

Innii



Education is the new Buffalo

A Proposal to develop *Innii*: Indigenous Innovation Network Initiative

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Executive Summary and Rationale

The University of Lethbridge, also known by its Blackfoot name, *Iniskim*, seeks to elevate the prominence of our Indigenous programming, research, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and student support and expand upon their work through the creation and implementation of an Indigenous Innovation Network Initiative - *Innii*. The purpose of *Innii* is to promote collaboration and a common vision among the various units involved in Indigenous scholarship and student support at the University of Lethbridge.

The University of Lethbridge, located within the Blackfoot Confederacy and Métis Region 3, was once a leader in Indigenous education during the 1970s, with its inception of one of Canada's first Native American Studies programs. As an institution, we seek to reclaim our status as a leader in this field. We are fortunate to have significant cross-faculty Indigenous programming, new funding for Indigenous scholarship, and considerable expertise in Indigenous research. We, as a University, are committed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (TRC-CTA) and the Universities Canada Principles on Indigenous Education. We strongly feel that now is the time to highlight these core aspects of our institutional identity by establishing a network.

The primary missions of *Innii* are:

- **To increase the number of Indigenous student graduates and engaged alumni**
- **To ensure that Indigenous perspectives and knowledge** are prominent throughout the institution and respected throughout our curriculum and programming
- **To celebrate Indigenous culture and its preservation** through the establishment of a *Centre for Language Sustainability*
- **To deliver academic excellence** in Indigenous programs, through the design and delivery of quality academic programming and research of relevance
- **To graduate students with expertise in Indigenous fields of study**, who utilize critical analysis, are educated in both historical and contemporary issues, and are community- and globally-engaged
- **To ensure the growth of Indigenous-focused scholarship** in all faculties, so that we become recognized as an international leader in Indigenous research and creative expression. This effort shall lead to eventual funding to establish a Transdisciplinary Institute for Indigenous Research Excellence.
- **To provide work-integrated learning opportunities** in all fields, to support Indigenous student success, produce future leaders and benefit the local, regional, national, and global economy
- **To engage in capacity building** as a means of creating a sustainable environment for Indigenous students, faculty, and staff
- **To create an Indigenous Alumni Council and employ Indigenous alumni** with graduate degrees to work with instructors to help integrate indigenous content and methodological approaches to teaching
- **To attend to the Calls to Action** of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report
- Elevate the Elders program, including **Elders as faculty members** with the same rights and privileges as the professoriate

The University of Lethbridge has identified and established **Indigenization** as a key strategic priority. To this end, none of the academic units focused on Indigenous studies and scholarship feel that governance structures are adequate to sufficiently elevate this priority. The University does not have a sufficient complement of Indigenous faculty members for Indigenization to be properly enabled across campus. **Improved coordination among Faculties** and **targeted Indigenous scholar hiring** are urgently needed so we can offer all students the support and experience they need, celebrate Indigenous scholarship and attend to equity, diversity and inclusion.

Indigenous student success is a key mission for our institution. Indigenous students from all nations collectively represent a fast-growing segment of our student body at all levels of study and in all Faculties. Thus, it is paramount that existing units at the University of Lethbridge ensure positive outcomes for Indigenous students in both their academic work and post-graduation employment. Our goal is to have strong Indigenous student representation in all programs. While many programs have Indigenous content, our understanding of this the approaches and course content within these programs is not sufficiently integrated. We propose improved coordination through *Innii* (Figure 1). The component parts of *Innii* include the Dhillon School of Business **Indigenous Governance and Business Management Program**, the Faculty of Health Science **Aboriginal Health Program**, the Faculty of Education **Niitsitapi Teacher Education Program**, the **Department of Indigenous Studies** in the Faculty of Arts & Science, as well as many other Departments and Program areas, including, but not limited to: Visual Arts, Music, Addictions Counselling, Public Health, Political Science, Geography & Environment and Anthropology. *Innii* can help to identify gaps, make recommendations for optimal transdisciplinary and cross-Faculty programming and cross-listing, as well as help to identify and coordinate opportunities to establish research centres.

We are at a significant moment in both national and international history. The world is finally focused upon the historical racialized abuse and oppression of marginalized communities, including Indigenous Nations. The University of Lethbridge is in a position to actively lead Indigenous education, given its long history of leadership in Indigenous scholarship and programming for Indigenous students, as well as the recent generous support of the Mastercard Foundation (MCF). With our commitment to establish *Innii*, we can capitalize on the MC funding, to help the Blackfoot Confederacy and the University of Lethbridge support our Indigenous students through enhanced pathways including an expanded Indigenous Student Success Cohort program, **work-integrated learning**, enhanced **student support services**, and other initiatives.

Among the various components proposed within the *Innii* network, **language revitalization** has been identified as a particularly important tool for cultural preservation and has, thus, emerged as a key goal of our committee. We intend to build upon existing expertise in Indigenous language and linguistics, including Blackfoot, to establish a *Centre for Language Sustainability*, in accordance with the Centres and Institutes policy of the Office of the Vice-President Research.

All Faculties and Schools across the University of Lethbridge are committed to elevating their Indigenous focused research scholarship. *Innii* will include a **task force and/or advisory group**, focused on (i) advancing Indigenous research and creativity across the institution, (ii) developing a strategy to ensure that we garner recognition both nationally and internationally in multiple areas of research with an Indigenous emphasis, and (iii) ensuring the sustainability of the network.

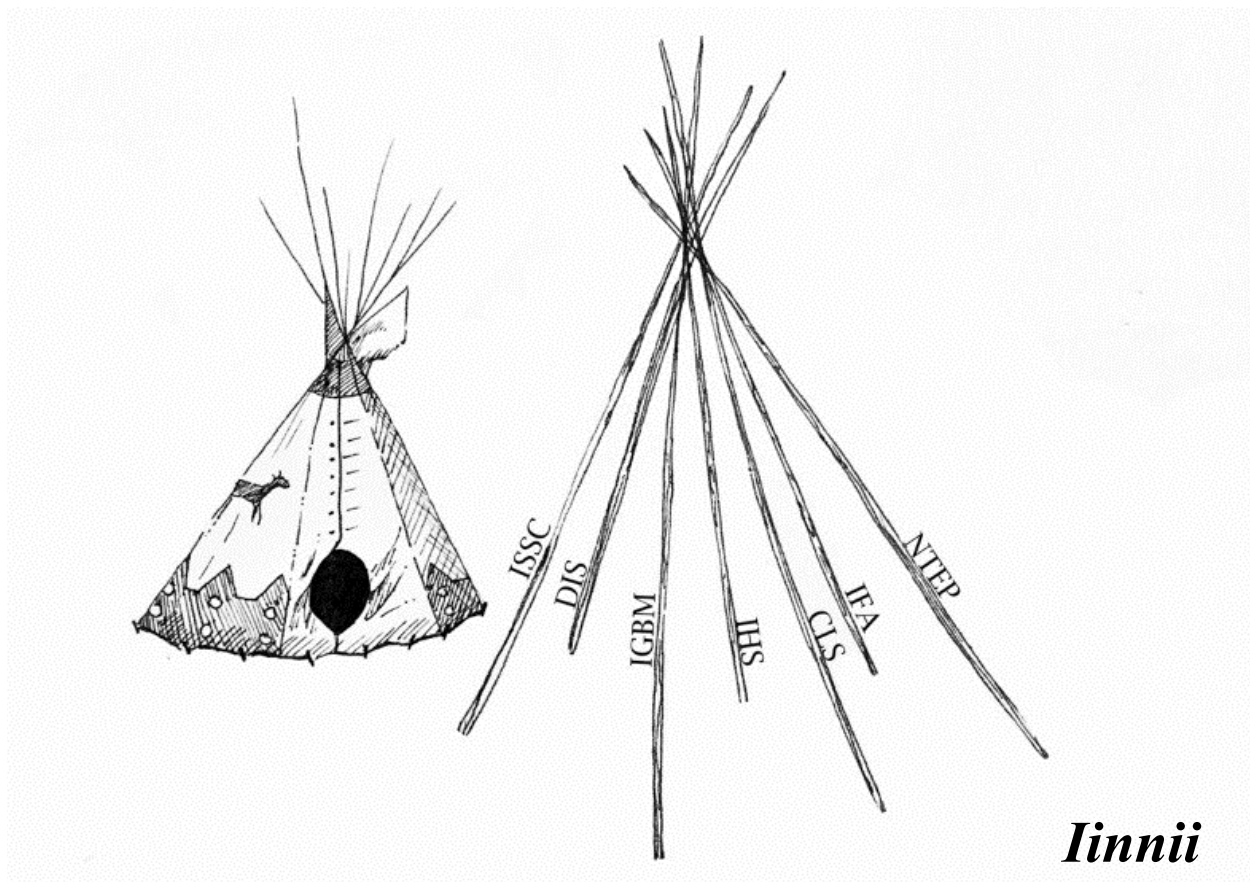


Figure 1. Conceptual model for *Innii*. The Blackfoot tipi is supported by each academic unit involved in the Indigenous Innovation Network Initiative, with more to be added in the future. These include the Indigenous Student Success Cohort (ISSC), the Department of Indigenous Studies (DIS), the Indigenous Governance and Business Management Program (IGBM), Indigenous health sciences (IHS), the Centre for Language Sustainability (CLS), Indigenous fine arts (IFA) and the Niitisitapi Teacher Education Program (NTEP), all of which will work closely to Indigenize and integrate Indigenous knowledge. This will be achieved along with our Elders, the Iikaisskini Gathering Space, the GFC Iniskim Education Committee and in accordance with our Blackfoot and Indigenous Peoples Protocols Handbook, which collectively form the cover shown in the tipi on the left. Further information on the symbolism represented by the tipi and its cover is outlined in Section 4.

The creation of *Innii* will require additional resources. Firstly, it will require a leader, such as a **Director**, who will be tasked with ensuring the effective coordination of the various programs across campus. This leader will oversee the creation of a network conducive to positive outcomes in terms of student success, community engagement, excellence in research and creative activity, and attendance to the TRC-CTA. Secondly, the University is greatly in need of Indigenous Studies faculty, preferably **Indigenous scholars** who have demonstrated excellence in their fields. We recommend a cluster of at least **three Indigenous faculty positions**, beginning with a **Research Chair in an area of Indigenous scholarship** and a continuing Instructor with expertise in **Blackfoot Language**. Thirdly, we recommend an **expansion of our Elders programming**, to include the promotion of existing Elders-in-Residence and the hiring of new **Elders as faculty members**.

The University of Lethbridge is cognizant of its position in the heart of Blackfoot Confederacy territory, where non-Blackfoot faculty, staff and students are guests. As such, we are committed to celebrating the local community, as well as all Indigenous cultures and languages. It is our

obligation to emphasize the importance of Indigenous student success, our institutional Indigenous-produced and/or focused research and expressive activity, and language revitalization. As the institution that offered the first Native American Studies Department (NAS) in Canada in the 1970s, the time has come to regain our status as leaders in Indigenous Studies and Research through the establishment of the *Iinnii* network.

1. A Brief History and Rationale for *Iinnii*

1.1 Indigenous Academic Programming and Support

Almost immediately after the University of Lethbridge came into existence in 1967, it began to explore its relationship with the surrounding Indigenous communities. That exploration resulted in the establishment of the Native American Studies (NAS) Department in 1975. It was among the first universities in Canada to include an undergraduate major in NAS among its Liberal Education components. NAS was housed within the Faculty of Arts and Science as a full-fledged academic discipline. Its hallmark was its interdisciplinary nature, resulting in a holistic approach towards university education for students majoring in the program. In keeping with changes in the discipline, NAS was renamed the Indigenous Studies Department (INDG) in 2018 to recognize the global breadth of Indigenous scholarship within the department and the connection of all Indigenous Peoples to their respective territories.

Indigenous programming expanded to all Faculties over time. The Dhillon School of Business (formerly the Faculty of Management) has been committed to Indigenous business management and governance education since 1984. Its first program, entitled “Business Enterprises and Self-Governing Systems (BESS) of Indian, Inuit and Metis Peoples”, was primarily envisioned as a certificate program for Indigenous students, with the option of continuing toward a bachelors degree. Following a review in 2002, the focus of the BESS program was shifted to the degree program, working in collaboration with the NAS Department. The program was later re-launched as the First Nations Governance (FNG) Program and specialized in on-reserve governance issues. A 2008 review led to philanthropic support of Elders, free tutorials, laptop lending and youth membership programs.

Following an extensive review in 2012, the program was renamed the Indigenous Governance and Business Management (IGBM) program and the Faculty of Management established the Indigenous Advisory Committee made up of Indigenous alumni, community members, scholars and Elders to provide guidance and direction for the changes. There are now two streams, with one focusing on governance and the other focusing on business.

The Niitsitapi Teacher Education Program (NTEP) was established by the Faculty of Education in 2004 and reinvigorated in 2018. This successful program can be carried out as a four-semester After Degree or five-year Combined Degree program. Along with the UofL Bachelor of Education experience, students from all Indigenous backgrounds complete foundational courses that focus on Blackfoot Language, values and ways of knowing. The Aboriginal Health Program was established in 2015 by the Faculty of Health Sciences. This program examines the factors contributing to Indigenous health, strength and resilience in Canada. Students in this program

develop their skills in a community setting, including practicum opportunities in partnership with rural and urban Indigenous populations. The Faculty of Fine Arts has exceptional scholars in Indigenous visual art and music, including two Canada Research Chairs, in Indigenous Art Research & Technology and Indigenous Music, Culture and Politics. Across faculties, departments and program areas, the University of Lethbridge also has expert scholars in Indigenous fields such as Public Health, Counselling, Political Science, Geography & Environment, Women & Gender Studies and Anthropology. Most importantly, since 2006, Indigenous student success has been supported by the First Nations Transition Program, now known as the Indigenous Student Success Cohort - a program that we intend to grow with the assistance of the MCF, as Indigenous enrolments increase.

1.2 Honouring Indigenous Culture and Blackfoot Confederacy Territory

The University of Lethbridge recognizes that it is a guest in Blackfoot territory. Since 2002, the University has held the Blackfoot name *Iniskim* (Sacred Buffalo Stone) to indicate the wisdom, knowledge, solidity, and connection to the land and people of the Blackfoot territory. This name was gifted in a Naming Ceremony by Blackfoot Elder Bruce Wolf Child. The University was also gifted a Blackfoot honour song. The University holds its own ceremonial pipe, which it smokes on special occasions. Some of the University's major buildings and programs were bestowed with Blackfoot names. The Ikaisskini Gathering Place is an important centre to instill a sense of belonging and community for all Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, faculty and staff and is soon slated to expand into a more prominent space in University Hall that respects the fundamental importance of indigenization and decolonization on our campus. This history testifies to the connection and commitment the University of Lethbridge has to Blackfoot and Indigenous Peoples from across the globe.

1.3 The Need for a Coordinated Network

The various academic units promoting Indigenous scholarship and student success have brought the University of Lethbridge recognition often disproportionate to its size and resources, including successful graduates, Canada Research Chairs and even a member holding the Order of Canada. Attempts have been made at developing coordinated strategies to support Indigenous students, faculty, staff, and community members at the University of Lethbridge. An example of this was the First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Centre Report to the President, produced in 2012 by Prof. Leroy Little Bear, Roy Weasel Fat (Red Crow Community College Vice-President Academic) and Professor Jane O'Dea. We believe that now is the time to build on this critically important report and develop a network among the various Indigenous academic programs. Indigeneity is rapidly changing at a global scale, as challenges to sovereignty continue to be waged, issues of land rights continue to be fought, and more Indigenous languages become extinct each year. With these issues at the forefront, it is becoming increasingly difficult for small academic departments to respond effectively, as there is inadequate coordination, resource allocation and Indigenous faculty hiring.



Figure 2. Performance of the University of Lethbridge Honour Song, by Prof. Emeritus Leroy Little Bear and Billy Wadsworth.

The various units with Indigenous academic programs and student support activities require additional resources to effectively respond to and ultimately exert leadership in contemporary Indigenous scholarship particularly in response to the TRC-CTA. In the heart of Blackfoot Confederacy and with a long tradition of Indigenous scholarship in multiple Faculties, we need to optimize collaborative opportunities and governance processes related to Indigenous research and teaching in accordance with an institution that purports to establish an environment in which all students have a sense of belonging and are given an opportunity to shine as illustrated by our #2 2020 ranking by MacLean's magazine. In addition to resourcing the outlined Indigenous academic programs, we need to create a cooperative organizational structure that is inviting to all faculty members across the campus who either have expertise related to Indigenous research and the SoTL, or who have expressed an interest in indigenizing and decolonizing their curriculum, teaching, research, creative and service activities.

Recently, the Mastercard Foundation selected the Blackfoot Confederacy and the University of Lethbridge as a recipient of \$15M toward the EleV program. The goal of this program is to grow opportunities for Indigenous learners to be full partners in their education and to access workplace opportunity. This selection exhibits the confidence such a high-calibre funder has in the University's ability to excel in and expand the Indigenous education and programming we currently provide to Southern Alberta's Indigenous communities. This funding also highlights the University's need for additional support, to become an institution that can meet the changing needs of the Indigenous communities. The *linnii* initiative is part of the solution to becoming highly competitive in Indigenous SoTL and research. For decades, FNMI and other Indigenous communities have expressed the need for capacity building in many areas, including, but not limited to, education, health, economics, addictions, mental health, environmental monitoring and resource management, agriculture, entrepreneurship and work-integrated learning. Increasingly,

Federal, Provincial and Tribal governments, agencies and the private sector must seek to hire Indigenous people and those with intercultural awareness in all fields. As an academic institution, with a breadth of Indigenous scholarship and programming, as well as a commitment to decolonization, Indigenization and experiential learning, we need to develop a common vision, by coordinating and growing our diverse sets of academic programs for the benefit of Blackfoot Confederacy and other Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Ultimately, this will promote cultural understanding and economic growth in Southern Alberta communities, especially among Indigenous peoples.

Our educators and researchers provide students with an opportunity to learn about Indigenous histories, languages, art, philosophies, geography, politics, law, and contemporary situations in a university setting, but there is an urgent need for more Indigenous scholars on our campus. There is also a need for expanded work-integrated learning opportunities. The MasterCard foundation funding can be directed toward this key need in association with our university and regional business, not-for-profit and government partners.

The University of Lethbridge needs *linnii* to allow the institution to respond, in a comprehensive and coordinated way, to the fast-changing world of the Indigenous communities, locally and nationally. The establishment of an Indigenous Innovation Network Initiative will allow the University of Lethbridge to maintain its leadership in the field of Indigenous research, education, and programming. The time is now!

2. *Iinnii* Committee Recommendations

The Indigenous Innovation Network Initiative Planning Committee makes the following recommendations associated with the launch of *Iinnii*:

1. That a Director be appointed to lead *Iinnii*.
2. That an inclusive hybrid organizational model, or network, be established for *Iinnii*, as described in 4. *Iinnii* Network Programs.
3. That *Iinnii* include an Indigenous research chair, a Blackfoot scholar, an open position for an Indigenous scholar, an expansion of the Elders program, the establishment of an Indigenous Fellows program, as well as adjuncts and teaching secondment opportunities for Indigenous university community members.
4. That a portion of Mastercard Foundation funds be utilized in coordination with *Iinnii* toward the establishment of work-integrated learning opportunities for Blackfoot and other Indigenous students across all fields.
5. That a visible and centralized space be allocated for Network leadership, including the Director, interested representatives from the academic units in each Faculty, the Centre for Language Sustainability and Elders-in-residence.
6. That we establish, in consultation with ULFA and the senior administration, the option to hire Elders as full faculty members as part of an expansion of the Elders program. These Elders would have the same rights and privileges as other faculty members and, thus, would not need a separate employment category.
7. That an Advisory Council to the *Iinnii* replace the Indigenous Innovation Network Initiative Proposal Committee effective at the time of network establishment, with a view to expanding membership beyond the existing committee to members representative of Indigenous scholarship across all fields of inquiry and creativity and in all Faculties.
8. That the allocated spaces for the Network, as well as its student services and Faculty programs be highly visible, inviting, and accessible to all members of the University and Lethbridge community, especially for Indigenous students and scholars.
9. That *Iinnii* work with the Indigenous Alumni Council, to identify and employ Indigenous alumni with Masters, Ph.D. or other terminal degrees to work with interested faculty members, to help integrate indigenous content into their courses, course materials and programs.
10. That the UofL establish a new Centre for Language Sustainability.
11. That the UofL work with representatives of all disciplines with experts in Indigenous research and creative activity to establish a Transdisciplinary Institute for Indigenous Research Excellence.
12. That all students at the UofL– *Iniskim* – be required to meet an Indigenous course requirement as part of their Liberal Education experience.

3. Commitment to TRC Calls to Action for Education

Given the importance of decolonization and indigenization as strategic directions for the UofL, we affirm our commitment to the TRC Calls to Action for **Education** (Items 6-12, below) and will endeavour, though *linnii*, to promote the successful achievement of the TRC-CTAs.

6. We call upon the Government of Canada to repeal Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada.

7. We call upon the federal government to develop with Indigenous groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

8. We call upon the federal government to eliminate the discrepancy in federal education funding for Indigenous children being educated on reserves and those Indigenous children being educated off reserves.

9. We call upon the federal government to prepare and publish annual reports comparing funding for the education of Indigenous children on and off reserves, as well as educational and income attainments of Indigenous people in Canada compared with non-Indigenous people.

10. We call on the federal government to draft new Indigenous education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Indigenous peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles:

- i. Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation.
- ii. Improving education attainment levels and success rates.
- iii. Developing culturally appropriate curricula.
- iv. Protecting the right to Indigenous languages, including the teaching of Indigenous languages as credit courses.
- v. Enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems.
- vi. Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children.
- vii. Respecting and honouring Treaty relationships.

11. We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of Indigenous students seeking a post-secondary education.

12. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families.

We also affirm our commitment to the Language-related Calls to Action specifically directed at the government and post-secondary institutions, with special emphasis on Call # 16:

13. We call upon the federal government to acknowledge that Aboriginal rights include Aboriginal language rights.

14. We call upon the federal government to enact an Aboriginal Languages Act that incorporates the following principles:

- i. Aboriginal languages are a fundamental and valued element of Canadian culture and society, and there is an urgency to preserve them.
- ii. Aboriginal language rights are reinforced by the Treaties.
- iii. The federal government has a responsibility to provide sufficient funds for Aboriginal-language revitalization and preservation.
- iv. The preservation, revitalization, and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Aboriginal people and communities.
- v. Funding for Aboriginal language initiatives must reflect the diversity of Aboriginal languages.

15. We call upon the federal government to appoint, in consultation with Aboriginal groups, an Aboriginal Languages Commissioner. The commissioner should help promote Aboriginal languages and report on the adequacy of federal funding of Aboriginal-language initiatives.

16. We call upon post-secondary institutions to create university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages.

4. *Iinnii* Network Programs

The Indigenous Innovation Network Initiative committee has chosen to illustrate our vision of *Iinnii* through the lessons of the tipi and its structural components (Figure 1). The seven primary components of the network are represented by poles of the tipi, which are tied together to provide a supportive structure, symbolizing the strength of a unified community of scholars, students and staff. The tipi cover encloses the structure formed by the poles to create protection, shelter, and provide warmth. Symbolically, the University of Lethbridge, and its support for liberal education, indigenization and decolonization, is represented by this cover as a sheltered place for learning, creating knowledge, and fostering collegiality. This warmth will be achieved along with our Elders, the Iikaisskini Gathering Space, the GFC Iniskim Education Committee and in accordance with our Blackfoot and Indigenous Peoples Protocols Handbook. The place where the poles meet symbolizes the exchange of energy and knowledge between the cosmos and the earth. For the University, this is where the energies for learning and knowledge come together. The bottom part of the tipi is what connects us with the earth and everything on the land. Often on the tipi flaps, sits a cross symbolizing the butterfly. The butterfly is symbolic of knowledge. As a liberal education university, the University of Lethbridge is, structurally, a symbol of knowledge. Inside the tipi, at its center, is the firepit, providing warmth and nurturing. The doorway symbolizes an inflow and outflow of relationships with everyone and everything on the lands. In this section, we outline how each section of the tipi benefits and receives benefit from the relationships inspired by *Iinnii*.

4.1 Indigenous Student Success Cohort Program at the University of Lethbridge

The Indigenous Student Success Cohort (ISSC) Program is a first-year credit program that provides Indigenous students who are not fully admissible to the University of Lethbridge, or who would like the supportive environment of a cohort, an important entry point into university and an opportunity to obtain a post-secondary degree. The program provides a solid foundation of core skills in a supportive cohort environment that attends to Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Learning (IWKL). It provides important cultural and peer support, advising, and academic skills development to create a positive first-year experience that positions students for success in further undergraduate studies. The students take a core set of foundational courses (Library Science 0520, a mathematics course (0100 or 0520), Writing 0520 and Quest for Success I (ISSC0524)), and if desired, one elective (Anthropology 0520, Sociology 0520 or Biology 0520) in the fall semester and a smaller core set of courses (Interdisciplinary Studies 0520 & Quest for Success II (ISSC0525)) and their choice of up to three selected electives (Indigenous Studies 1000, Chemistry 0520, Liberal Education 1500, Aboriginal Health 1000, Art 2850, Environmental Science 0520). This enables them to feather into and experience larger mainstream class sizes with the supports of the program.

In this program, Indigenous students learn:

- How to bridge cultures and build interdisciplinary knowledge
- Skills for success in university academics
- Effective writing techniques

- Library research and information gathering
- Mathematics and computer skills
- Creative thinking techniques
- How to integrate health into your life and potential career
- How to integrate the wisdom of First Nations' culture into their university experience

Currently, the ISSC is operated through the office of the Dean of Arts and Science (A & S), under the portfolio of an Associate Dean. The program has a full-time Coordinator, a full-time Learning Facilitator in Arts and Science, and a Learning Facilitator (0.3 FTE) from Health Sciences and a mathematics instructor (0.5 FTE). Other faculty and instructors are assigned on a repeat basis from supportive departments; the number of sessional instructors has been reduced over time, though one or two experienced individuals are still used. This has provided continuity and enabled its growth and development to the successful program it is today.

The ISSC is unique in comparison to other programs nationally in that it is a first-year for credit program, for Indigenous students specifically who either do not meet the mainstream academic requirements or who would like to develop a stronger foundation in a culturally-relevant supportive cohort environment. Once students have completed the ISSC core in good academic standing, they may access programs in the Faculties of Arts and Science, Fine Arts, Health Sciences, and the Dhillon School of Business. As such, the ISSC Program would be centrally located within *Innii*, as students completing the program feed into any and all disciplines. With the current MasterCard Foundation funding, the program is slated to increase its intake by 30 students per year annually over the next 5 years. This will greatly increase the Indigenous student base at the University of Lethbridge.

4.2 The Centre for Language Sustainability

The Centre for Language Sustainability (CLS) works to support the continued vitality of Indigenous languages in Canada and the World, with a particular emphasis on Southern Alberta. The work of the centre is guided by the idea that successful, sustainable, and efficient language revitalization and maintenance work is built upon collaborations between language communities, activists, teachers, learners, and scholars in education, linguistics and other fields. We understand sustainable language vitality from a very broad perspective and aim to provide support for work with endangered languages. For many communities, returning ancestral languages to their positions as primary means of communication is the stated aim. Our work and facilities fully support this goal. In addition, we equally support work that aims to record and document endangered languages in communities where a return to widespread competency is difficult or temporarily not feasible. High quality documentary and descriptive work aims to ensure that languages remain viable over long periods of time, even considering possible periods of dormancy. Thus, while our perspective is broad and inclusive of various states of language vitality, the CLS strives to support the full and sustained vitality of Indigenous languages.

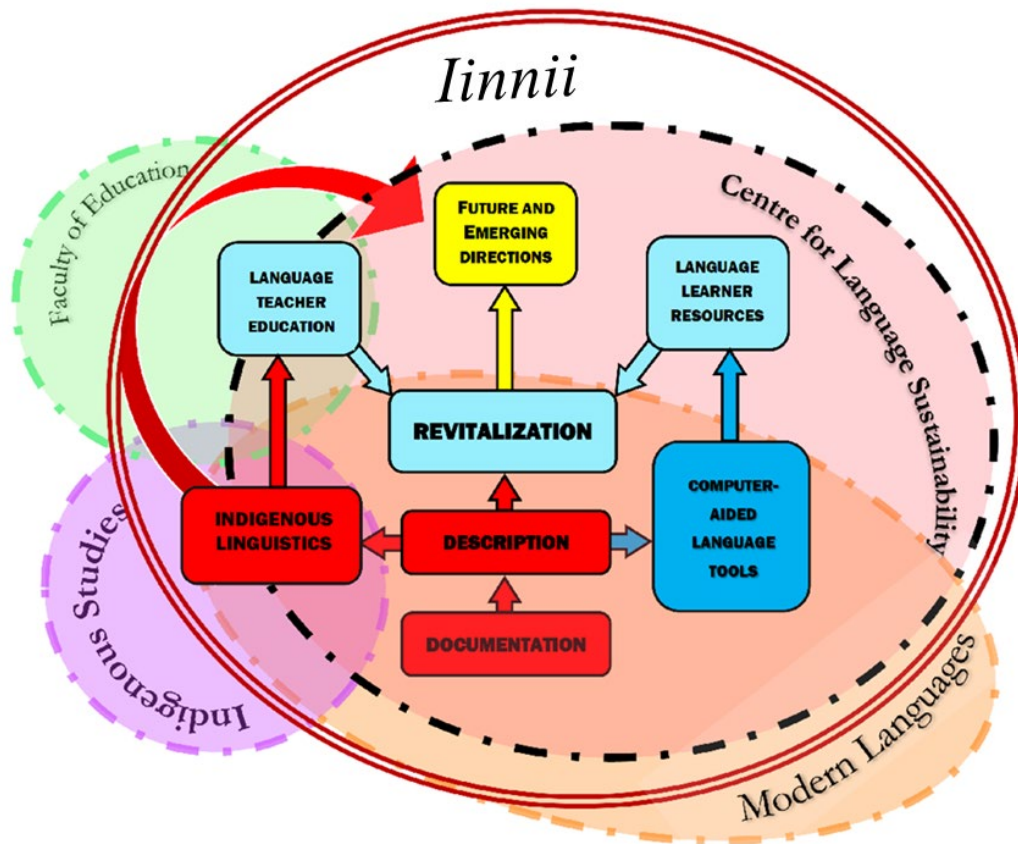


Figure 3. Intersections between the work of the CLR and other elements both within and outside of *Iinnii*.

Language endangerment and language vitality are social issues whose causes and implications involve a range of disciplines, skill sets, viewpoints and expertise bases. Consequently, the CLS aims to collaborate with relevant disciplines that support the wider efforts of securing long-term language use. A schematic overview of the work of the CLS and its intersections with other units both within and outside of the Indigenous Innovation Network Initiative are shown in Figure 3.

The foundation of all language revitalization work is adequate description and documentation. From that foundation, resources and training programs can be developed to support language revitalization both in personnel and in material terms. This leads to natural areas of collaboration with areas such as language studies and second-language pedagogy (Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics), Indigenous culture (Department of Indigenous Studies), Management and Law (Dhillon School of Business) and curriculum development and teacher training (Faculty of Education).

Within *Iinnii*, the CLS is as a central place for consultation on language revitalization, on supporting language elements in other projects (e.g. the recording and analysis of ethnobotanical or ethnoenvironmental terminologies and the transcription and translation of language materials), as well as training in the methods and technologies of language management and development. In addition, the CLR maintains AV-recording equipment and facilities that can be made available to students, researchers, and language activists who require it. One of the goals of the CLR would

be to contribute to a language-focussed version of the Niitsitapi Teacher Education program (NTEP) which would specifically aim to prepare Blackfoot language teachers.

4.3 Aboriginal Health Program in the Faculty of Health Sciences

The health of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is a complex social justice issue that can only be addressed by people who are creative, skilled, culturally competent, committed, and passionate about righting historical wrongs and acting to create a more inclusive, equitable society. In this way, Aboriginal Health is Canadian health. The program's objectives for students are to:

- Understand the historical and contemporary causes of current issues such as poverty, water and food insecurity, diabetes, addictions, youth suicide, and family violence.
- Learn a variety of traditional Indigenous teachings and contemporary perspectives by engaging with Elders, knowledge keepers, health care professionals, and other Indigenous peoples.
- Learn how a variety of Indigenous values, knowledge, and practices foster healthy children, youth, adults, Elders, families, and communities.
- Develop knowledge and portable skills and practices that help organizations and communities to respond to critical health issues facing Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians.
- Gain valuable workplace experience and apply what is learned through a practicum experience with a provincial or community Indigenous organization.

Program Courses

Aboriginal Health can be taken as a major or minor concentration, and as a two-year post-diploma program. Currently, Aboriginal Health has four designated courses:

- ABHL 1000 Introduction to Aboriginal Health
- ABHL 2000 Indigenous Healing & Restoration
- ABHL 3300 Traditional Aboriginal Health Concepts
- ABHL 3310 Contemporary Issues in Aboriginal Health

HLSC 3850 Indigenous Community Development has been taught for several years but has not yet been regularized. ABHL 2000 has designation as a General Liberal Education Requirement.

Future Goals

The goals for the future of the Aboriginal Health program involve expanding both content and scope of the program. Specific goals include:

- Introducing more interdisciplinary activity in the program
- Development of new courses that utilize Indigenous pedagogies and land-based experiential learning
- Adding courses or content pertaining to Indigenous health policy in Canada and Indigenous ethics, among other possibilities
- Increased student enrollment and retention in ABHL program

- Acquiring and retaining additional faculty on staff, specifically Indigenous scholars
- Increasing the diversity of content through the inclusion of more Indigenous worldviews and perspectives in course programming
- Enabling students to include more cross-faculty/disciplinary content as part of their program

Program Needs

The Aboriginal Health program is in its seventh year and is still continuing to evolve. At this point in time, the program needs to creatively increase its resources and capacity to deliver quality content and continue with program development. The establishment of a network would help in this regard.

Benefits of an Indigenous Innovation Network Initiative

Iinnii would be beneficial to our program in the following three ways:

1. Facilitate inter- and multi-disciplinary programming opportunities for ABHL students
 - a. Streamlining processes will decrease barriers to cross-listing of courses
 - b. Increase course offerings for ABHL students in faculties and departments such as Indigenous Studies, Dhillon School of Business, Fine Arts, and the Centre for Language Revitalization
 - c. Enable the expansion of student (and faculty) understandings of Indigenous holistic perspectives of health/wellness
2. Create more opportunities for resource-sharing between faculties
 - a. Cross- or co-teaching between faculties/departments
 - b. Cross-listing courses can increase the uptake of previously under-enrolled courses such as Indigenous Community Development
3. Will create a stronger network for research opportunities and multi- or interdisciplinary collaboration across faculties
 - a. Strengthen collegial networks for cross-disciplinary research and innovation
 - b. Create opportunities for discussion and increased implementation of Indigenous pedagogies
 - c. Build a strategic campus-wide alliance to advocate for the continual enhancement of Indigenization practices at the University of Lethbridge

4.4 Niitsitapi Teacher Education Program in the Faculty of Education

The Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge offers the Niitsitapi Teacher Education Program (NTEP) in partnership with Red Crow Community College. This program is offered both as a four-semester After Degree and as a five-year Combined Degree program. Students begin their programs with Kipatapisanooni I and II, foundational courses that teach students about Blackfoot language, values, and ways of knowing.

The NTEP is designed to recruit Indigenous students interested in educating Blackfoot children and youth. The program not only meets the requirements of the Alberta Teaching Quality Standard, but also prepares aspiring educators for teaching within the Blackfoot culture. The training provided is broad-based, with practical experiences for both elementary and secondary teaching excellence.

This program would benefit from the establishment of *Innii*, because the network will improve collaboration among the Faculties that contribute to the program. These include the Faculty of Fine Arts, the Dhillon School of Business and the Faculty of Arts & Science. Many students in the ISSC also move toward Education programs. Investment in Indigenous programming, centres, Elders and Indigenous faculty through *Innii* would improve research and teaching quality in each Faculty, thereby benefitting the NTEP. The Centre for Language Sustainability and the recommended Blackfoot Instructor, would directly improve the quality of the program, as would the connection with the Indigenous Student Success Cohort.

4.5 Faculty of Fine Arts support for *Innii*

The Faculty of Fine Arts is committed to enhancing and increasing the participation of faculty and students in the indigenization and decolonization of curriculum, research/research-creation and public engagement. Our active Indigenous Arts and Culture community includes two Canada Research Chairs (one in the department of Art and one in Music) as well as other faculty and students in Art, Drama, Music, New Media, and the University Art Gallery. These scholars collaborate with Indigenous colleagues on specific community-led activities and support curricular, programming, and research/research creation by and with Indigenous artists. In an effort to contribute to the UofL's Strategic Research Plan (SRP), the Faculty of Fine Arts continues to build on these existing strengths in Indigenous scholarship, digital media, critical studio practice and community engagement and works to elevate the prominence of Indigenous programming. We envision that Fine Arts will contribute to, as well as benefit from the *Innii* network in a myriad of ways, while focusing on creative renewal, revitalization and cultural expression.

Specific to curriculum, the Faculty of Fine Arts is in the process of reorganizing the BFA Art curriculum and re-developing a series of courses, to launch a new Indigenous Arts Studio Program led by Dr. Jackson Leween, Two Bears in which Indigenous ways of knowing will play an even more essential role in our pedagogy. These new courses in Indigenous Art Studio reflect our commitment to **indigenization** and **decolonized curriculum** at our post-secondary institution, where Indigenous creative and cultural practices are integral to new knowledge formation and inform new approaches to instruction and education.

Currently we offer 2000- and 3000-level courses in Indigenous Art Studio, with a capstone course, entitled *LandMarks*, offered at the advanced/ senior level. These courses provide students with a unique learning environment—one that promotes collective learning, collaborative interaction, and the freedom to express their creative ideas in any artistic discipline. These courses introduce students to a wide-range of studio art practices, where skills in critical thinking and analysis are developed through in-class discussions, readings, and production. In our studio courses, students apply conceptual, technical and creative skills in the research and production of artistic projects in a range of art-media. Understanding that art practices are interlinked with academic explorations, students examine and analyze their work in relation to significant areas of contemporary thought, and within certain social, political and cultural contexts.

Work with students in our programs is often interconnected with faculty research, and often involves embedded forms of community engagement, which contributes to a creative effort to integrate Indigenous ways of knowing into our pedagogical practices. In these Indigenous Art Studio classes, we often work collaboratively on larger projects; for instance, our students recently created new artworks for the University Art Gallery collection, in collaboration with the Blackfoot Digital Library. This past semester our students also contributed to a new exhibition of works related to the *Concepts that Bite through Time* project, which involved working alongside elders from the community and researchers at U of L and Central Saint Martins University and the University of Southampton (UK). Students in our *LandMarks—Spatial Storytelling: Land, Art, Place and Community* course also work alongside Elders and knowledge keepers from the community when making new site-specific artworks for a major public exhibition in Lethbridge at the end of the semester, where we strive to creatively explore and deepen our connection to the land through a series of contemporary art projects.

Indigenous music courses now also come under the purview of the Faculty of Fine Arts, with the transfer appointment of Dr. Monique Giroux to the Department of Music in 2019. Currently two courses in Indigenous music are offered annually, one each at the 2000 and 3000 levels. While registration in these courses is still ‘counted’ in the Faculty of Arts & Science (until 2023), the curriculum is led within the Department of Music. MUSI2850 offers an introduction to a diverse selection of Indigenous musics. Particular attention is paid in this course to ways in which music articulates and shapes issues of tradition and modernity, place, and belonging, revitalization and resurgence, and sovereignty and self-determination. MUSI3850 is a course in which students explore Indigenous music as political thought. Here students engage with critical theory to consider how contemporary Indigenous musics intersect with politics, in ways that comment on relations of power, serve as agents of change, make a space for protest and resistance, and articulate acts of resurgence. At the graduate level, the Faculty of Fine Arts has recently initiated and seed-funded a Fine Arts Indigenous Graduate Admissions Award intended to support Fine Arts graduate students across our MFA, MMus, and MA programs. Our first award recipient is a sound artist in the MMus program.



Figure 4. Outdoor Medicine Wheel Artwork by Sarah Russell, University of Lethbridge student in Indigenous Art Studio, 2019.

Within all of our Indigenous classes, we promote academic success among Indigenous students. In these courses, students are not bound by certain (Euro-centric) categorizations and definitions of art, artifact, craft, or fine arts that ultimately restrict artistic expression. Rather, we recognize all forms of creative practice as important and valid expressions of our culture, our communities, and ourselves, whether ‘traditional’ or ‘modern’, ‘ceremonial’ or ‘contemporary’. Housed within our world-class studio facilities, our programs support all forms of disciplinary and interdisciplinary studio practice, such as ceramics, fibres, intermedia (video, performance, and electronic arts), painting, drawing, photography, print media, and sculpture. We further support and promote all forms, actions or instances of creative expression, such as carving, beading, basket weaving, jewelry making, drumming, singing, dancing, sound creation and production, and storytelling in all its diverse forms. Importantly, these studio courses are open to all students, and feature an integrated learning approach, within a hands-on, practical environment.

In Fine Arts, our aim is to celebrate Indigenous culture, focusing on the ways that art, music, and critical studio praxis can support the transmission, transformation, innovation and expression of Indigenous creative and cultural practices, in its many changing, and evolving forms. We look forward to participating in the development of *Iinnii*, while contributing to a committed, imaginative, and creative effort to integrate Indigenous knowledge into advanced research and scholarly inquiry, and the development of new pedagogical practices.

4.6. Indigenous Governance and Business Management in the Dhillon School of Business

In 2011, Elder Francis First Charger gifted the Dhillon School's Indigenous space with the Blackfoot name Mokakit, meaning "Practice wisdom, apply your knowledge." The Indigenous Governance and Business Management (IGBM) Program takes this name to heart, by bringing together traditional Indigenous and Western governance and business models and approaches in its course offerings. Likewise, the AACSB-accredited Dhillon School of Business has embraced Mokakit for the school motto and determined that its 2021 Strategic Plan will have Indigenization as one of its core pillars.

Indigenous peoples have drastically altered their methods of governing and conducting business to work alongside Western constructs. Whereas, traditionally, both business and governance would fall under the influence of Indigenous gifting economies, engagement with commodified approaches has demanded change. Understanding and addressing this change is essential for Reconciliation and moving toward a more equitable system in Canada and around the world.

The Dhillon School of Business IGBM program offers a unique blend of studies in Indigenous governance and associated core business concepts and is open to all DSB students. Small class sizes and strong academic supports enhance the learning environment. Students select one of two streams within the program: Indigenous Governance or Indigenous Business Management. The Indigenous Governance and Business Management program offers a degree, second degree, two minors (one in Indigenous governance and one in Indigenous business), a certificate and a post-diploma degree route.

The DSB IGBM program and course offerings are based on a provincially mandated qualitative academic review undertaken in 2012. As part of the review process, external reviewers assessed the program and surveyed students, alumni, community members and Elders. The IGBM Program was launched in Fall 2018, based on recommendations of the academic review and the DSB Indigenous Advisory Committee. A number of courses, programs, and streams with Majors and Minors, are available to students within the standard business education model, but from a uniquely Indigenous perspective. The DSB takes pride in how IGBM affords the space to ensure that Indigenous perspectives inform and innovate our shared future. As part of this shared future, starting in Fall 2021, all DSB students are required to take one Indigenous-content course toward their degree. To help students fulfil their course requirements, the Dhillon school is pleased to offer the following courses:

- IGBM 2500 - Introduction to Indigenous Governance and Business Management
- IGBM 3250/INDG 3250 - Financial Management in Canadian Indigenous Communities
- IGBM 3506/INDG 3506 - Indigenous Business and Entrepreneurship in Canada
- IGBM 3515/INDG3515 - Canadian Indigenous Negotiations
- IGBM 3522/INDG 3522 - Canadian Indigenous Project Management
- IGBM 3280/INDG 3280 - Indigenous Peoples and Natural Resources
- IGBM 3590/INDG 3590 - Current Practices in Canadian Indigenous Governance
- IGBM 3592/INDG 3592 - Applied Indigenous Management Issues (Series)
- IGBM 4120/INDG 4120 - Historical and Legal Aspects of Canadian Indigenous Governments

- IGBM 4150/Indigenous Studies 4150 - Administrative Aspects of Canadian Indigenous Governments
- IGBM 4501/Indigenous Studies 4501 - Canadian Indigenous Tax Issues
- IGBM 4570/Indigenous Studies 4570 - Indigenous Leadership and Management

The Indigenous staff, students, alumni, and faculty at the Dhillon School are always looking to initiate new paths and new partnerships within the academy and sectors outside the School, including both the wider university community and the Indigenous community, while maintaining and strengthening those we already have. In 2008, the DSB commenced and continues to finance the university's Elders Program, where students, staff, and faculty can meet with Elders on a weekly basis. This commitment to Elder engagement has included the renaming of the University's Elders room in honour of the late Elder Carolla Calf Robe and a welcome luncheon to introduce new Elders and students. The Dhillon School has established ongoing workshops for students and others, including Blackfoot Protocols, Traditional plants, Approaching Elders and traditional knowledge holders, Blackfoot Face painting, Reconciliation, Indigenization, and specialized workshops for University personnel on Indigenous matters. As well, the DSB offers a free tutorial program for all Indigenous students at the university, funding up to three hours per week, per student.

Dhillon School of Business faculty members and staff work with local and national Indigenous organizations, to promote and support Indigenous initiatives such as the Blackfoot Women Empowerment Project, Sisters in Solidarity and the university's annual Indigenous Awareness Week. The DSB continues to sponsor students to attend conferences and collaborate with various entities, such as Iikaisskini, the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association and the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers. The DSB was also a founding member of the FNMI Support Group, which became the GFC Iniskim Education Committee.

The Dhillon School established an Indigenous youth mentorship and school outreach program in 2013. The mission of this program is to offer positive encouragement to Indigenous youth in all educational endeavours, in a culturally sensitive, safe and caring environment, along with University of Lethbridge Indigenous student volunteers. The program objectives are to provide Indigenous youth with fun, positive ways to connect with current UofL students who can foster confidence, provide positive Indigenous role models and to encourage educational success. Students who have participated in this program have subsequently completed high school, and many have attended post-secondary institutions, including the University of Lethbridge.

The Dhillon School is actively working with recruitment officers, to promote the IGBM program provincially, nationally and internationally. Our courses are taught by Indigenous scholars and professionals, including Dr. Leroy Little Bear. At present, the school has one tenure-track Aboriginal faculty member, one tenure-track Métis faculty member who teaches outside of the IGBM area and one Aboriginal staff member who also serves as the Dhillon School Indigenous Learning and Program Coordinator and provides student academic support and guidance, student liaison with other on-campus support units. For the IGBM program, all other teaching and administrative duties are carried out by sessional instructors, faculty from other areas, and part-time student staff.

Like all Indigenous units on campus, the DSB is in need of resources (space, manpower, equipment, and finance) and time, including an expansion of the ‘Indigenous class’ footprint and space within these classes, where Indigenous voices have been denied within the Academy. This denial of Indigenous voice is not a University of Lethbridge specific issue. Reports, like the RCAP, TRC, and MMIWG all indicate that this problem is systemic and pervasive. This paradigm shift will not be easy, but it is up to us, as thought leaders, to move this topic beyond mere conversation and into a world of transformation. We can make the change.

4.7 Department of Indigenous Studies in the Faculty of Arts & Science

The University of Lethbridge stands at a critical juncture in its commitment to Indigenous education and scholarship. The Department of Indigenous Studies strongly believes that the University of Lethbridge can and should join other universities in Canada in making an institutional commitment to new decolonized ways of perceiving and teaching; to not researching and teaching **about** Indigenous Peoples but **with** and **by** Indigenous Peoples and **from** Indigenous perspectives. We stand on the brink of structuring a new social contract; we have the opportunity to educate those who will contribute to all facets of the Indigenous conversation. *Innii* will empower the University of Lethbridge to re-conceptualize its proud tradition, one that will continue to make important and significant foundational contributions to Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous life, locally, nationally and internationally, through the scholarship, preparedness and advocacy activities of its graduates and faculty.

Canadian universities have tended to build on and incorporate their “Native Studies” departments as the foundation of their emerging Schools or Faculties of Indigenous (or FNMI) education. Members of those Departments have played critical roles in the resulting transitions and continue to make up the central core of the resulting Faculties or Schools. Likewise, members of the Department of Indigenous Studies at the University of Lethbridge are committed to ensuring that this institution regains its cutting-edge reputation in Indigenous education, scholarship and creative inquiry, not just among Indigenous communities, but for all students. As educators working with an Indigenous curriculum, we can elicit focus, stimulate critical thought, explore provocative solutions, initiate dialogue, and bring about awareness that incorporates divergent ways of knowing. The Department of Indigenous Studies already reflects these priorities in our pedagogy, our commitment to a national and international Indigenous student presence, and the fact that we work directly with Indigenous students and community.

The Department of Indigenous Studies at the University of Lethbridge provides Indigenous and non-Indigenous students the opportunity to learn and think about Indigenous knowledges, and their past, present, and future experiences in creative, transformative, and critical ways. In doing so, the Department provides leadership in Indigenous and Indigenous-centered teaching, scholarship, and creative inquiry. Given these mandates, the Department of Indigenous Studies continues to occupy a central position in current and future institutional planning as a lead facilitator in the Indigenous and decolonization of curriculum, scholarship and creative inquiry, and institutional structures within the University of Lethbridge, as represented in Figure 5. As such, the Department of Indigenous Studies is a central component of *Innii* and is foundational to the framework upon which Indigenous education and scholarship is built.

The Department of Indigenous Studies’ vision is grounded in relationality with local Indigenous communities and connectivity to/elevation of global Indigeneity. Faculty within the department are dedicated to community-engaged scholarship, challenging settler-colonial structures and frameworks, and working in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples toward achieving their priorities and aspirations in Canada and throughout the world. This vision is of paramount importance, as our commitment to education, scholarship, and creative inquiry, sourced in Indigenous and decolonial knowledges, should also inform the network.

As educators and scholars in Indigenous Studies, the Department of Indigenous Studies bears the responsibility for instructing an exciting core curriculum that is responsive to and embedded within current local and global Indigenous and settler-colonial realities. The department offers courses that engender a rigorous and respectful understanding of Indigenous Peoples’ languages, knowledges, cultures, histories, politics, arts, intellectual traditions, decolonial ambitions, and research methodologies. We are educating tomorrow’s leaders, negotiators and citizens, whether these students are Indigenous or non-Indigenous members of society. We envision the subsequent inclusion of many of our courses into Faculties and Departments developing degrees and other programming targeting Indigenous themes. Too often, society tends to objectify Indigenous “issues,” “problems,” “bodies/health,” “social issues,” and even “Indigenous art.” Such objectification leads to Othering, marginalization, and essentialization of Indigenous Peoples and communities. As an institution we need to ensure that *all* students – particularly non-Indigenous students – have a practical understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing and decolonial frameworks. Otherwise, we risk graduating students who will continue to perpetuate the paternalism that has defined settler-colonial Indigenous interactions throughout history; a stance to which Indigenous Peoples are emphatically resistant.

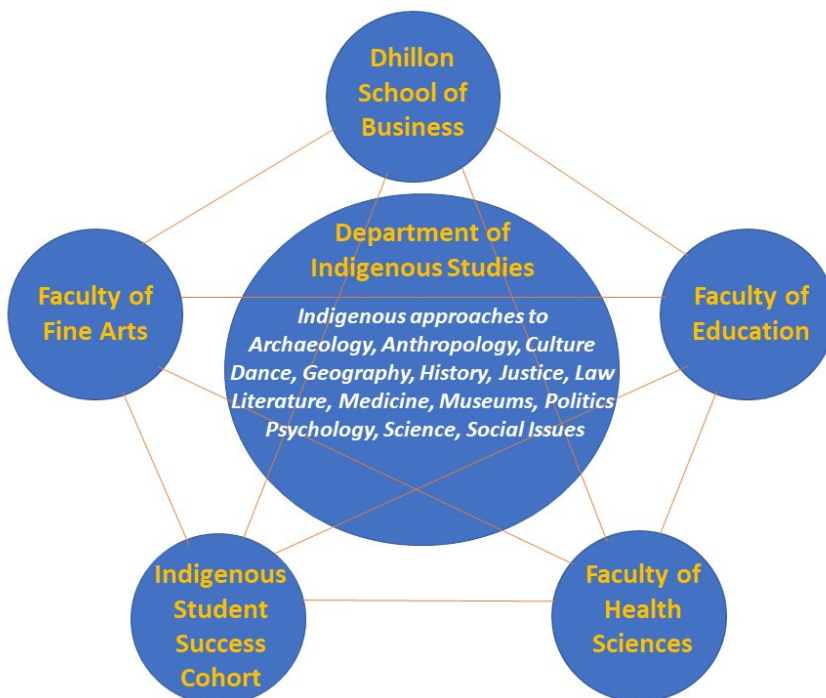


Figure 5. The role of the highly transdisciplinary Department of Indigenous Studies within *Innii*.

To be prepared for the challenges in meeting its mandate, the Department of Indigenous Studies urgently requires significant expansion to meet the needs of our students and reflect the university's stated commitment to Indigenization and the creation of the Indigenous Innovation Network Initiative. The Department of Indigenous Studies has steadfastly adhered to the philosophy articulated at its inception: to teach from Indigenous perspectives. Currently, however, the ethnic composition of the core faculty, and the peripheral nature of Indigenous faculty/educators as adjunct/associate or sessional instructors within the department, points to the urgent need for tenure-track Indigenous faculty and instructors within the department. This matches a need to increase Indigenous faculty and staff hires across the campus more broadly. Such a hiring initiative would **reflect** and **underscore** the university's commitment to the development and sustainability of the *Innii* network, and to the Indigenization and decolonization of the institution itself.

4.8 Indigenous Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Opportunities

The University of Lethbridge recently centralized its experiential learning programs under the CareerBridge banner. CareerBridge serves the entire University of Lethbridge student community with a strong focus on Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and the development of the MyExperience transcript. The Mastercard Foundation also has a strong focus on socioeconomic development for the Blackfoot Confederacy and has identified WIL as a primary vehicle for achieving positive educational and employment outcomes for Blackfoot and other Indigenous students. We are encouraged by the mutual interest of the University of Lethbridge and the Mastercard Foundation in supporting Indigenous WIL. We are also excited by mutual interest in microcredential program opportunities, which can increase access to educational pathways. *Innii* sees great value in institutional initiatives to support WIL and microcredentialing opportunities on our campus and will be a strong supporter as the UofL, CareerBridge and the Mastercard Foundation nourish WIL opportunities for our Indigenous students and graduates.

4.9 Transdisciplinary Research Centre

One of the primary objectives of *Innii* is to promote excellence in Indigenous-focused scholarship in all Faculties so that we become an international leader in Indigenous research and creative expression. The *Innii* membership consists of ten professors and two doctoral students, including research chairs and an Order of Canada recipient with diverse backgrounds in Indigenous research across four Faculties. Collectively, we believe that this effort shall lead to the eventual establishment of a funded, cross-Faculty, transdisciplinary research centre focused on Indigenous themes. They also recognize, however, that the success of such a research centre in promoting excellence at the University of Lethbridge depends on inclusive engagement of all faculty with expertise in Indigenous research and creative expression. We have outstanding scholars in fields outside of the Indigenous units themselves that would greatly contribute to such an initiative. We openly invite all faculty members who could contribute to an outstanding research centre or institute to work with us on this next endeavour over the coming years.

5. Risk Analysis

The risks associated with establishing an Indigenous Innovation Network Initiative can be summarized as follows:

- Increased pressure for resources on a limited institutional budget
- Increased demands on a small organization to fully serve all students, Faculties and service units
- Increased oversight requirements.

The benefits associated with establishing an Indigenous Innovation Network Initiative can be summarized as follows:

- Fostering indigenous student success
- Improving the coordination of Indigenous academic programming
- Promoting transdisciplinary Indigenous research excellence
- Contributing significantly to language preservation and revitalization
- Improving Indigenous employment outcomes through access to higher education, positive learning experiences and work-integrated learning opportunities
- Enhancing Indigenous alumni engagement
- Responding effectively and at the forefront of the Canadian institutional responses to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- Demonstrating academic leadership in the decolonization of programming and curriculum, including the incorporation of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and the promotion of Two-Eyed Seeing for Both Ways Knowing.
- Maintaining Canada and Alberta Treaty obligations
- Maintaining the obligations inherent with the name and Honour Song we hold on Blackfoot Territory
- Succeeding in a vision to ensure that the UofL becomes a leader in Indigenous student access, research scholarship, SoTL and alumni engagement

Risks can be mitigated by establishing a framework for *Innii* that recognizes a place for alternative systems of teaching and learning. In order for Reconciliation to take root, it is essential that the University of Lethbridge, understand and embrace the many perspectives of varying disciplines, shared through Indigenous and non-Indigenous lenses. Faculties in partnership with this delivery will enable a greater understanding and distribution of knowledge co-creating and co-sharing. Elders, alumni, teaching fellows, adjuncts, and secondments can supplement Indigenous instruction. The development of Indigenous breadth across disciplines will enhance critical thinking problem solving, and liberal education perspectives, engaging citizenship at all levels of the community.

Historically, we are complicit in maintaining the gaps in education and economics articulated in the TRC report, which echoes the findings of the RCAP and Ipperwash reports. To fail to act on the TRC-CTAs would further extend the gap for another generation. The University of Lethbridge can re-establish a competitive niche as one of the premiere post-secondary Indigenous Schools in Canada and North America. It is a matter of hearing the needs of Indigenous people and scholars

and providing the resources necessary to support a comprehensive and pervasive institutional Indigenous and reconciliatory strategy to benefit all.

Student success at University of Lethbridge depends on an institution willing to be judged as one of the premiere schools in which open, participatory and connected learning advances the conversations our graduates have with the Reconciling world. To increase student success, a sustainable Indigenous organizational structure is required to oversee the many elements to appeal to students through transdisciplinary learning. We believe that the *Innii* network model is the best way to accomplish this, while remaining adaptable in the context of future growth and restructuring needs. The University has identified enrolment as its greatest risk factor. Without a sustainable organizational structure to oversee Indigenous education as a strategic priority, enrolments may be hindered in the long-term in the fastest growing segment of our student body.

6. Conclusion

The Year 2020 will be remembered as a critical year for reflection on the impacts of colonialism on marginalized groups around the world. The time is now to honour our commitment to the Blackfoot, Métis and other Indigenous peoples who are part of our university community through the establishment of a network that will improve Indigenous academic programming and student success efforts at the University of Lethbridge – *Iniskim*. Dr. Leroy Little Bear and Mike Bruised Head have recommended that the appropriate name for such a network be *Innii*, given the significance of the buffalo to sustaining the Blackfoot people, just as Education will sustain and support the present and future generations.

Innii will embed Indigenous perspectives into our curriculum, help to preserve Blackfoot and other indigenous languages for cultural preservation, graduate informed and globally-engaged citizens with exposure to Indigenous knowledge, increase the number of Indigenous students and alumni, promote research excellence, augment our Indigenous work-integrated learning opportunity, instill alumni engagement, incorporate Elders as full faculty members and celebrate our leadership in contributing to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. To achieve these objectives requires a community of scholars working together with each unit serving as a pole in a tipi to produce a solid structure for future success in Indigenous scholarship and learning outcomes. Education is the new buffalo – *Innii*.

