

## Conclusion: The work of indigenizing the Academy

In a happy example of serendipity, we were hired by Memorial University at the same time. Both of us had been undergraduates here: Kirk in the 1970s and '80s and Maura in the '80s. Our Memorial University degrees in hand, we went on to work and study elsewhere. Our (separate) experiences took us to England, Ontario, Greece, the post conflict regions of Kosovo and Lebanon, and remote Indigenous communities in Western and Eastern Canada. Then we rejoined Memorial University just before the creation of Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation and were with Qalipu staff in Corner Brook when the long-awaited news of the order-in-council establishing the band came over the phone from Ottawa. Given the history of Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous peoples in Newfoundland and Labrador, it was a joyous day and the beginning of a heady time. The band has experienced a rocky road since then but we, like other people of Mi'kmaq descent, continue to honour and celebrate our Mi'kmaq roots and our Mi'kmaq present regardless of decisions made by officialdom in Ottawa and Gatineau.

In our case, we do this largely through our work with the academy, working with Indigenous and non-Indigenous allies. Memorial University is led by a president, Dr. Gary Kachanoski, who grew up in Saskatchewan, and is committed to the Indigenization of the academy. Under President Kachanoski's leadership, Memorial has put resources and his personal support into the implementation of the recommendations of the Presidential Task Force led by the visionary Evan Simpson, our former Vice-President (Academic) as well as initiatives that build on the Task Force.

In 2011, along with representatives of about 20 other Canadian universities, we attended the Indigenizing the academy Conference at the University of the Fraser Valley in Stó:lō Territory, Chilliwack, B.C. This conference took place as universities and colleges all over the country were building dedicated Aboriginal spaces and hiring support staff at a fast pace. Yet one of the abiding concerns expressed by conference participants was that Indigenization might be a trend that would not be institutionalized. In common with many universities across Canada, Memorial is putting in place structural pieces that will support Indigenization; these include our designated seats program, new Aboriginal resource centres, scholarships for Indigenous students, and so on. But as we go about bringing in these measures, we worry that genuine Indigenization of the academy may not occur, for this process involves decolonization, which necessitates a power shift – something human beings usually resist. In the case of Indigenous peoples and the larger Canadian population and state, the power imbalance is long entrenched, institutionalized, and is a generally unacknowledged dimension of Canadian history and the Canadian identity.

Fortunately there are models that provide guidance, many involving youth whose transformative experiences may mean an altered power relationship in the future. One such model is the Ontario-based Canadian Roots Exchange ([www.canadianroots.ca](http://www.canadianroots.ca)). This organization was founded by Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux, Lakehead University's new Vice-Provost for Indigenous Affairs, and others, and is youth-driven. And indeed the path we are on will be a model worth travelling too. In the words of participants themselves: "We are the Canadian Roots Exchange, a group of young Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians who believe that in order to bridge the gap between Canada's peoples, we need to become educated and aware of the teachings, triumphs, and daily realities of our Indigenous communities. So, together we travel to cities, towns, and traditional territories across Canada in an effort to break down

stereotypes, open a dialogue, and build honest relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people living on this land.” The road trips that are the core of the program foster understanding and promote reconciliation. These journeys are labour-intensive and cost money and they are small-scale. Perhaps change has to happen that way. Yet we have to acknowledge that this can be frustrating: as Chief Tammy Cook-Searson of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band in Saskatchewan recently told the Aboriginal PSE Summit at the University of Regina, Indigenous people are running out of patience. The emergence of Idle No More testifies to Chief Cook Searson’s view.

In an ideal world, Indigenous teaching and learning methods, as well as content, would be offered to all our children starting in preschool. The danger in such a case would be cultural appropriation; a great deal of sensitivity and politicization of teachers would be required; non-Indigenous children would have to receive the message that, while of great value, these teachings are not theirs to own or manipulate. This education would continue through the primary, elementary, and secondary school systems and, of course, through students’ time at the academy. Bits and pieces are in place already; for instance, kindergarten students in Newfoundland and Labrador read a book written by Innu teacher Kanani Penashue Davis about contemporary life in the Innu community of Sheshatshiu, Labrador. How do we start – or continue – this process? Many of those who contributed so generously to this special issue of *The Morning Watch* point the way. Jacqueline Ottmann provides us with a big picture view of where we need to go. Jodie Lane and Amy Hudson speak from the vital perspective of Indigenous students. Ellen Oliver and her university and Nunatsiavut Government colleagues explain how partnerships can work. Rainer Baehre takes us through the steps of Indigenizing a small campus in the midst of First Nations territory at a time of major developments in that First Nation’s history.

We’ve been taught that you won’t see the results of your work in your lifetime but that you still have to do the work. In some ways, however, many of us are fortunate enough to see some results of some of our work. It is our sincere hope that this special issue of *The Morning Watch* leads to even more work and more results, all aimed at bringing out social justice for the Indigenous peoples of Canada and, as a result of this, social justice to all.

All our relations,

**Maura Hanrahan and Kirk Anderson**

**Memorial University of Newfoundland**

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<sup>i</sup> Nitassinan is the Innu name for the Quebec-Labrador Peninsula.

<sup>ii</sup> Although the Indian Act applies only to First Nations, its omission from the Terms of Union was part of Canada’s and Newfoundland’s failure to recognize any of the Indigenous people of the new province.

<sup>iii</sup> The Department of Rural Development, the Newfoundland and Labrador Rural Development Council and its member organizations, the Memorial University Extension Service, the Centre for the Development of Community Initiatives, L.I.P., L.E.A.P., O.F.Y., D.R.E.E. (all government work creation programs), Manpower, the Department of the Secretary of State, The Company of Young Canadians, Frontier College, and The Newfoundland Development Corporation.

<sup>iv</sup> Not all communities in Newfoundland and Labrador have running water (e.g. Black Tickle).