



# Strategic Framework for Indigenization 2021-2026

## Introduction

Memorial University campuses are situated in the traditional territories of diverse Indigenous groups – the Beothuk, Mi'kmaq, Innu and Inuit. Acknowledging the diverse histories and cultures of the Indigenous peoples of this province is important in recognizing Indigenous peoples' enduring connection to their traditional territories. Beyond acknowledging, however, it is also incumbent on the University to make space, both literally and figuratively, to Indigenous peoples and their knowledges, pedagogies, perspectives, and more, within the academy.

In October 2017, President Kachanoski and Provost and Vice-President (Academic) Golfman issued a position statement on Indigenization (see Appendix A). This statement underscored the critical importance of Indigenization and the fundamental role universities play in reconciliation. In April 2020, Memorial's new president, Dr. Vianne Timmons, further announced Indigenization as one of her priorities.

The way the University moves forward has significant potential for renewed meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples. The release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report in 2015 and the subsequent adoption of Universities Canada's Principles on Indigenous Education have compelled us to re-examine our approach to the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in the academy. The TRC makes it clear that universities have a fundamental role to play in our country's reconciliation efforts. Therefore, it is no longer enough simply to provide supports to students so that they can succeed in the mainstream environment, but rather we must look at ways to indigenize the academy for the benefit of all – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – students, employees and others with a stake in the academy.

In the two years following the release of the position statement, the Office of Indigenous Affairs, supported by the President's Advisory Committee on Indigenous Affairs, undertook a comprehensive set of consultations. From August 2018 to August 2019, Memorial University held 26 engagement sessions with Indigenous communities across Newfoundland and Labrador. A summary report was released in November 2019 outlining what was heard from Indigenous community members. Three overarching themes emerged: Increasing Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and Places; Indigenizing the Academy; and, Strengthening University-Indigenous Community Relationships. Community members were generous with their time, thoughts, and ideas. We thank them immensely for their contributions, as this framework would not be possible without them.

The consultation process focused on engaging faculty, staff, students and administrators throughout the University – at the Labrador Institute, the Grenfell campus, the Marine Institute, the Signal Hill campus and the St. John's campus. Indigenization will impact both academic and non-academic units throughout the University, and it is important to hear from various levels within the institution.

This report presents a set of actions grounded in consultations and framed so the University can advance reconciliation. The strategic framework sets out four strategic priorities: Leadership and Partnership; Teaching and Learning; Research; and Student Success. Within each strategic priority,

actions have been identified that reflect what was heard from both Indigenous communities and the University community.

Indigenization must be led by Indigenous peoples. This is the only way that Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing are brought into the institution in a robust and ethical manner. At the same time, the strategic framework also recognizes that in order to indigenize the academy, there are other actions by non-Indigenous people that must necessarily happen in concert. Some of these actions can be classified as decolonizing, truth-telling, building capacity, and reconciliation. The entire Memorial University community has a role to play in ensuring that Indigenization is successful.

Indigenization is a process whereby Indigenous people bring Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing into spaces that are not designed for those ways. The challenge of theorizing Indigenization within University education is that not much work has been done in the area (at least not until recently) and therefore this requires we get the fundamentals right, from the start.

Indigenization involves two critical pillars. Pillar 1: the need to ensure that there is an embodied representation of Indigenous people within the University. This is achieved through intentional hiring, retention, and mentorship of Indigenous people into positions of leadership, Academic Staff Members (ASMs), and supporting staff across the University. It also requires increasing the admissions of Indigenous students into various programs in the university as well as offering academic supports to ensure their academic successes at the University. Pillar 2: Indigenization involves including Indigenous knowledges, values, worldviews, histories, and cultures into specific educational practices such as pedagogy, instruction, curricula formulations, and research as we interrogate discursive practices at Memorial University. Equally important to Pillar 2 is the understanding that Indigenous people did not arrive at the current state alone. Many Indigenous scholars including Mi'kmaw Professor Bonita Lawrence have argued that settlers need to acknowledge that there is "land theft and dispossession." Therefore, the teaching curricula and pedagogical practices at Memorial University must include and reflect the violent history of colonization, the Indian Act, Residential schools, and racism in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada that dispossessed Indigenous Peoples of their lands, resources, and humanity.

Indigenous Peoples have lived on these lands and waters since time immemorial. Therefore, it is critical that in this institution of higher education that we represent those Indigenous knowledge systems that have been built on these lands and waters. It is one way to honour the lands, waters and Indigenous ancestors of the territories in which we work and live.

Indigenous Peoples, cultures, and knowledge systems have been marginalized by the colonial system, and indeed governments and their education systems have worked to eliminate Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. It is our responsibility to actively work to make reparations. This work will help to build respectful relationships between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Peoples.

The work of Indigenization cannot stand alone, however. It must be accompanied by the work of decolonization. Decolonization is a process whereby we “take away the colonial”.

It means starting with the truth, and understanding and recognizing our colonial history. It means walking through this process with cultural humility. It means making structural and systemic changes in the way we govern, in the way we teach, in the way we do research and in the way we build relationships.

It is also important to understand that this framework will not address all issues of equity, diversity, inclusion or anti-racism. These are important elements of the work to be done, but it is important that these issues not be conflated. This framework is about Indigenization and what actions can be taken to support Indigenization specifically.

## Strategic Priority 1: Leadership and Partnership

To ensure strong, accountable leadership and collaborative partnership for building meaningful reconciliation.

### Observation

This goal focuses on two distinct principles:

Leadership, which is courageous, challenging and transformative and contributes to the aspirations and success of Mi'kmaq, Innu and Inuit, and other Indigenous peoples; and

Partnership, which serves as the foundation for meaningful and sustainable relationships.

Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples across Newfoundland and Labrador means establishing and maintaining respectful relationships. It requires knowledge of both the accurate history and present-day situations of Indigenous Peoples in the province and across Canada. It means ensuring strong and constant Indigenous leadership in all University structures on all campuses.

### 1.1 Strengthening Indigenous leadership within Memorial University

There is a diversity of capacity within Indigenous communities that encompasses lived experience. These Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing must be reflected in teaching and learning, research, and administration at Memorial University.

### Response

1. Memorial University supports the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 2015 report and will respond to those Calls to Action pertaining to post-secondary education.
2. Ensure appropriate Indigenous representation on the Board of Regents and the Senate which is in alignment with Principle #4 of Universities Canada's Principles on Indigenous Education.
3. Ensure the Office of the Special Advisor to the President is aligned with the objective of Indigenization by: retitling the position to Vice President, Indigenous; and increasing the staff complement of the office to be commensurate with all of the responsibilities of Indigenization.
4. Make the position of Associate Vice President (Indigenous Research), within the Office of the Vice President Research, permanent to ensure the continuation of the important and necessary work initiated since the position was created.

5. Create a strategy to recruit and retain Indigenous employees that provides employment stability with compensation that is market competitive.
6. Determine priority areas for Indigenous employee recruitment in order to implement some of the recommendations in this framework. The following positions should be the first of these priority areas:
  - (i) Create an additional position of Manager, Indigenous Affairs at the Grenfell Campus that will lead and manage the implementation of campus-specific Indigenization initiatives. This position will report to both leadership at the Grenfell Campus as well as the Office of the Vice President, Indigenous.
  - (ii) Hire an Indigenous-specific position in the Human Resources Department, at a senior level, to develop strategies to attract, mentor, upskill, recruit and retain Indigenous employees, or convert an existing position to meet these responsibilities. This position will have a dual report to the Office of the Vice President, Indigenous.
  - (iii) Hire an Indigenous-specific position in the Office of the Registrar, at a senior level, to provide oversight, advice and support in all operational areas of the Office, or convert an existing position to meet these responsibilities. This position will report to both leadership within the Office of the Registrar as well as the Office of the Vice President, Indigenous.
7. Ensure Indigenous representation on advisory and decision-making committees, boards, panels, etc. Until such time that there are enough internal Indigenous candidates to fulfill demand, external Indigenous community members should be appointed and compensated.
8. Develop protocols/guidelines to address issues of Indigenous identity as they pertain to internal processes such as targeted hires, reserved seats, and other Indigenous-specific opportunities.
9. Create an Elder-in-Residence program on each campus, which serves to strengthen Indigenous leadership in the University and support Indigenous student success. Create guidelines for the remuneration of Elders.

## **1.2 Strengthening post-secondary options in Labrador**

For over 40 years, Memorial University has had a presence in Labrador through the Labrador Institute, providing research and education supports. However, the Institute has never had academic unit status. The Inuit and Innu communities have long articulated the need for more post-secondary programs in Labrador, focused on Innu, Inuit, and other Indigenous priorities and ways of knowing and doing, beyond the current activities of the Labrador Institute.

### **Response**

1. Prioritize the establishment of a Labrador Campus of Memorial University that includes supporting the development of a constitution, governance structure, and business case.
2. Secure adequate funding to ensure the successful establishment of the campus.
3. Ensure 1-2 Indigenous hires for the Labrador Campus for its first year of operation.

## **1.3 Increasing Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and Places**

Reconciliation starts with building knowledge of the Indigenous Peoples of this place. Indigenous Peoples have lived on these lands and waters since time immemorial, and continue to live in their traditional territories, yet the modern story of Newfoundland and Labrador is often rendered absent from the Province's and university's societal consciousness. The history and legacy of colonialism in this province must be recognized and addressed as we collectively move forward, and all University members must collectively increase knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and places for this purpose.

### **Response**

1. Educate employees – senior leaders, faculty, staff, and administrators– about Indigenous Peoples, cultures, histories, and achievements, as well as historical and ongoing structures of settler colonization. Workshops will be delivered on a regular basis, and modified versions incorporated into orientation sessions for all new faculty and staff. Following protocol, Memorial University will partner with Indigenous groups to develop curriculum for such workshops.
2. Recognizing that entry-level university students lack knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, Memorial University will play a role in addressing systemic curriculum and professional development issues in the K-12 system. Memorial University will reach out to work in partnership with the provincial Department of Education to ensure Indigenous curriculum is effectively included and delivered in provincial schools.
3. Develop and deliver cultural humility workshops for Memorial University employees that will encourage self-reflection of assumptions and practices, comfort with 'not

knowing' and recognition of the power imbalance that exists in cross-cultural relationships and interactions.

4. Increase the collection of Indigenous authors and resources within the libraries as well as collaborate with Indigenous communities to create data sharing systems.
5. Ensure that robust and effective processes are implemented to deal with Indigenous-specific racism.

## Strategic Priority 2: Teaching and Learning

To enhance the learning and teaching environments at Memorial University for students, faculty, and staff to engage with each other to foster a more inclusive university environment that values Indigenous knowledges as commensurate with academic knowledge.

### Observation

Indigenization within Memorial University begins with a learning environment that includes a greater number of Indigenous scholars and Indigenous curriculum specialists who can support each other and foster growth across all programs.

#### 2.1 Supporting Teachers

Reconciliation and Indigenization must be supported by the faculty members and instructors who are at the core of Memorial University's mandate, and with a network to support each other in and out of the classroom.

### Response

1. Recruit Indigenous thinkers, with lived experience, in tenure-track faculty positions, regardless of discipline, through a cluster hire framework as a means of significantly increasing the number of Indigenous scholars and ensuring a peer-support network for their academic success within the University. This cluster hire framework must be thoughtfully implemented with awareness of all campuses.
2. Launch a peer-to-peer faculty network, co-chaired by two Indigenous mentors, to inform how the educational experience of all Memorial University students could be strengthened through Indigenized content.
3. Ensure appropriate levels of curriculum development support by Indigenous curriculum development specialists (with the goal of having three who represent the various Indigenous groups within the province). These Indigenous curriculum development specialists will work with the current team within the Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning to develop Indigenous curriculum; to mentor



Indigenous scholars; and to support and guide settler and non-Indigenous scholars who aim to incorporate Indigenous content within their courses.

4. Develop clear guidelines to support the delivery of Indigenous content when taught by settler and non-Indigenous scholars to increase the ubiquity and respectful delivery of Indigenous content across all programs.
5. Create a pathway program for growing Indigenous tenure-track faculty by providing opportunities to recruit Indigenous graduate students and emerging Indigenous scholars and to facilitate their becoming tenure-track faculty.
6. Establish opportunities to recognize innovation and excellence in Indigenous teaching and learning, and provide funding opportunities to reach those goals.

## **2.2 Focusing on Programs and Students**

Strengthen and expand academic programs with an Indigenous focus.

### **Response**

1. Launch additional degree and certificate programs, which may be complementary to existing degree programs, that: attract more Indigenous students, support culture and language revitalization, and strengthen partnerships between the University and Indigenous communities.
2. Building on the past partnerships and experiences with Indigenous communities, ensure that undergraduate degree programs in the Faculty of Education and the School of Social Work integrate Indigenization and decolonization so that all students benefit. These academic units can lead the way for others to follow suit.
3. Review, expand and revive existing Indigenous-specific degree programs, and continue to work with Indigenous communities and governments in the Province to identify additional Indigenous-specific cohort degree programs.
4. Add at least three additional courses per academic year to better inform Memorial University students about Indigenous Peoples, cultures, histories, and achievements, as well as historical and ongoing structures of settler colonization. As such, these courses could be developed and delivered, in partnership with and under the leadership of Indigenous peoples, in a way that makes them specific to academic units.
5. Strike an Indigenous-led task force to audit academic curriculum, in partnership with academic units, to identify areas for increased Indigenous content and universal exposure to necessary lessons.

6. Develop a set of online modules that includes information of Indigenous Peoples, cultures, and histories; the history and legacy of colonialism; and the challenge of reconciliation that addresses the unique aspects of this Province. Make this a requirement for students while the University builds its academic offerings.
7. Memorial University must ensure that its graduates, regardless of their discipline, demonstrate a basic literacy in and knowledge of Indigenous peoples, histories and cultures as well as the history and ongoing impacts of colonialism and residential schools.
8. Develop an academic regulation requiring students to complete at least a 3-credit course, from a designated list of Indigenous courses approved by the Vice President, Indigenous, to graduate from any program at Memorial University.
9. Examine the designated seats programs to ensure that the program is meeting the desired outcomes.
10. Create an Indigenous-specific student career experience program, at the undergraduate and graduate levels, available on all campuses.
11. Ensure that academic support services are accessible and relevant to Indigenous students.

### **2.3 Focusing on Delivery**

Ensure equitable access to education through inclusive pedagogical methods and course delivery.

#### **Response**

1. Increase access to courses for Indigenous communities through delivery in communities, blended delivery methods, and by online delivery.
2. As a partner institution in the University of the Arctic, Memorial University is able to avail of courses at other partner institutions. Ensure that the University provides opportunities for Indigenous students to access relevant partner institutions' courses.
3. Indigenous content in academic curriculum is an important piece of the equation, but this must be supported by Indigenous pedagogical methods to support enhanced learning environments.

## Strategic Priority 3: Research

Undertake Indigenous-led and Indigenous-partnered research that is transformative and beneficial for Indigenous communities, in accordance with Indigenous ethical frameworks.

### Observation

This goal focuses on supporting and enhancing Indigenous research for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers.

#### 3.1 Developing an ethical framework for engaging in Indigenous research

Research in Indigenous communities has an ongoing legacy of extraction and colonialism. The University has a responsibility to rectify this situation. Indigenous research carried out by members of the University community must adhere to Indigenous ethics and protocols.

#### Response

1. Introduce a clear policy framework that ensures a fulsome respectful and reciprocal engagement by Indigenous communities prior to embarking on any research initiative.
2. Develop a detailed inventory of research topics that are of interest to Indigenous communities, in partnership with Indigenous communities that responds to the needs and priorities of Indigenous communities.
3. Create guidelines and principles for engaging with Indigenous communities and traditional Indigenous knowledges.
4. Convene a group of settler and non-Indigenous researchers, elected by Indigenous research communities, to advise on ethical Indigenous research.
5. Create guidelines for the traditional knowledge keepers who work with the University in their expert capacities that addresses data ownership, compensation, co-authorship, and intellectual property.
6. Develop and deliver mandatory training for all those engaged in, or who will be engaged in, Indigenous research.
7. Adopt a data sovereignty framework to ensure Indigenous data is owned, accessible to, and controlled by Indigenous groups.
8. Created dedicated funding to support building relationships with Indigenous partners before research begins.

9. Ensure that all forms of Indigenous research, including but not limited to classroom research and program evaluation, adheres to principles of good conduct.

### **3.2 Strengthening Indigenous research at the University**

Develop capacity and support for Indigenous research.

#### **Response**

1. Develop courses on anticolonial research methods for students, faculty, and staff at all levels.
2. Maintain a public inventory of Indigenous research within and across all campuses. Ensure that existing inventories of research recognize Indigenous-led and Indigenous-partnered research.
3. Identify and promote internal and external funding opportunities for Indigenous research that recognize the importance of developing relationships with Indigenous communities.
4. Create an Indigenous-specific career experience program that develops research skills, at the undergraduate and graduate levels, available on all campuses.
5. Develop and support networks for Indigenous staff and students who are conducting research.
6. Continue and expand on featuring Indigenous research in University-wide and/or divisional research forums, communications and marketing as often as possible.
7. Actively recruit Indigenous graduate students and postdocs.

## Strategic Priority 4: Indigenous Student Success

To increase Indigenous student success by providing an inclusive environment in which Indigenous students thrive and succeed.

### Observation

Indigenous Student Success focuses on providing equitable access to post-secondary education in Newfoundland and Labrador for Indigenous students. It is tied to systemic change in teaching and learning, research and governance, and can be directly supported through recruitment initiatives, transition planning and retention strategies, and supporting career development, ensuring that educational experiences are delivered through a culturally respectful physical and inclusive environment.

### 4.1 Indigenous Learners

The access to culturally relevant academic programming and student support services is a key factor in the success of Indigenous learners.

#### Response

1. Create a new Indigenous University transition program to transition Indigenous students to University study. The program will provide comprehensive supports, with both academic and student life-related focuses.
2. Increase the promotion of post-secondary programs and the recruitment of Indigenous students across Newfoundland and Labrador, and beyond.
3. Create an Elder-in-Residence program on each campus, which serves to strengthen Indigenous leadership in the University and support Indigenous student success. Create guidelines for the remuneration of Elders.
4. Review academic policies and student support services to ensure they are culturally relevant in order to promote academic success and social and cultural well-being. This can be supported by the new Indigenous-specific position in the Office of the Registrar.

### 4.2 Space and Place

Memorial University can welcome Indigenous Peoples to its campuses by reflecting Indigenous culture and language in architecture, art and signage, and through an increased presence of Indigenous faculty and staff. It is important to have spaces that promote dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the University community.

## Response

1. Provide a physical space that will welcome Indigenous students at each Memorial University campus that is commensurate with the growing number of Indigenous students at each campus. For example, the new Labrador Campus will be reflective of Innu and Inuit cultures, as well as the lands and waters of Labrador.
2. Ensure that Indigenous House is built on the St. John's campus before the end of this strategic framework timeline, where the architecture and the artwork will reflect the Indigenous peoples, cultures, languages and traditions of Newfoundland and Labrador.
3. Ensure that there is a plan for a building at the Grenfell campus that is reflective of its place in Mi'kmaw territory, before the end of this strategic framework timeline.
4. Develop public-facing signage for key buildings, roads, rooms, and other spaces in Indigenous languages of the province.

### **4.3 Languages and Practices**

Memorial University has a responsibility to support Indigenous communities in Newfoundland and Labrador in revitalizing and safeguarding Indigenous languages, and to ensure that cultural practices adopted by Memorial University are clearly understood and consistently applied.

## Response

1. Building on existing good work, commit to supporting Indigenous communities in revitalizing and safeguarding their languages.
2. Develop guidelines, in collaboration with Indigenous communities, to accompany Indigenous practices and protocols. This may include, but will not be limited to, land acknowledgements, Elder payments and other protocols to ensure that they are used appropriately and consistently throughout the University system.

## APPENDIX A

**Strategic Indigenization Plan - Position Statement**  
**Dr. Gary Kachanoski, President and Vice-chancellor**  
**Dr. Noreen Golfman, Provost and Vice-President (Academic)**  
**Memorial University of Newfoundland**

October, 2017

For the past number of decades, universities have, to varying degrees, examined ways to support Indigenous students and incorporate Indigenous content into their academic programming. The release of the [Truth and Reconciliation \(TRC\) report](#) in 2015 and the subsequent adoption of [Universities Canada's Principles on Indigenous Education](#) have compelled us to re-examine our approach to the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the academy.

The [TRC](#) makes it clear that universities have a fundamental role to play in our country's reconciliation efforts. Therefore, it is no longer enough simply to provide supports to Indigenous students so that they can succeed in the mainstream environment, but rather we must look at ways to indigenize the academy for the benefit of all – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – students, employees and others with a stake in the academy.

We recognize the critical importance of indigenization at Memorial and have identified the need for a university-wide strategic indigenization plan. Though indigenization involves the integration of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, the concept of indigenizing the academy is as diverse as the cultures of Indigenous peoples themselves. Given the unique cultures and history of Newfoundland and Labrador and the important role of Memorial University to the province, we consider it necessary that Memorial University develop its own description of indigenization.

Demonstrating that we are working towards such a goal will derive many benefits for both Indigenous students and Memorial University as a whole.

At the core of this initiative is the potential for renewed relationships with Indigenous peoples and the advancement of reconciliation. Additionally, Memorial's capacity to expand upon and advance knowledge about cultures and worldviews will increase, helping to build trust and understanding as well as the capacity to inspire future students and generations.

The President's Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Affairs struck a working group for the strategic indigenization plan and they have identified some key principles and discussion points for the development of such a plan. These are:

- 1) Memorial must engage in consultation and partnership with the Indigenous peoples of Newfoundland and Labrador. A template or "one size fits all" approach is not effective when it comes to indigenization. Some have suggested that indigenization should mean that Indigenous peoples can have access to education that is congruent with their cultural knowledge, history, language, identity, values, worldviews, rights, and embodied experiences ([Gaywish, 2017](#)). In this connection, working with the Indigenous peoples of this place is integral. This is where we must begin.
- 2) The process is not starting from scratch. The [2009 Report of the Presidential Task Force on Aboriginal Initiatives](#) has provided strong direction regarding enhancing the recruitment and success of Indigenous students and there has been considerable [progress toward its objectives](#). Significant work continues to happen on our campuses at Memorial University, some of which emanates from the 2015 [report Celebrating Aboriginal Culture and Cultivating Inclusion at Memorial University](#). However, it is recognized that the path on which we are about to embark is fundamentally different from that which has been taken in the past. Indigenization is a much broader approach, one that encompasses student success and also advances the integration of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being into the whole University and acknowledges the value of this integration to the institution.
- 3) Memorial operates in many areas across the province, each with its own relationship to Indigenous groups in those areas. This diversity must be reflected in the approach taken.
- 4) Strategic planning processes normally have clearly defined goals with identified target dates. This process will not presume to identify those goals and targets until consultation has taken place. Additionally, it is recognized that a reasonable timeline would consist of 18-24 months. While the plan is in development, the work that is in progress which advances reconciliation and indigenization will continue.
- 5) Additional human and financial resources to undertake the work involved in this project are needed appropriate to the scale of the project.