Outreach initiatives within Indigenous communities “help demystify and reduce fear and anxiety and instead present university as a welcoming, positive, and possible place for Indigenous students.”

- Dolleen Manning, Indigenous PhD candidate

On January 24 and 25, 2013, Western’s Aboriginal Education and Employment Council (AEEC), the Office of the Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Students) including Indigenous Services, the Faculty of Social Science including First Nations Studies Department, as well as the Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Initiative (IWHI) collaborated to engage internal and external community stakeholders in three interconnected areas:

1. Indigenous community outreach and engagement;
2. Indigenous student and staff advancement;
3. Indigenous research and academic development.

**Talking Circle Approach**

Through a series of talking circles along with a written feedback submission process an estimated 160 stakeholders offered input to Western as part of the University’s strategic planning renewal process. The engagement involved First Nations leaders, local Aboriginal organizational leaders, Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, alumni, staff, and faculty members.

The talking circles were conducted by external facilitator Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux who is a national leader in Aboriginal postsecondary education.
Indigenous Community Outreach and Engagement

2. Start early and “light the fire” within Indigenous students in early grade levels by exposing them to various fields of study and professional career pathways.
3. Partner with the public education system.
4. Develop academic bridging/pre-university pathway courses.
5. Create a central online portal that highlights Indigenous programs, services, research and relations at Western.
6. Hold more Indigenous events at the University.
7. Hold more University courses and events in Indigenous communities.
8. Support Indigenous student voices within student initiatives across the University (e.g. within the Infinite Reach Métis group).
10. Encourage and support university representatives (staff, faculty, students and administrators) to get involved in local Aboriginal communities.

Indigenous Student Supports

1. Nurture an inclusive community at Western that fosters cross-cultural understandings about Indigenous matters through education and dialogue.
2. Acknowledge and support Indigenous Services as a core essential service to supporting the recruitment, retention, and advancement of Indigenous students at Western.
3. Develop an Aboriginal self-identification guideline and process to measure success over the long-term.
4. Address financial barriers and create more Aboriginal scholarships, grants, bursaries, and awards for Indigenous students at all levels.
5. Enhance Indigenous Services programs and services to include more cultural programming, peer mentoring, and student-led initiatives.
6. Develop pipeline mentoring opportunities for local Indigenous high school, undergraduate and graduate students.
7. Support Indigenous student-led initiatives (e.g. Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement (SAGE) group, First Nations Student Association (FNSA), Infinite Reach Métis group).
8. Advocate for Indigenous student voices within student initiatives across the University (e.g. within the University Student Council (USC), Society of Graduate Students (GOGS)).

Indigenize Curriculum – Across Disciplines

1. Acknowledge the roots of Canada through a commitment to Aboriginal communities and Indigenous Knowledge.
2. Contribute to restoration and sustainability of Indigenous Knowledge through programming and research priorities.
3. Support the educational priorities of local First Nations communities and organizations.
4. Embed Aboriginal perspectives, cultures, and value systems within courses and programs.

Recruitment and Hiring of Indigenous Staff and Faculty

1. Identify and utilize “best practices” for recruiting Indigenous staff and faculty across the institution.
2. Increase representation of Aboriginal employees at Western and establish long-term goals in this area.
3. Establish a protocol for hiring Indigenous-related positions (e.g. assembling an Aboriginal hiring advisory committee).

Retention Strategies

1. Promote and support the current Indigenous Staff and the Faculty Caucus.
2. Develop long-term succession plans for Indigenous-related positions.

Advancement

1. Establish proactive mentoring and cultural networks for Indigenous staff and faculty.
2. Acknowledge external service contributions of faculty in performance evaluation processes especially when working within Indigenous communities.

Establish Indigenous Research Priorities at Western

1. Create a Canada Research Chair for an Indigenous scholar.
2. Create post-doctoral scholarships in Indigenous research in various disciplines.

5. Encourage the development of more community-based programs such as Western’s Faculty of Education Masters of Education in Aboriginal Educational Leadership.
6. Create professional development training for all staff and faculty to gain understandings of Indigenous peoples, and increase capacity to work with Indigenous learners.

Indigenous Research Ethics

1. Educate Faculty on Indigenous research methodologies.
2. Ensure Indigenous research done through Western is accessible and includes a duty to disseminate research to Indigenous communities.
3. Educate Faculty on ethics when doing research with Indigenous communities.
4. Build opportunities for Faculty members to work with Indigenous communities and honour Indigenous communities’ autonomy by supporting the development of ethical protocols.

Institutional Implementation

1. Commit to Indigenous matters in the next University-wide Strategic Plan.
2. Introduce and coordinate system-wide planning through a 5-year Indigenous Strategic Plan.
3. Allocate institutional resources to initiatives within the Indigenous Strategic Plan.
4. Develop long-term plans to create an Office for Indigenous Inclusion/Initiatives that includes an Indigenous Research Ethics Committee.
5. Revitalize Aboriginal Education and Employment Council (AEEC) terms of reference and actively recruit additional members.