SKYLIGHT: The Science Centre for Learning and Teaching
UBC Science

How do I get started? Creating safer learning environments for Indigenous students in STEM at UBC

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

July 2022 | Version 1.0

Frances Butterfield

BSc Student, Combined Major in Science

Ashley Welsh

Interim Associate Director, Skylight

Contact: ashley.welsh@ubc.ca

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https://tinyurl.com/wwu6sk86

Resource Development & Design

- Supported by funding from a Skylight Development Grant
- Frances hired as a UAA to work with Ashley on resource development
- Resource designed to respond to commonly asked questions related to Goal #4 of the ISP: Indigenizing Our Curriculum
- Conversational and informed by Indigenous students, staff, and faculty, CTLT Indigenous Initiatives, the Skylight team, and Zakir Suleman (former GAA in Skylight)

Main Themes Explored

1. Teaching, Indigenous & Western Ways of Knowing, and *Etuaptmumk* (Two-Eyed Seeing)
2. Language
3. Land Acknowledgements
4. Emotion, Relationality, and Positionality
5. Personal Journey

Teaching, Indigenous & Western Ways of Knowing, and Etuaptmumk (Two-Eyed Seeing)

- How do I get started?

- **How do I create a safe space** in my classroom where Indigenous students will not feel tokenized, isolated, or uncomfortable?

- **How do I respectfully and authentically incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing (IWK)** into my teaching when I don't know a lot about it?

- Where can I find **specific examples** of how to embed Indigenous Ways of Knowing in my STEM course?

- What are the **differences** between Western science as a way of knowing and Indigenous ways of knowing (IWK)?

- Why is **Western science colonial**?

- What is **Etuaptmumk (Two-Eyed Seeing)**?

Language

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES: LANGUAGE GUIDELINES

2021 | VERSION 3.0

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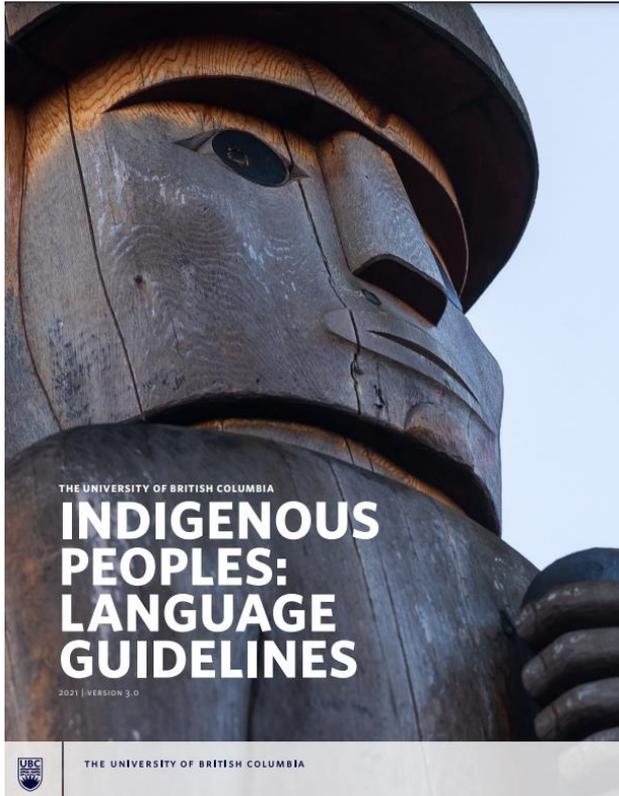
- Why is language so **complicated** in this space?

- What is the difference between "First Nations", "Indigenous", "Aboriginal", "Indian", and "Native"? **When (if ever) do I use each one?**

- What do the terms Indigenization, decolonization, and reconciliation mean?

Land Acknowledgements

- What is a land acknowledgment?
- **How do I approach doing land acknowledgments?**
- How do I bring emotion/self into land acknowledgments?
- Why can land acknowledgments be **harmful**?

Emotion, Relationality, and Positionality

- **How do I bring emotion into the classroom?** Why is it important?
- What do I do if I accidentally **offend someone**?
- **How do I process my own guilt/emotions** in this space?
- How do we exercise and promote self-care and community care?

Personal Journey

- Why should I care? **Why is this important?**

- I often hear the term "nothing about us, without us." So **how can I do this work on my own** as a non-Indigenous person? Who will support/guide me?

- I am a recent immigrant, how do I learn more about Indigenous Peoples and Histories in Canada?

- How do I build relationships and partner with Indigenous Peoples/Communities?

- **What can I do as an ally?**

November 2022 Workshop

- Collaborative Event: Skylight & CTLT II Classroom Climate Series
- Highlighting the design, development, and content of the resource
- Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students in Science/LFS sharing their experiences and leadership
- Opportunity for faculty, staff, and student to listen and reflect on their own roles in decolonization, reconciliation, and 'Indigenizing Our Curriculum'

Blog post in the works: **Respectfully Collaborating with Indigenous Students on Events, Panels, or Resources**

Highlight one thing in the resource that resonated with you. Why did it resonate?

Click on the sticky note icon on the left hand toolbar to write a comment.

Q. Is it challenging to be learning these things as we are teaching? Co-learning exercise discussion.

How ingrained science is as the ultimate truth (unlearning - it is very confusing)

IWK section, and thinking about incorporating these as part of our inclusivity practice, as much as changing the content of our teachings.

Important to recognize humanity, not shy away from emotion

Emotion in science faculty, doesn't come naturally for scientists

Emotionality and relationality - important to acknowledge this in learning, it's important to create safer spaces for everyone. It helps us understand eachother

We enjoyed hearing from the students themselves. Good to hear authentic experience and their perspectives . We would like to hear more from students themselves

Creating a culture where values (e.g., reciprocity) are acted on

why is western science colonial? Kinesiology (using western science to understand the body. How much is missed by only doing this?

IWK - does not mean randomly inserting facts! More than that: its about relations, respect, reciprocity. The way of teaching is important, it's not only what you are teaching.

How to meaningfully integrate content. Think more about ways of knowing, a path not previously considered

Personal Journey: so important to get a better sense of how I can authentically and respectfully engage in this area as a non-Indigenous educator.

it's actionable based on personal/professional reflection and critical thinking

Emotions: Frustrated - not having been able to make a lot of progress on adding Indigenous content. Excited to have a new way of approaching

Our role is to support students so we enjoy hearing from them. Uncertainty, how to know about learners backgrounds, how to know who we are talking to?

involving Indigenous students in the creation of this resource , and to have their input and experiences represented here is so wonderful to see.

Suggested – Braiding Sweetgrass, Robin Wall Kimmerer

Case-based learning. Land acknowledgements

The language – didn't realize I didn't know the difference btw Indigenization and Decolonization

Importance of bringing in emotion, and how that can make instructors (and students) feel uncomfortable

Holistic approach to learning and teaching - emotion, spirit in the classroom

Reminder being transparent with students about colonial and patriarchal history of science disciplines... and how much knowledge has been ignored or not credite

Reading about: Surveillance of arrests of protests in BC. Student wanted to have convos about how piece was biased

Portrayed complexity, did not give ways to fix things, it's work we need to do.

How do we know when to step forward?

What do you do in your classrooms to create more inclusive spaces for (Indigenous) students?

created a slack channel so that all students could share resources with one another -- Indigenous students took this up and shared resources they felt were important to read

Inviting students to share (anonymously if they wish) information that they want me to know about them and what supports they could use to thrive

Give personalized land acknowledgment in the first class. Position myself. Self-learning process.

Examine cultural assumptions

Looking at syllabus to create safer space. Asking colleagues

Sharing pronouns and other sharing around your positionality. Giving space for each to have their own positionality, all different, and that is okay.

bringing in yourself into the classroom (positionality) and inviting students to bring themselves into the classroom

Be open to listening to students and consider the additional family and community expectations, be open to accommodating students

creating opportunities for students to participate in different ways

Choosing more diverse representation in course materials

First Peoples Principles of Learning poster in my classroom and talking about them with respect to study strategies

Co-construct learning (to bring in different perspectives).

Start my course with a positionality statement about where I come from, where my knowledge comes from, and give space to recognize that it is not the same for everyone

Get comfortable with emotion, with sharing backgrounds, leaning into discomfort -

Building in opportunities for students to get to know each other, and share about their personal lives. So they come into the classroom with excitement

Academics / STEM focused on facts, getting things right, worried about getting something wrong , create an environment to support risks

clear expectations in the classroom, such as on assignments. All students benefit from clear expectations.

I bring sources that share Indigenous communities' perspectives, stories, knowledge and wisdoms.

Receive people, rather than hoops to jump through

how do we have less deadline rigor without impacting academic rigor?

Thanks to student leaders/contributors!

Frances Butterfield

BSc Student (Science)

Jessica Schaub

PhD Student,
Oceanography

Oceania Kreutzer

BSc Student (LFS)
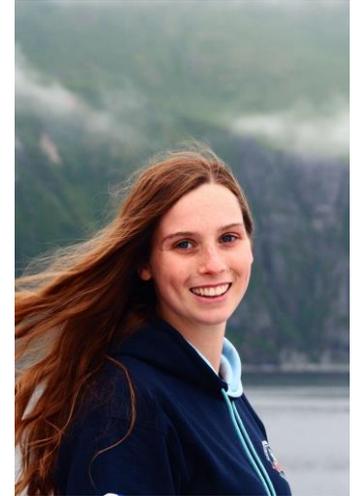
Wylee Fitz-Gerald

MSc Student,
Oceanography

With sincere thanks to:

- Indigenous faculty, staff, and students in UBC Science, LFS
- CTLT Indigenous Initiatives Team
- Zakir Suleman, former GAA in Skylight
- Amber Schroeder, Skylight Administrative Coordinator
- Centre for Indigenous Fisheries Team
- Skylight Team
- UBC Science Dean's Office

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