. Hart is a citizen of Fisher River Cree Nation. As a father of two teenage boys who are exploring the world and figuring out how to reach their dreams, he sees the need for and is deeply committed to, creating greater opportunities for Indigenous people. Since 2012, Dr. Hart has held a Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Knowledges and Social Work through the University of Manitoba.



Kanonhsyonne Janice Hill leads the Office of Indigenous Initiatives at Queen's University, providing strategic support and leadership university-wide to oversee the implementation from the Queen's TRC Task Force Report recommendations. Jan is Turtle Clan, a Clan Mother of the Mohawk Nation from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. She began her academic career as an adjunct faculty member in the Faculty of Education and went on to help establish the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program, serving as Academic Co-Director for the program in 1997-98.

Jan is in the process of completing her Master of Arts in Gender Studies at Queen's. Jan served as Director of the Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre for 7 years prior to being appointed as the Director of Indigenous Initiatives and most recently the Associate Vice-Principal (Indigenous Initiatives and Reconciliation)



Dr. Angela Jaime (Pitt River/Valley Maidu) is the Interim Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement and Professor in Indigenous Studies for the College of Arts and Science at the University of Saskatchewan. Arrived in Saskatoon July 2020 from The University of Wyoming in Laramie, Wyoming where she was the Director of Native American & Indigenous Studies and Associate Director of the School of Culture, Gender, and Social Justice. Dr. Jaime has been teaching and consulting in the areas of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Anti-Racism, and Social Justice for the past 25 years. Her areas of research are in Native women and their experiences in higher education, Indigenous education, stereotypes and generalizations of race, culture, and gender within education. She promotes social justice by critically examining systems of oppression, discrimination, and assimilation of people of colour in higher education. Most importantly, she is a mother of two amazing boys.



Neal Kewistep has spent most of his career fostering relationships with government, community-based organizations, Indigenous organizations, and educators. In his current role, Neal is involved with the ongoing leadership training of many Chiefs, Councilors, and Senior Band Administrators of Indigenous communities. Prior to joining the policy school, Neal was the Interim Director of Population and Public Health in the Saskatchewan Health Authority, where he was responsible for 13 departments ranging from Sexual/Street Health, to Healthy Families, to Immunization, and to Inner-city Health Services. Neal Kewistep holds a Master of Public Administration degree from the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School and has a bachelor's degree in Indigenous Studies from First Nations University of Canada. In addition to his formal education, he counts his traditional training from Elders as being relevant in teaching him the role of a servant leader.



Dr. Lynn Lavallee is Anishinaabe registered with the Metis Nation of Ontario. She is the Strategic Lead, Indigenous Resurgence in the Faculty of Community Services as well as a Professor in the School of Social Work at Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University). She previously served as the University of Manitoba's first vice provost Indigenous engagement in 2017. Lynn completed a Bachelor of Arts in Kinesiology and Psychology, Master of Science in Community Health and Doctorate in Social Work. Her research expertise lies in the areas of Indigenous research ethics, Indigenous research methodology, and Indigenous health and well-being. Lynn achieved full professor status in 2019.



Elder Mary Lee is a member of First Nations University of Canada kêhtê-ayak Council. She retired from the Catholic School Board after 38 years of service.



Dr. Dustin Louis is the Director of NITEP (Indigenous Teacher Education Program) and an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. He is a First Nations scholar from Nee Tahi Buhn and Nadleh Whut'en of the Carrier Nation of central British Columbia and is a member of the Beaver Clan. Dr. Louie has a BA in history, a **PhD in Educational Leadership from the University of Calgary** and an MA in Human Security and Peacebuilding from Royal Roads University. He has worked extensively in teacher education, while also leading dozens of school districts, government agencies and social service organizations through decolonizing transformation of their philosophy, organization, and practices.



Dr. Brenda Macdougall is a leading expert in the history of Métis and First Nations as University Research Chair in Métis Family and Community Traditions at the University of Ottawa. Professor Macdougall has presented her findings in scholarly articles and books, including her first book, *One of the Family: Métis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan*, and in a collection of essays she co-edited, entitled *Contours of a People: Métis Family, Mobility, and History*. Brenda grew up in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and is a Scottish Half-breed (Métis) whose paternal family history stretches back to the founding of Fort Edmonton and eventually to the parishes of St. Clements and St. Charles in Red River.



Dr. Linda ManyGuns is the associate vice-president of indigenization and decolonization at Mount Royal University. A Blackfoot woman, she was born on the Tsuut'ina Nation and registered at Siksika. She is an elder for the Buffalo Women's Society and part of the Beaver Bundle Society. Traditional knowledge informs her respect for all life and all thoughts. ManyGuns has a Bachelor of Arts from St. Thomas University, a master's from Carleton University, a law degree from University of Ottawa and a doctorate from Trent University. Previously, she spent 11 years as a professor at the University of Lethbridge in the Department of Indigenous Studies.



Marilyn Poitras is an ethical space designer, public speaker, and positive deviant. She attended the Native Law Centre Summer Program, obtained her LL.B. at the University of Saskatchewan, her LL.M. at Harvard Law School and learns Indigenous law from Elders and the land. In addition to being a lawyer, she has worked as a law professor, a writer, a film producer, a negotiator, a facilitator, a public speaker, a commissioner, a consultant, and a design thinker. Michif and Irish Scottish, born and raised in Southern Saskatchewan Marilyn comes to her work in this field with passion and conviction and focuses her lens on relationship development on the Indigenous front.



Dr. Deborah (Deb) Saucier became President and Vice-Chancellor of Vancouver Island University in July 2019. An experienced administrator, accomplished neuroscientist and devoted educator, Deb is deeply committed to access and learner success, Indigenous education, and community engagement. Originally from Saskatoon, Deb is a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta. Deb started her journey in academia on Vancouver Island, completing an International Baccalaureate diploma at the Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific in Metchosin, and then bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology at the University of Victoria, receiving her PhD in psychology from the University of Western Ontario in 1995.

Deb worked as a neuroscience/psychology professor for many years, and in recognition of her research she was awarded a Canada Research Chair in Behavioural Neuroscience.



Elder Solomon "Sol" Sanderson is an expert in Indigenous governance, inherent Aboriginal rights, treaty rights, and the constitutional framework governing Canada's relationship with Aboriginal peoples. After 55 years of involvement in Aboriginal politics in Canada, he has an encyclopedic knowledge of federal policy, treaties, and governance structure. A member of the Chakastaypasin Cree First Nation in Saskatchewan, Sol served as Executive Director and first vice-president of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) before being elected chief from 1979 to 1986. Sanderson was a founding leader of the Assembly of First Nations.



Colby Delorme is President of The Imagination Group of Companies. He is a founder of Influence Mentoring, a national, collaborative organization built on the goals of creating better opportunities for Indigenous post-secondary students and creating opportunities for mentors to raise their awareness of Indigenous issues, culture, and history. Colby manages corporate relationships with large institutional clients in industry, government, and Aboriginal businesses, focuses on expanding the reach of The Imagination Group into national and international markets Colby is a facilitator, conference speaker and emcee. He is a member of the Métis Nation and has served in a governance capacity to several charities, not-for-profit, and corporations.



The Honorable Murray Sinclair is Anishinaabe and a member of the Peguis First Nation. He is a Fourth Degree Chief of the Midewiwin Society, a traditional healing and spiritual society of the Anishinaabe Nation responsible for protecting the teachings, ceremonies, laws, and history of the Anishinaabe. His Spirit Name is Mizhana Gheezhik (The One Who Speaks of Pictures in the Sky). Called to the Manitoba Bar in 1980, Sinclair focused primarily on civil and criminal litigation, Indigenous law and human rights. In 1988, he became Manitoba's first, and Canada's second, Indigenous judge. Sinclair joined the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2009, before becoming a senator in 2016. He retired from the Senate in 2021 but continues to mentor Indigenous lawyers. The breadth of public service and community work completed by Sinclair demonstrates his commitment to Indigenous peoples in Canada. He now serves as the Chancellor of Queen's University.



Dr. Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair is Anishinaabe (St. Peter's/Little Peguis) and an Associate Professor at the University of Manitoba. He is a regular commentator on Indigenous issues on CTV, CBC, and APTN, and his written work can be found in the pages of The Exile Edition of Native Canadian Fiction and Drama, newspapers like The Guardian, and online with CBC Books: Canada Writes. Dr. Sinclair obtained his BA in Education at the University of Winnipeg, before completing an MA in Native and African American literatures at the University of Oklahoma, and a PhD in First Nations and American Literatures from the University of British Columbia.

Chief Michael Starr is Cree from Star Blanket First Nation on Treaty 4 Territory.



Dr. Kim TallBear (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate) (she/her) is Professor and Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Peoples, Technoscience and Society, Faculty of Native Studies, University of Alberta. She is the author of *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*. In addition to studying genome sciences disruptions to Indigenous self-definitions, Dr. TallBear studies the roles of the overlapping ideas of "sexuality" and "nature" in the colonization of Indigenous peoples and lands. She is a frequent commentator in US, Canadian, and other global media outlets on issues related to Indigenous peoples, science, technology, and sexualities. She is a regular panelist on the weekly podcast, *Media Indigena*. You can follow her research group at <https://indigenousts.com/>. She tweets @KimTallBear. You can also follow her occasional posts to her Substack newsletter, *Unsettle: Indigenous affairs, cultural politics & (de)colonization*, at <https://kimtallbear.substack.com>. She has several essays on that platform related to self-Indigenization or race shifting.



Jean Teillet is Senior Counsel with Pape Salter Teillet LLP and specializes in Indigenous rights law. Jean has long been engaged in negotiations and litigation with provincial and federal governments concerning Métis and First Nation land rights, harvesting rights and self-government. She served as counsel before all levels of court, including lead counsel for the landmark case *R. v. Powley* in which the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed constitutional protection of Métis harvesting rights. Jean was a founder of the Métis Nation of Ontario and the National Aboriginal Moot. She sits on the MMIWG Federal Sub-Working group. Jean is a frequent author and lecturer on issues surrounding access to justice, Indigenous rights, identity, and history. She is also the great grandniece of Louis Riel.





Manon Tremblay is a member of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation. She is the Senior Director, Indigenous Directions at Concordia University where she oversees the implementation of the Indigenous Directions Action Plan. Prior to her appointment at Concordia, Manon was the Director, Indigenous Research at the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada where she led the initiative to build Indigenous research capacity. Prior to that, she was the Senior Project Leader for the Public Service Commission of Canada's Aboriginal Centre of Expertise where she worked in strategic Indigenous recruitment programs and services. Manon has spent 20 years of her career as a university student services administrator, part-time faculty, and senior leader on Indigenous affairs.



Susannah Walker is an enrolled citizen of the Waganakising Odawa (Michigan) and her grandmother's family is from the Santee Sioux (Dakota) Nation. She is a Lecturer in the School of Indigenous Social Work at the First Nations University of Canada. Before joining the faculty, Susannah worked as a K-12 educator and in the nonprofit sector throughout her career. She was a part of the Regina Homelessness Community Advisory Board and currently sits on the board for the North Central Family Centre of North Central Regina. She is a PhD candidate with the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy; her research focuses on the impact of culture on improving mental health conditions for Indigenous youth. She completed her MSW at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her BA at the University of Wisconsin.

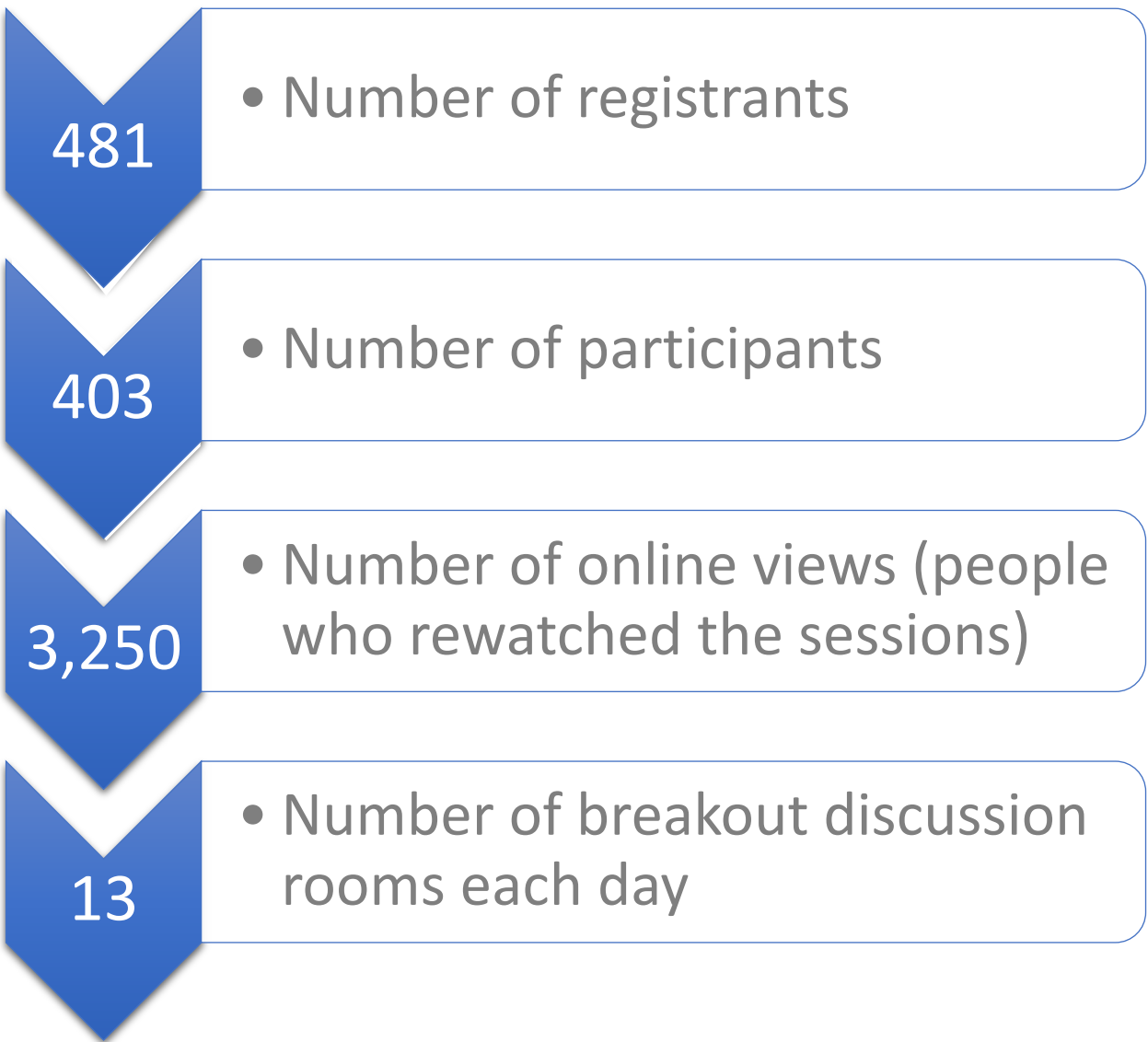


Dr. Winona Wheeler is a member of the Fisher River Cree Nation in Treaty No. 5 territory (Manitoba) though her family hails from George Gordon's First Nation in Treaty No. 4 territory (Saskatchewan). Of Cree/Assiniboine/Saulteaux and English/Irish descent Winona has been a professional historian and a professor of Indigenous Studies since 1988. She is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Indigenous Studies at the University of Saskatchewan.

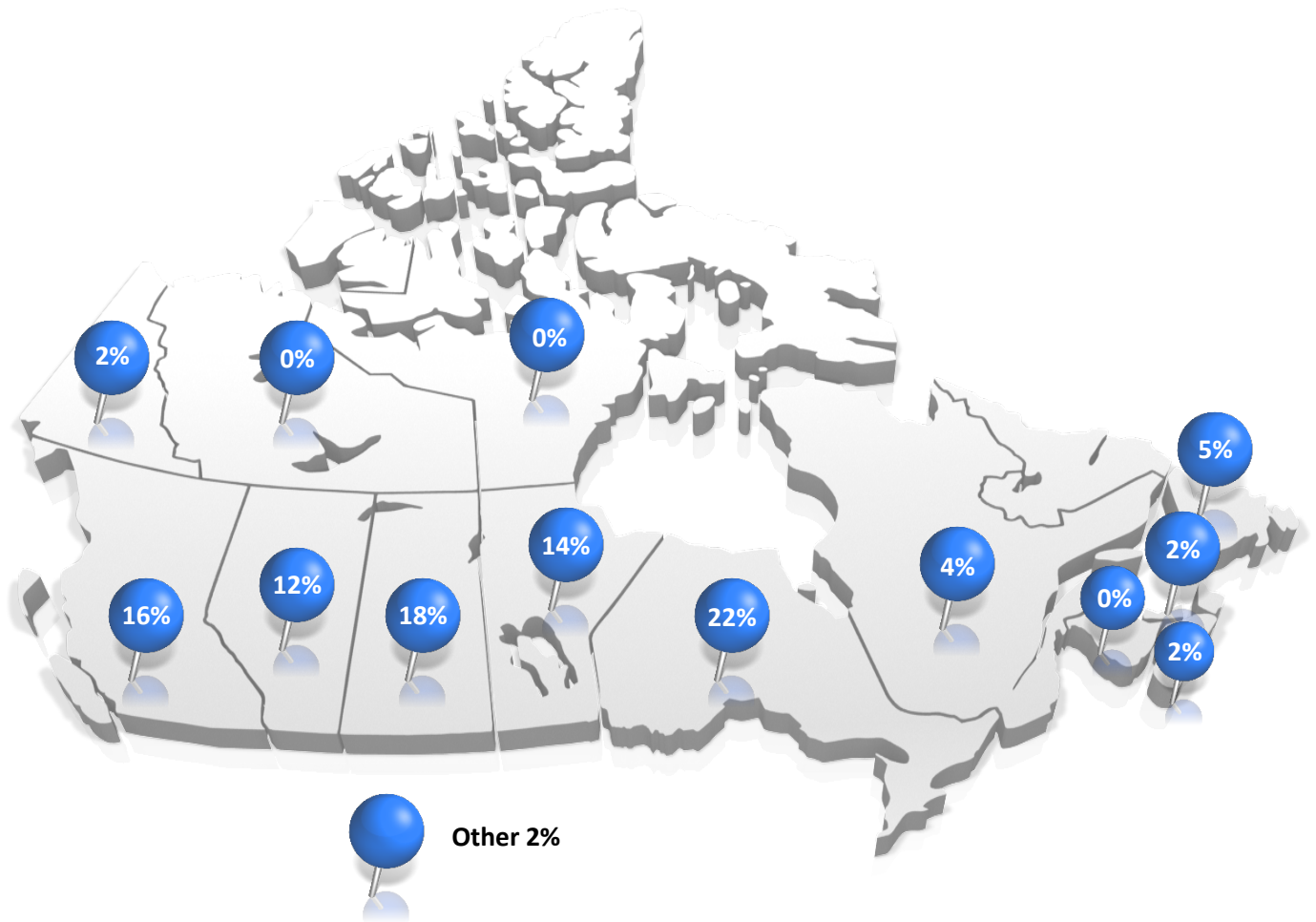
Participating Universities and Colleges

Algoma University
British Columbia Institute of Technology
Brandon University
Brescia University College
Brock University
Cape Breton University
Carleton University
Concordia University
Dalhousie University
Emily Carr University of Art and Design
First Nations University of Canada
Humber College
Huron University College
King's University College
Lakehead University
Laurentian University
McGill University
McMaster University
Memorial University of Newfoundland
Memorial University of Newfoundland - Grenfell Campus
Mount Royal University
NorQuest College
Northern Ontario School of Medicine
Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) University
Portland State University
Queen's University
Ryerson University
Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
Saskatchewan Polytechnic
Simon Fraser University
Thompson Rivers University
Toronto Metropolitan University
University of Alberta
University of British Columbia
University of British Columbia – Okanagan Campus
University of Calgary
University of Guelph
University of Manitoba
University of Michigan
University of Ottawa
University of Regina
University of Saskatchewan
University of the Fraser Valley
University of Toronto
University of Victoria
University of Victoria
University of Waterloo
University of Windsor
University of Winnipeg
University of Prince Edward Island
Vancouver Island University
Western University
Wilfrid Laurier University
York University
Yukon University

Forum Statistics



Geographic Representation of Participants*



Current Roles of Participants*

39%	Administration or Operational
29%	Faculty
15%	Student
6%	Other
4%	Research (other than postdoctoral)
3%	Sessional
2%	Elder / Indigenous Knowledge Holder
.67%	Chancellor
.67%	Postdoctoral Research

*n=112 from post-forum survey report responses

Post-Forum Questions

From your perspective, is the issue of ‘pretendians’, ‘fétis’, or race-shifting an issue at your post-secondary institution? (Race-shifting is defined as: a phenomenon where members of dominant populations claim Indigenous identity based on a tenuous, imagined, or invented connection to Indigenous communities.)

Extremely significant	28.18%	31
Very significant	19.09%	21
Somewhat significant	30.91%	34
Not very significant	18.18%	20
Not at all significant	3.64%	4
Total	100%	110

From your perspective, please indicate if you felt the Forum was organized in a manner that was conducive to meeting the goal of discussing wise practices for validating Indigenous identity(ies).

Yes	80.36%	90
Somewhat	15.18%	17
No	4.46%	5
Total	100%	112

Overall, how would you rate the inaugural National Indigenous Identity Forum?

Excellent	53.21%	58
Very good	37.61%	41
Good	4.59%	5
Fair	4.59%	5
Poor	0.00%	0
Total	100%	109

Acknowledgements

<p>Pipe Ceremony</p> <p>First Nations University of Canada Elders’ Council</p> <p>Treaty 4 Song</p> <p>Red Dog Drum Group</p> <p>Treaty 4 Welcome</p> <p>Chief Michael Starr, Star Blanket Cree Nation</p> <p>Métis National Anthem</p> <p>Amanda Paul and Keifer Paul</p> <p>Elders- Regina</p> <p>William Ratfoot Dennis Omeasoo Rod Apsis Virgil Bear Betty Peeppeekoot</p> <p>Elders – Saskatoon</p> <p>Gilbert Kewistep Mary Lee Judy Pelly</p> <p>Elders – Northern</p> <p>Florence Allen Rose Bird Margaret Reynolds</p> <p>Witnesses</p> <p>Dr. Linda ManyGuns, Mount Royal University Dr. Lynn Lavallee, Ryerson University Dr. Dustin Louis, University of British Columbia Moses Gordon, Graduate Student, University of Regina</p> <p>Indigenous Staff Notetaker Support</p> <p>Kim Fraser-Saddleback Preston Gardypie</p>	<p>Indigenous Student Conversation Circles Hosts/Notetakers</p> <p>Andree Hatfield Ashley Bear Becca Page Christina Gervais Crystal Head Delrae Whitehawk Elle Sina Sorenson Heather O’Watch Jaden Noreen Jesse Kitchemonia Jessica Keeshig Kaleigh Starblanket Kaydon Laurin Kyle Kimbley Laine Grace Laura Kennedy Poitras Lillian Desjarlais Mercedes Keshane Michelle Descheneaux Deanna Garand Fred Allison</p> <p>Technical Support</p> <p>AMP</p> <p>Opening Remarks</p> <p>Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann, NIUSLA, First Nations University of Canada Manon Tremblay, NIUSLA, Concordia University</p> <p>Closing Remarks</p> <p>Elder Mary Lee Dr. Michael Hart, NIUSLA, University of Calgary Dr. Florence Glanfield, NIUSLA, University of Alberta Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann, NIUSLA, First Nations University of Canada</p> <p>Emcees</p> <p>Susannah Walker Neal Kewistep Colby Delorme</p>
---	--

2022

WHAT WAS
HEARD REPORT

INDIGENOUS VOICES
ON
INDIGENOUS IDENTITY



**FIRST NATIONS
UNIVERSITY
OF CANADA**

National Indigenous Identity Forum
March 2022
Report published June 2022



NIUSLA
NATIONAL INDIGENOUS UNIVERSITY
SENIOR LEADERS' ASSOCIATION