

# Tourism Curricula and Indigenous Learning Outcomes

Marion Joppe\*

School of Hospitality, Food and Tourism Management, University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada

## ABSTRACT

Although hospitality and tourism students in business programs are taught to develop and market product that meets the needs of various demand segments by playing on the “authentic” cultural and heritage elements of destinations, they are rarely exposed to underlying justice and ethics concerns, especially as they pertain to Indigenous populations. In a settler colonial country such as Canada, it is imperative that students are exposed to the underlying justice and ethics concerns of commoditizing cultural and heritage elements of destinations, especially as they pertain to Indigenous populations. This paper takes a closer look at the process of developing and embedding Indigenous Learning Outcomes in a tourism business program and the underlying principles for designing a more inclusive community engagement process. The case is that of the Tourism-Travel and Eco-Adventure program at Confederation College in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada.

**Keywords:** Tourism curriculum; Indigenous learning outcomes; Indigenization; Canada

## INTRODUCTION

The author would like to start by acknowledging the dedication and generosity of the Negahneewin Council members, who gifted the Indigenous Learning Outcomes (ILOs) (Table 2) that are the subject of this paper to Confederation College in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. The College is situated on the shores of Lake Superior which is in Robinson-Superior Treaty territory and is the traditional home of the Anishnaabeg.

The release of the report by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [1] raised awareness of the trauma Indigenous people have suffered from colonization, residential schooling and loss of cultural identity. In response to its calls to action, Indigenous culture is slowly gathering momentum as an important study area, not only in its own right, but as an adjunct to many others [2,3]. To date, the main efforts by post-graduate institutions have concentrated on increasing Indigenous representation among faculty, staff and students, at times with the creation of centres that provide support services to Indigenous students and/or a variety of Indigenous studies courses [4,5] refer to as Indigenous inclusion. For non-Indigenous students these courses are rarely part of their core curricula. Where hospitality and tourism programs exist at the post-graduate level, they tend to be concentrated in faculties of business or management due to this industry’s growing economic importance globally since tourism now generates 10.3% of world GDP [6].

Although tourism would appear to be an obvious study area for embedding an appreciation of traditional knowledge and processes [7], no university level programs had made a deliberate effort to develop Indigenous cultural competency in its students [8]. However,

Confederation College in Thunder Bay, Canada was identified as a leader in Indigenous education and that is in the process of implementing a comprehensive vision for the transformation of the institution informed by Indigenous community engagement and its learning community, with the two-year Tourism Diploma being the most advanced in this regard. The purpose of this study was therefore to document the process, challenges encountered and overcome as well as perceptions of effectiveness of the ILO implementation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In Canada, the interest in Indigenous tourism by both governments at all levels eager to promote a ‘novel’ product and Indigenous communities themselves looking for economic development opportunities has grown significantly in recent years [9-11], to the point where demand is outpacing the availability of staff and the development of infrastructure, increasing the risk of cultural appropriation and inauthentic experiences [12]. However, the country has only recently taken significant steps to decolonize its post-secondary sector [3].

**Correspondence to:** Marion Joppe, School of Hospitality, Food and Tourism Management, University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada, E-mail: [mjoppe@uoguelph.ca](mailto:mjoppe@uoguelph.ca)

**Received:** January 21, 2021, **Accepted:** February 04, 2021, **Published:** February 11, 2021

**Citation:** Joppe M (2021) Tourism Curricula and Indigenous learning Outcomes. J Tourism Hospit. S1:003.

**Copyright:** © 2021 Joppe M. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Table 1: Indigenous learning outcomes.

Outcome	Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
1. Relate principles of Indigenous knowledge to career field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cosmos/Creation stories</li> <li>• Decision-making by consensus</li> <li>• Pimatisiwin principles</li> <li>• Justice</li> <li>• Traditional dispute resolution</li> <li>• Traditional medicines</li> </ul>	1.1. Examine the key elements of North American Indigenous and Western worldviews 1.2. Investigate Indigenous approaches to decision making 1.3. Compare Indigenous and Euro-Canadian approaches to justice 1.4. Examine traditional approaches to health and wellness 1.5. Relate principles of Indigenous knowledge to community wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciate the importance of historical context</li> <li>• Recognize and respect people's diversity</li> <li>• Openness to individual differences</li> <li>• Be socially responsible and contribute to your community</li> <li>• Willingness to learn</li> <li>• Values lifelong learning</li> </ul>
2. Analyze the impact of colonialism on Indigenous communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post-colonial theory and decolonization</li> <li>• Marginalization and dispossession of Indigenous communities</li> <li>• Residential school experiences</li> <li>• Agricultural displacement of Indigenous farming families</li> <li>• Self-determination principles</li> </ul>	2.1. Contrast perceptions of colonialism 2.2. Relate colonial policies to contemporary Indigenous contexts 2.3. Analyze examples of assimilationist policies in relation to Indigenous families 2.4. Analyze contemporary assertions of Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciate the importance of historical context</li> <li>• Recognize and respect people's diversity</li> <li>• Openness to individual differences</li> <li>• Be socially responsible and contribute to your community</li> <li>• Willingness to learn</li> <li>• Values lifelong learning</li> </ul>
3. Explain the relationship between land and identity within Indigenous societies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principle of responsibility among Indigenous societies</li> <li>• The Anishnaabe Seven Grandfather Teachings</li> <li>• Connection between land and identity</li> </ul>	3.1. Apply concepts of responsibility to community development 3.2. Create a code of ethics based on the Anishnaabe Seven Grandfather Teachings 3.3. Relate examples of oral tradition of Indigenous people in relation to the land 3.4. Investigate the significance of traditional ecological knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciate the importance of historical context</li> <li>• Recognize and respect people's diversity</li> <li>• Openness to individual difference</li> <li>• Be socially responsible and contribute to your community</li> <li>• Willingness to learn</li> <li>• Values lifelong learning</li> </ul>
4. Compare Indigenous and Canadian perceptions of inclusion and diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographics: local, regional, provincial, national</li> <li>• Indigenous views of inclusion</li> <li>• Colonialism, settler governments and immigration</li> <li>• Multiculturalism in Canada</li> <li>• Social change</li> </ul>	4.1. Examine inclusion and diversity from an Indigenous perspective 4.2. Analyze Canadian perceptions of inclusion and diversity 4.3. Explain the effect of Canada's multicultural policies on Indigenous people 4.4. Examine theories of social change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciate the importance of historical context</li> <li>• Recognize and respect people's diversity</li> <li>• Openness to individual differences</li> <li>• Be socially responsible and contribute to your community</li> <li>• Willingness to learn</li> <li>• Values lifelong learning</li> </ul>
5. Analyze racism in relation to Indigenous peoples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government legislation</li> <li>• Constitutional recognition of Indigenous peoples</li> <li>• The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</li> <li>• Representation and the media</li> <li>• The meaning of privilege</li> </ul>	5.1. Investigate the concept of racism 5.2. Analyze legislation and government policies related to racism 5.3. Examine current and historical examples of racism in relation to Indigenous peoples 5.4. Examine common misrepresentations of Indigenous people 5.5. Analyze the concept of privilege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciate the importance of historical context</li> <li>• Recognize and respect people's diversity</li> <li>• Openness to individual differences</li> <li>• Be socially responsible and contribute to your community</li> <li>• Willingness to learn</li> <li>• Values lifelong learning</li> </ul>

6. Generate strategies for reconciling Indigenous and Canadian relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political discourse between Indigenous people and various levels of government</li> <li>Political advocacy by Indigenous leaders and communities</li> <li>Truth and Reconciliation Commission</li> <li>Approaches to Indigenous community development and partnerships</li> </ul>	6.1. Describe current formalized approaches to reconciliation 6.2. Analyze the effects of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 6.3. Distinguish between self-determination and self-governance 6.4. Formulate strategies towards the reconciliation of Indigenous and Canadian relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appreciate the importance of historical context</li> <li>Recognize and respect people's diversity</li> <li>Openness to individual differences</li> <li>Be socially responsible and contribute to your community</li> <li>Willingness to learn</li> <li>Values lifelong learning</li> </ul>
7. Formulate approaches for engaging Indigenous community partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indigenous community organizations</li> <li>Ethical approach to working with Indigenous communities</li> <li>Individual and community needs</li> <li>Alternative approaches that reflect community development principles</li> </ul>	7.1. Examine local community organizations and resources 7.2. Analyze Indigenous community partnerships 7.3. Examine approaches for working with Indigenous communities 7.4. Prepare a principled approach to working with Indigenous partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appreciate the importance of historical context</li> <li>Recognize and respect people's diversity</li> <li>Openness to individual differences</li> <li>Be socially responsible and contribute to your community</li> <li>Willingness to learn</li> <li>Values lifelong learning</li> </ul>

Table 2: Indigenous learning outcomes tourism-travel and ecotourism program.

Indigenous Learning Outcome	#Of courses with Indigenous Learning Outcomes taught				
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Total
1. Relate principles of Indigenous knowledge to career field	2	2	0	3	7
2. Analyze the impact of colonialism on Indigenous communities	2	0	0	1	3
3. Explain the relationship between land and identity within Indigenous societies	1	1	2	3	7
4. Compare Indigenous and Canadian perceptions of inclusion and diversity	2	0	0	1	3
5. Analyze racism in relation to Indigenous peoples	1	0	1	1	3
6. Generate strategies for reconciling Indigenous and Canadian relations	1	0	0	1	2
7. Formulate approaches for engaging Indigenous community partners	2	0	2	2	6

Yet research has shown that tourism curricula pay scant attention to familiarizing students with the country's diverse number of Indigenous populations and their different ways of life and worldviews, leading to cultural appropriation and misrepresentation when promoting this "product" [8]. There is little understanding, for instance, that each of the traditional owners may have their own specific protocols that need to be observed to build a respectful relationship. In a multicultural settler society such as Canada's this is complicated by the fact that many of the more recent immigrants bring their own understanding, stereotypes and worldviews to the encounters with Indigenous peoples.

In the province of Ontario, students can gain some exposure to tourism (which can include hospitality and food service) in high school, but it is largely a subject matter taught at the 2, 3 and 4-year level in college and at the undergraduate and graduate level in universities. While courses can be found in the social sciences, the vast majority are taught with a focus on the profitability of the supply side as well as tourist demand, destination marketing and product development. It is here that the apparent lack of appreciation of Indigenous worldviews is exacerbated for tourism students. While concepts such as cultural commodification (seen to be a negative) are part of the teaching of the subject matter, students are not taught about Indigenous rights in tourism nor are they prepared with any strategies as to how to avoid the appropriation of cultures or how to approach Indigenous peoples respectfully. Although

commodification is viewed as an all-pervasive characteristic of modern capitalism, and tourism is subject to the same general principles of capitalist consumer culture [13], this approach is particularly problematic when it comes to Indigenous cultures. Since colonialism entails unequal power relations and often results in Indigenous peoples' forced disconnection from land, culture and community, the resultant trauma and loss of identity can lead to a sense of powerlessness and low self-esteem. According to Jamal [14]: "power relations play out through touristic and other practices in everyday life that can contribute to oppression, domination, misrecognition as well as stereotyping and stigmatization of diverse cultural groups."

## METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in the form of an inductive single case study to fully capture participants' diverse perceptions through a series of interviews and focus groups with Negahneewin Council members, administrators, faculty and staff, supplemented by focus groups with students and Program Advisory Board members. Research participants were recruited through purposeful and snowball sampling.

### The case: Confederation College

Established in 1967, Confederation College has a main campus

in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada and eight regional campuses. It is the only publicly funded college in Northwestern Ontario, an area covering 550,000 square kilometres (almost as large as Spain and Portugal combined). The city's population of about 100,000 includes approximately 13.5% self-identified Indigenous people [15]. The main campus has a student population of approximately 3,200 students with about 800 self-identified Indigenous and 1,000 international students. There are 54 First Nations communities and key advisors in the territory covered by Confederation College.

Negahneewin (Ojibwe for "Leading the way") Council, a group of indigenous knowledge-keepers, advocates, and engaged community players and a partner with Confederation College in providing programs and services to Indigenous students, gifted the College with seven ILOs in 2007 (Table 2) [16]. Each of the ILOs also have defined associated knowledge, skills and attitude. Formally adopted by the College in 2012 as part of the "Negahneewin Vision" – strategic directions to the year 2022 –, work has been ongoing to embed the ILOs across all programs. The Vision also addresses the need for all students to leave the College "as global citizens with an understanding of Indigenous worldviews" and the need to "respect and celebrate diversity towards social justice".

The two-year, four semester (level) Tourism Diploma in the School of Business, Hospitality and Media Arts is considered one of the most successful with respect to embedding the ILOs in its courses, and today is the only program to have embedded all seven (Table 1). Its courses cover topics including adventure expeditions, tour, cruise and airline operations, business fundamentals, marketing and selling, sustainability and ecotourism.

## DISCUSSION

There are three distinct perceptions about embedding ILOs: those of administrators, faculty and staff, and students/alumni. Administrators generally understand the need to go beyond Indigenous inclusion to reconciliation indigenization which advocates for increased Indigeneity in all its forms and ultimately decolonial indigenization. However, current faculty and staff who are predominantly non-Indigenous do not seem ready to acknowledge such a shift nor are they ready to embrace other ways of knowing and being as part of their own courses. The student/alumni perspective is much more nuanced than that of either of the two other groups. Their level of knowledge about Canada's colonial history, Indigenous culture and traditions is an important determinant of their attitude towards the ILOs. Some of the students that now identify as Indigenous did not grow up in that culture, but the College's setting, architectural details, interior design and exposure to the ILOs have all contributed to giving them a sense of pride and a desire to learn more about that aspect of their heritage. For non-Indigenous students who grew up in Canada, where they attended particularly secondary school plays an important role in how much they know about Canada's colonial history and policies of forced acculturation. Those that attended school in the Prairies and western provinces seem far more knowledgeable than those from central and eastern Canada. Finally, every international student declared themselves to have been unaware that there were Indigenous peoples living in Canada and had never even thought about colonialism. This widely divergent knowledge base explains why so many students—echoed by faculty, staff and administrators—talked about the need for one or more foundational courses that

would be mandatory.

## CONCLUSION

The goal of this research was to provide a deeper understanding of the process of developing and embedding ILOs in a tourism program through its documentation, and to identify challenges encountered and overcome as well as perceptions of effectiveness of the ILO implementation. The work to develop ILOs must be a grass-roots effort, involving the breadth of local Indigenous tribes. The great diversity among First Nations requires each institution to work with its own ancestral owners of the land on which it is situated to achieve common ground and understanding. Although other institutions may be interested in these ILOs, they belong to the Negahneewin College/Council who gifted them to Confederation College; they cannot simply be adopted by other institutions.

Confederation College's Tourism Diploma recognises that land-based learning is essential in Indigenous tourism. Field trips, short visits, and learning in outdoor spaces where students can be hosted and guided by Indigenous people or at least gain a deeper understanding of the realities of "living on the land" contribute greatly to gaining respect for different cultural values and beliefs and shift away from Eurocentric approaches to knowledge development. All of these aspects have been built in at various stages of the two-year Diploma and contribute greatly to achieving the ILOs in their entirety.

## FUNDING

This work was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Institutional [grant numbers 430452, 430465].

## REFERENCES

1. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future. 2015.
2. Battiste M. Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*. 2013;60(3):615-618.
3. Morcom L, Freeman K. Teaching truth and reconciliation in Canada- The perfect place to begin is right where a teacher stands. *The Conversation*. 2019.
4. Pidgeon M. More than a checklist: Meaningful Indigenous inclusion in higher education. *Social Inclusion*. 2016; 4(1): 77-91.
5. Gaudry A, Lorenz D. Indigenization as inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization: Navigating the different visions for indigenizing the Canadian Academy. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*. 2018;14(3):218-227.
6. WTTC. World Travel and Tourism Council. 2020.
7. Young T, Pearce A, Butler K, Gross MJ. CAUTHE 2011: National Conference: Tourism: Creating a Brilliant Blend. Adelaide, SA, University of South Australia. School of Management, 2011: 842-849.
8. Joppe M, Thomas-Francois K, Hayhoe MA. University best practice and Indigenous human rights in tourism. *Tour Edu*. 2016; 26-29.
9. Destination Canada. Unlocking the Potential of Canada's Visitor Economy. Vancouver. 2018.
10. Fiser A, Hermus G. Canada's Indigenous Tourism Sector: Insights and Economic Impacts. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada. 2019.
11. ITAC. Accelerating Indigenous tourism growth in Canada. Five-year strategic plan update. Vancouver. 2019.

12. Zeidler M. Demand for Indigenous tourism outpacing availability of staff, creation of infrastructure, CBC News, 2019.
13. Watson GL, Kopachevsky JP. Interpretations of tourism as commodity. *Annals of tourism research*. 1994; 21(3):643-660.
14. Jamal T. *Justice and Ethics in Tourism*. Routledge. 2019.
15. Statistics Canada. Distribution of the population aged 25 to 64 (total and with Aboriginal identity), by highest certificate, diploma or degree and age group. 2016.
16. Joppe M, Shen Y, Veltri G. Confederation College "Reconciliation education". 2020.