

Indigenization Engagement Team: Yukon College

Final Report:
A Shared Journey

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*"Indigenous people, framed as a counter-narrative, will always be seen as radical."
- Dr. Shauneen Pete*

Yukon College is already engaged in the dynamic process of Indigenization in a variety of ways. The indigenization team's primary objective was to continue the process by developing a series of further recommendations. Some of the milestones already achieved at the college include:

- 1) The development and implementation of Yukon First Nations Core Competency aimed to broaden understanding of "...six key aspects of Yukon First Nations: history, heritage and culture, governance, residential schools and contemporary topics and world views". (Yukon First Nations Core Competency, n.d.)*
- 2) First Nations Initiative's (FNI) involvement in the curriculum review process and several college wide boards and committee.*
- 3) A college position that coordinates access to Elders on campus.*
- 4) The creation of the President's Advisory Council for First Nations Initiatives (PACFNI).*
- 5) The addition of First Nations art within college spaces.*
- 6) A traditional food policy.*
- 7) An appeals and grievances policy that has a First Nations portion/ perspective.*
- 8) A First Nations research protocols document.*

Guided by the work of FNI and PACFNI the team met regularly to engage in discussions around what indigenization means at Yukon College. We researched the endeavors of other communities and institutions, comparing them to our context and debating opportunities. As the group's comfort with each other and the subject matter increased we continued to struggle with identifying the best path forward. Each author or speaker offered varied and contextual definitions for what indigenization means and, it took a while to really understand how the word resists a simple definition because of how it is embedded in communities with different histories, populations and needs. Specifically, the scholarly work and on-site presentation of Dr. Shauneen

Peete both challenged and informed our thinking as we sought to explore the process of indigenization and what that would mean for Yukon College.

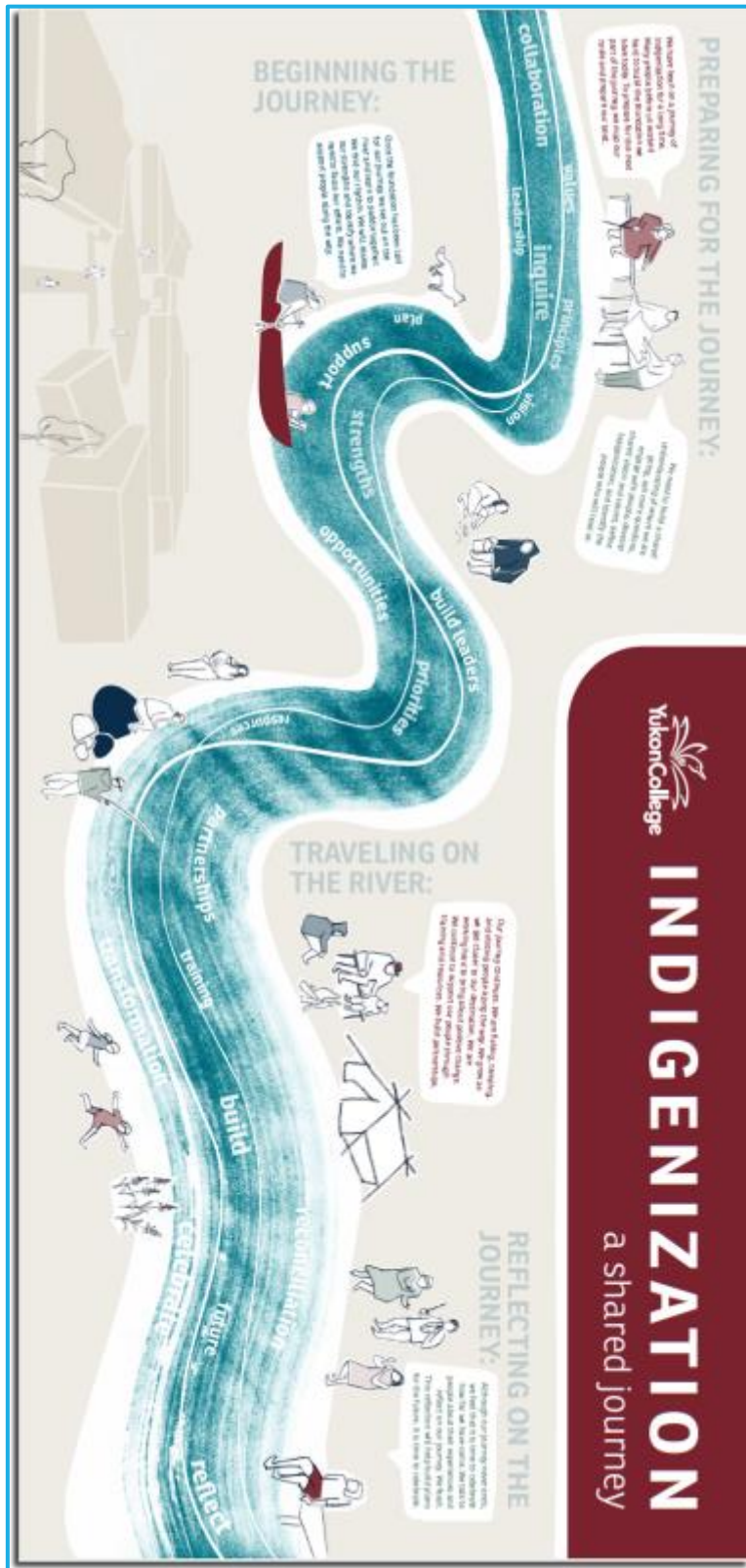
The Indigenization Engagement team did not only struggle with definitions; we also struggled with identity and language. Early in our meetings, we self-identified discomfort with the word “indigenization” and acknowledged a mutual fear to engage in these important conversations due to lack of experience or expertise with the subject. The process of reading, listening, communicating and reflecting over time helped us find the words and the confidence to engage in meaningful dialogue with each other. We especially cherish our field trip to Teslin campus, where we spent an entire day working, eating and conversing together. The ability to travel and physically be together in a community was extremely valuable and underscored how geography impacts our process of indigenization.

Yukon College does not have a specific definition for indigenization, and therefore the recommendations in this report are grounded in an analysis of what has already been achieved at Yukon College, and the readings and research of what “Indigenization” means to a variety of scholars, groups and individuals across North America. These recommendations emerge from the idea that, “Indigenization is not a series of tickable boxes, but a process moving at a different pace in each community that has taken it up...” (Macdonald, 2016, ¶ 27). This statement speaks to the breadth and depth of Indigenization. It is more than just examining and redefining “spaces”, “policies”, “services” and “programs” because it is also about “...relationships and re-centering your relationship to indigenous people” (Pete, 2017). In a broader sense, this refers to the process of personal and institutional decolonization and social justice work; examining assumptions, understanding and unpacking concepts of dominance and “assumed neutrality”

(Pete, 2017). An authentic process of Indigenization will require every member of the Yukon College community to engage in a reflective and reflexive process. Mi'Kmaq Elder Robert Marshall's concept of Etuaptmuk, "two-eyed seeing", adopted by the Institute for Integrative Science and Health at Cape Breton University is described as "...learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing ... and learning to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all" (Marshall, 2004, ¶ 2). There is a feeling among some that "to add" means "to replace" but Etuaptmuk suggests that knowledge and cultures complement and reinforce each other, rather than subvert and lessen. Indigenization is an opportunity to enrich programs, policies, spaces and services as well as ourselves and our communities but only if we are willing to shift the way we see and understand the world. This process will require a broad level of support, resources and time from college systems and administration.

The team didn't want the only culmination of our efforts to be a ten-minute presentation and a paper document. We wanted to produce something that could tell a story; our story of learning about indigenization, and the story of what indigenization might look like for Yukon College. Working with a graphic designer, the team developed a poster to reflect a vision for what the process of indigenization might look like. The metaphor of "travelling on the river" flows through the final recommendations, structuring and carrying them forward to the greater community.

Graphic for Indigenization at Yukon College:



Indigenization Recommendations

Indigenization is not the responsibility of one person or one area of Yukon College. There needs to be explicit college-wide commitment to indigenization as a strategic goal of the College. This means that there needs to be both support for staff and faculty to promote indigenization, and an accountability mechanism to ensure this commitment results in action. While indigenization is the responsibility of all Yukon College staff and faculty, there should also be a full-time position devoted to coordinating the indigenization process and activities.

Yukon College is part of the wider Yukon community, and indigenization needs to be a collaboration between Yukon College and Yukon First Nations Peoples. Engaging with all of Yukon's First Nations will help Yukon College set a course for indigenization and decolonization as it transitions to a university.

Indigenization is not a process that has an ending, but involves ongoing efforts that evolve over time. Yukon College must remain flexible to adjust and expand its approach to indigenization. Education and support for staff and faculty must be provided on an ongoing basis to ensure there is a general understanding of the reasons behind indigenization and the process and initiatives moving forward.

The following recommendations are based on the efforts of the Indigenization Team over a six-month period, recognizing that we alone cannot identify a strategy or plan for indigenization. We have created a multi-year process to begin indigenization efforts, however these recommendations are lacking detail that can be filled in through the early steps of the process.

Yukon College is making a conscious effort to support indigenous students and to re-center indigenous world-views into the core of the institution. Enhancing programs and services at Yukon College is fundamental to this process of reconciliation, decolonization and indigenization. Yukon College needs to continue to build welcoming and respectful learning environments on campus through the implementation of indigenized programs, services and support mechanisms, as well as the creation of spaces that celebrate and welcome indigenous learners, staff and faculty.

Preparing for the Journey:

Before indigenization actions are identified and implemented, there is some preparatory work that needs to be done at Yukon College and with the Yukon community at-large. This step in the indigenization process involves building an understanding of the context, engaging the right people, defining key terms and values, setting a vision, and identifying institutional leaders.

Key Recommendations:

1. Through a meaningful and collaborative process with Yukon First Nation Peoples (governments, community members, Elders, and students), develop a definition of indigenization and a set of guiding principles that acknowledge the unique needs of indigenous students at Yukon College and the underlying values that Yukon College will hold to support indigenization.
2. Develop an Executive Lead/Senior Advisor of Indigenization position supported by an Indigenization Advisory Council made up of indigenous people and non-indigenous allies from inside and outside the institution. This position would have the mandate and budget to lead the process of indigenization at Yukon College and support the work of staff and faculty. The position would report to the President and would sit on SEC and Senate/Academic Council. This position would have strong connections to PACFNI and FNI, but would focus on work outside of FNI's mandate. The establishment of this position would recognize the importance of Indigenous education leadership through representation at the governance level.

Beginning the Journey:

Once the foundation has been laid for indigenization and we have a vision, guiding principles, and key people involved, the next step in the process is to identify actions to promote indigenization. This step involves reviewing what Yukon College is already doing, identifying gaps in policies, programs, space, and services, and developing a process and actions to address those gaps. The following key recommendations are a beginning, but specific directions will arise out of the preparatory work done in Year 1.

Key Recommendations:

1. Review current student services available to support indigenization and identify gaps (e.g. support for students during evening classes, support in the communities) and future action required to meet indigenous student needs.
2. Provide information and support to instructors around the types of student services that are currently available and might be required to support all students through the process of reconciliation, decolonization and indigenization.
3. Review existing policies to ensure they support indigenization at Yukon College and identify and change policies that may be barriers. Determine if an over-arching indigenization policy is also required.
4. Consider how the indigenization process impacts Indigenous employees in terms of workload, promotion, etc., and implement measures to mitigate those impacts.
5. Revisit current spaces, names and signage and identify ways to acknowledge and celebrate Yukon First Nations culture in the existing physical spaces of Yukon College campuses.

6. Communicate Yukon College indigenization efforts at articulation meetings to ensure indigenized courses maintain transferability.
7. Develop procedures for ensuring indigenization is an integral component to new program development and program review processes.
8. Evaluate recruitment, promotion and retention policies and practices to encourage the hiring of indigenous staff and faculty.

Traveling on the River:

Once gaps are identified and processes are in place to incorporate indigenization, Yukon College can begin working on specific actions. This part of the journey focuses on supporting faculty and staff through training and resources, as well as building partnerships.

Key Recommendations:

1. Develop a short presentation to be delivered at Orientation week that introduces students to the context of reconciliation, decolonization and indigenization. It would also inform Indigenous students of the array of services, programs and supports available to them on campus.
2. Provide training on indigenization to front-line staff at Yukon College building awareness around historical institutional trauma and how to support Indigenous students in all areas of the college (e.g. student services, facilities, housing).
3. Incorporate indigenization as part of the formal planning, design and tendering process for new buildings and spaces.

4. Develop an Indigenous Center bringing together indigenous programs, courses and research.
5. Build partnerships with local First Nations artists to add art/culture pieces throughout Yukon College campuses.
6. Re-design “the pit” to be a gathering space that celebrates Yukon First Nations' cultures.
7. Identify ways that research can support the indigenization process.
8. Revise YC course evaluations to seek student feedback on indigenization.
9. Provide resources, time and support to faculty, including sessional instructors, to develop knowledge and skill related to indigenization of courses and programs. Ideas to achieve this objective include but are not limited to:
 - a. workshops
 - b. co-teaching opportunities
 - c. peer mentoring
 - d. release time to indigenize courses
 - e. communities of practice
 - f. social justice audits of curriculum
 - g. indigenization resource list
10. Develop an additional module for YFN 101 that explores social location, anti-oppressive approaches, responding to expressed racism in classes and personal world views as they relate to indigenization efforts at YC.

Reflecting on the Journey:

Following the implementation of these initial indigenization recommendations, there needs to be a process to reflect on these efforts, including gathering feedback from faculty, staff and students. This feedback will help build plans for the next few years of indigenization. This is also a time to celebrate the efforts that have already happened; particularly celebrating the Indigenous leaders amongst Yukon College staff, faculty and students, and the Yukon community-at-large that have led and guided the indigenization process at Yukon College.

Key Recommendations:

1. Evaluate the implementation of indigenization recommendations and identify gaps to guide future indigenization actions.
2. Host a celebration with the Yukon-wide community to highlight indigenization efforts and showcase the role of Yukon First Nations at Yukon College/Yukon University.

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