

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT IN THE QUEBEC UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

— Tool developed as part of the work of the working group on Indigenous realities of the Quebec Interuniversity Network on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (RIQEDI).



DRAFT

Élodie Bouchard, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Officer at the University of Quebec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue and Coordinator of the Working Group on Indigenous realities of the Quebec Interuniversity Network in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (RIQEDI)

Agathe Riallan, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisor at the Faculty of Science of the University of Sherbrooke

COORDINATION

Élodie Bouchard

Agathe Riallan

Katherine Robitaille, Project Manager, Quebec Interuniversity Network in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

COLLABORATION

Hugo Asselin, Professor and Director of the School of Native Studies at UQAT

Suzy Basile, Professor at the School of Native Studies and Canada Research Chair on Indigenous Women’s Issues at UQAT

Édith Bélanger, Wolahkomikonikewin, Research and Claims Consultant

Sébastien Brodeur-Girard, Professor at the School of Native Studies at UQAT

Francis Verreault-Paul, Chief of First Nations Relations at the Nikanite First Nations Centre of the University of Quebec in Chicoutimi

ARTWORKS

Eruoma Awashish, Atikamekw Nehirowisiw Artist from Opitciwan

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Onaki Créations

FINANCIAL PARTNERS

Ivado

Quebec Interuniversity Network on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (RIQEDI)

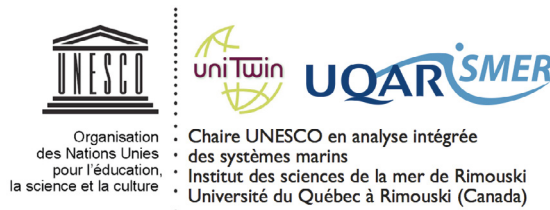
Equity, Diversity, Equity, Intersectionality Institute (EDI2)

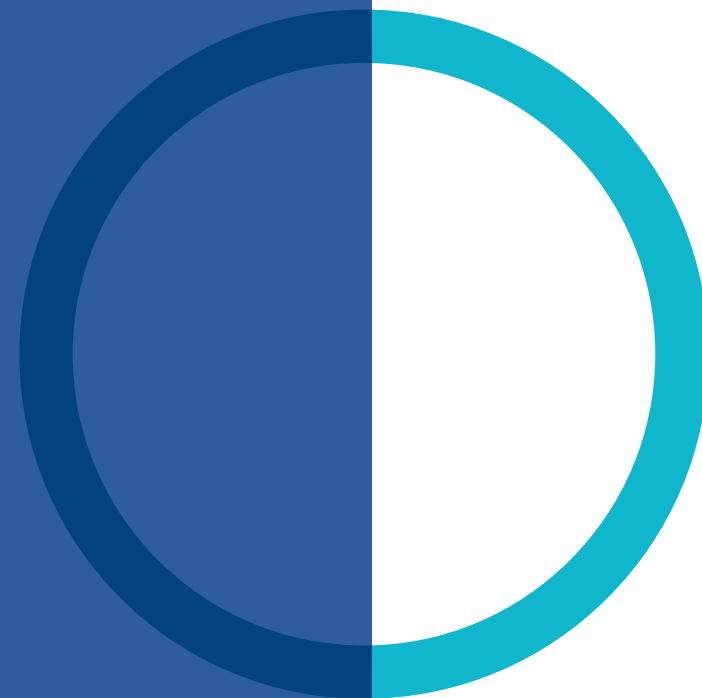
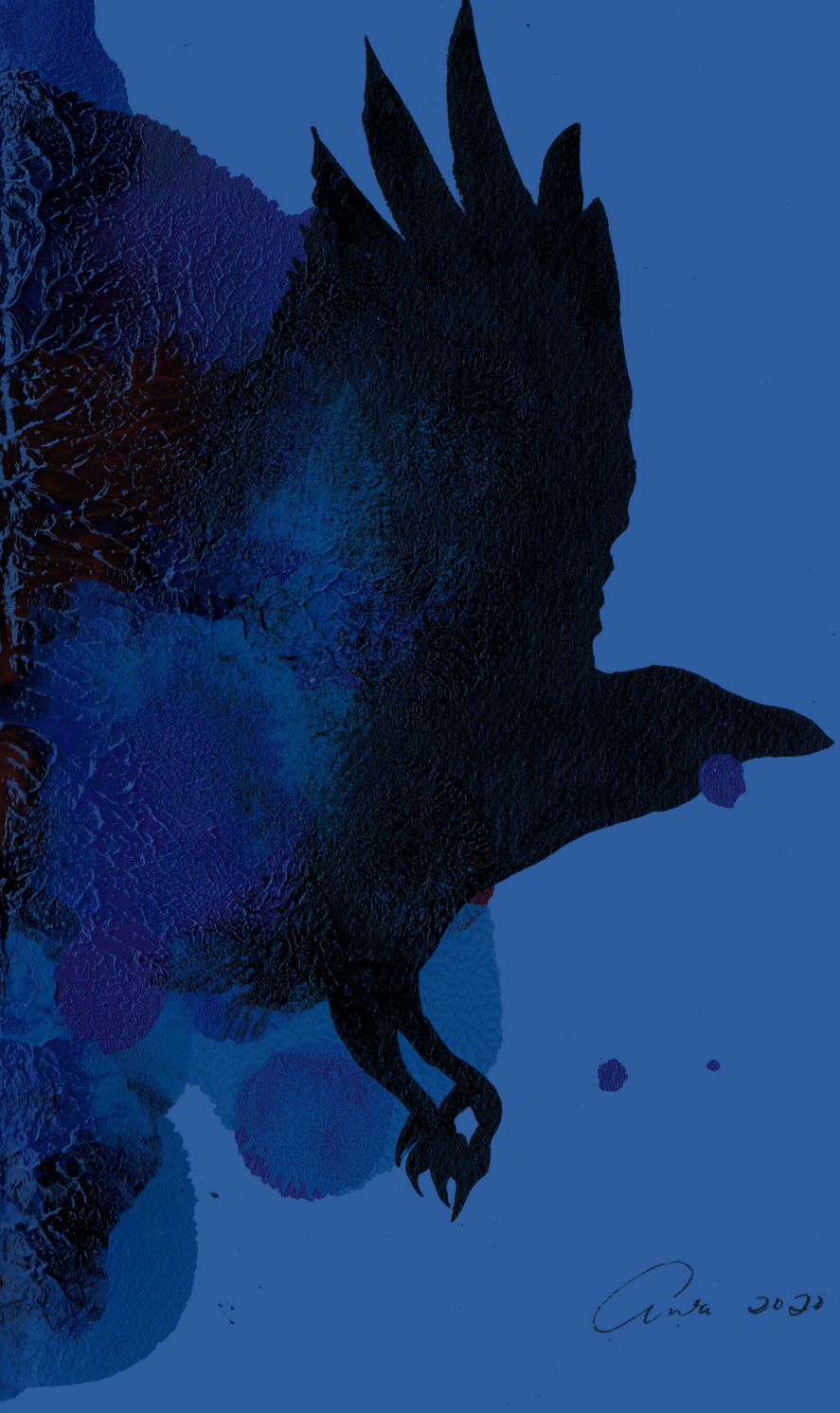
SPONSORS

UNESCO Chair in Integrated Analysis of Marine Systems

Rimouski Institute of Marine Sciences

University of Quebec at Rimouski





— This tool is intended primarily for members of the Quebec's university community who, as part of their teaching or research activities, wish to present a land acknowledgment statement, but it can certainly be used in other contexts as well.

It should enable you to bring this matter to your respective circles in a more sensitive and informed manner.

○ APPROACH

—

In September 2019, when the RIQEDI working group on Indigenous realities was created, the first tool that members started working on was the leaflet on land acknowledgment.

More and more people in academic institutions were expressing their desire to be guided on how to do this and the tool was intended to help them do this.

Therefore, the initial idea was to create a guide to accompany the members of the university community in writing a land acknowledgment evolved, one step at a time. As the group's efforts progressed, the leaflet changed.

The perception of the tool was changing as we learned and interacted with each other. The process finally made the members of the group aware of the need to better reflect, within this tool, the depth of the relationship that Indigenous Peoples have with the territory and the nature of the colonial roots of the territorial issues.

Lastly, the group modestly wanted to create a tool to gather and consolidate what the last year and a half of work and consultation has revealed on the issue of land acknowledgment.

CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO THE TERRITORY

The intrinsic link between Indigenous identity and the territory

Indigenous Peoples have a close relationship with their ancestral homelands and make it a central element in the experience of their identity. In fact, based on a holistic understanding of the environment, Indigenous Peoples consider spirit and substance to be on an equal level, seeing themselves as part of the territory (Asselin, 2015). This is reflected in the names of various communities. For example, «Abitibiwinnik» is the name that designates the Algonquins of Pikogan and means «people from the tip of Lake Abitibi», where the community met almost 6,000 years ago (First Nation Council of Abitibiwinni, 2021) .

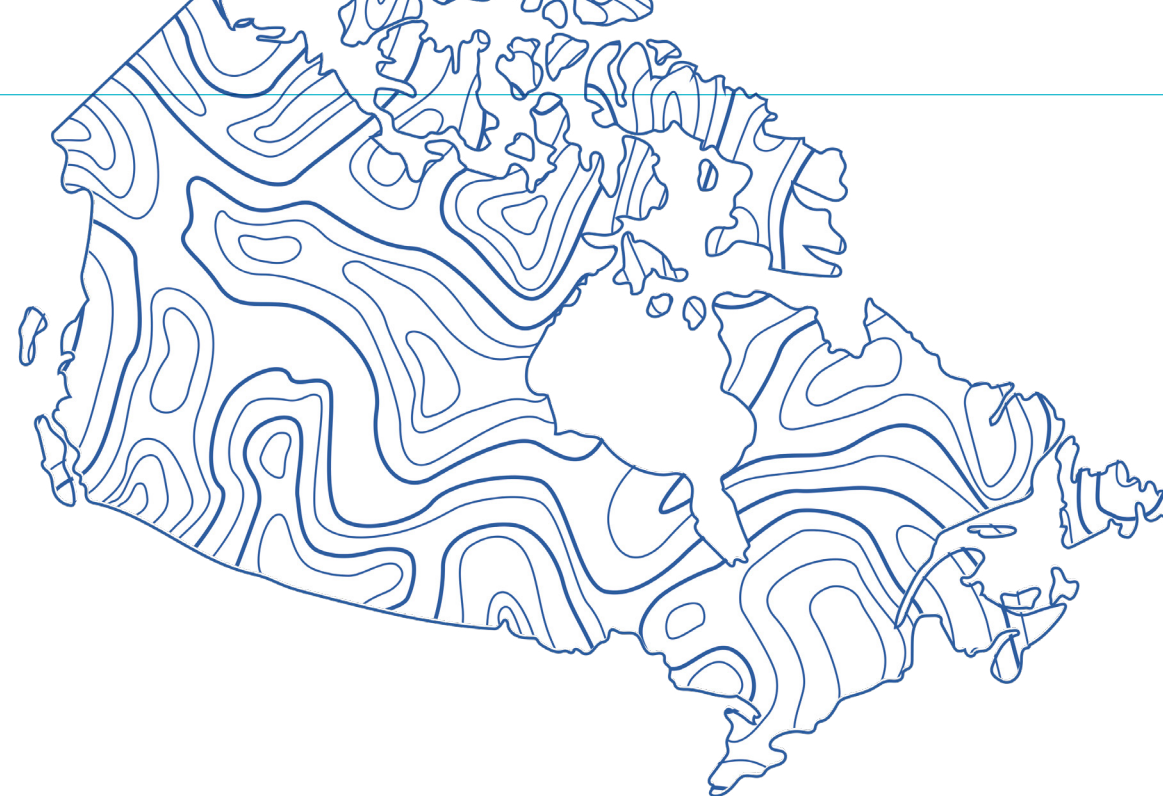
Also, «Wolastoqiyik», which refers to the Indigenous people living on the shores of the Saint-Jean River in New Brunswick and Maine, and the Saint-Laurent River in Quebec, means «people of the beautiful river» (Bélanger and Wylde, 2020).

These two examples illustrate the nature of the link that exists between Indigenous identity and the territory and «like in any relationship, nothing is fixed, neither spatially nor temporally - landscapes evolve and the link to the territory is consequently continually «renegotiated», individually and collectively» [Our translation] Landry, 2020). So, even if the territory is not the only component of their identity, it is necessary to understand the effect of colonial territorial policies which, by depriving the Indigenous peoples of their lands, have at the same time deprived them of part of their identity.

IN THIS CONTEXT, A LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT STATEMENT MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT AND ADDRESS THE IDENTITY-BASED NATURE AND HISTORY OF THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TERRITORY OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- [The link between Indigenous identity and the territory](#) (article)
- [Link of the natives to the territory](#) (thesis, French only)
- [Indigenous forest knowledge](#) (chapter)



THE RELATIVITY OF TERRITORIAL BOUNDARIES

The delimitation of territories stemming from the colonial interpretation, based on the concepts of the nation-state and private property, is different from that practised by the Indigenous people, characterised by systems of social interaction and by the intertwining of lands shared between the different communities.

As a result, the mapping of Indigenous territories often shows fixed and impervious borders, reflecting a colonial, limited and restrictive vision that does not reflect the territorial realities of Indigenous peoples.

The maps you may need to consult to identify the Indigenous territory on which your institution is located may be incorrect, incomplete, and may create or cause tension between some Indigenous communities whose relationships cross the territorial boundaries outlined on the maps.

IN THIS CONTEXT, IT IS VITAL TO ENSURE THAT THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES CONCERNED BY A DESIGNATION OF TERRITORY ARE CONSULTED AND THAT THE SPECIFICITY OF THEIR TERRITORIAL REALITY IS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

FURTHER INFORMATION



- [The consequences of territorial deprivation \(book\)](#)
- [The Intertwining and Negotiation of Indigenous Territories \(book\)](#)
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission Reports](#)

THE MANY MANIFESTATIONS OF COLONIAL DOMINATION

—
The consequences of colonialism on the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people go far beyond the question of appropriation of the territory and its wealth.

In effect, according to the report by the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the treatment of Indigenous peoples as a result of colonial policies constituted cultural genocide in the form of territorial deprivation, as well as identity and politics.

Furthermore, the impact of colonialism, entrenched in Canada's history, continues to be felt by members of Indigenous Peoples, who are still victims of it.

IN THIS CONTEXT, THE RECOGNITION OF THE FACT THAT AN INSTITUTION IS LOCATED ON INDIGENOUS TERRITORY IS ONLY ONE OF THE ACTIONS THAT NEED TO BE TAKEN IN ORDER TO MEANINGFULLY ENGAGE WITH THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND IN THE NECESSARY PATH OF RECONCILIATION.

FURTHER INFORMATION



- Manifestations of colonial domination and the balancing of relationships with Indigenous peoples (article, French only)

○ CLARIFY CERTAIN KEY CONCEPTS

—
Land acknowledgment must be part of a broader institutional approach.

For example, here are some key concepts that universities can use in the process of establishing a relationship balance with Indigenous peoples.



CULTURAL SECURITY

—
Viewed as a tool for social justice and a driver of social change, a cultural empowerment approach is about becoming aware of and challenging unequal power relationships that exist for Indigenous people at the individual, family, community and social levels.

«[It] must [also] necessarily involve a shared and social aim, on the part of public and governmental institutions to recognise and accept difference, exceptionality and Indigenous expertise» (Lévesque, 2017: 12). A culturally safe environment allows each person to feel that their unique cultural background is respected and that they are free to be themselves without being judged, singled out or called upon to speak for all members of their group (Wilson, 2018).

DECOLONISATION

—

The process of deconstructing colonial ideologies that provide a sense of superiority to Western ideas and approaches. On the one hand, it requires dismantling the structures that legitimise the status quo and fighting against unequal power dynamics.

On the other hand, it is about valuing and reinvigorating Indigenous knowledge and approaches, and breaking down prejudices about Indigenous people that are inherited from the colonial era (Wilson, 2018).

INDEGINISATION

—

An approach that involves making «conscious efforts (...) to integrate Indigenous Peoples, their philosophies, knowledge and cultures into relevant strategic plans, governance roles, curriculum development and review, research and professional development» (CACUSS, 2018 : 5).

FURTHER INFORMATION



- A guide to indigenization of post-secondary institutions
- Report on the indigenization of higher education



FIELD OF ACTION

ACTION 1: IDENTIFY YOUR INTENTIONS AND MOTIVATIONS

In developing a statement of land acknowledgment, it is essential to ask yourself why you are doing so, to ensure that your statement is meaningful and respectful.

This action must be marked by humility and critical reflection. While the procedures for land acknowledgment can be stimulated by an external requirement (e.g. granting bodies), we recommend that you deepen the reflection within your institution regarding your relations with Indigenous Peoples and the benefits of cultural diversity.

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS THAT CAN ALSO HELP YOU TO ESTABLISH YOUR LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

What kind of activity requires a declaration?

An academic institution is a place where many different types of research and teaching activities take place. It is therefore important that each person and group writing a land acknowledgment statement thinks about the context and type of activity where it will be relevant to introduce it (e.g. press conference, symposium, round table, course, etc.).

Who should make the declaration?

In an era of academic delocalisation, interdisciplinarity and internationalisation, it must be acknowledged that academic activities sometimes have several different home locations and involve parties from different backgrounds. This raises the question of the roots of land acknowledgment. Therefore, it is important to think about who will be doing the land acknowledgment and the context and adapt your statement accordingly. For example, at a conference where the opening address

is given by the president, will only that person make the statement or would you prefer that each speaker make a statement before speaking based on their own experience?

When do I have to make a declaration?

It is important to ask yourself when the land acknowledgment will be delivered according to the duration and the programme of the event (e.g. only at the beginning of the activity? Every day? Every part of a conference?).

FURTHER INFORMATION



- Watch [this short humorous video](#) to better understand the limits of land acknowledgment statements

ACTION 2 : POSITIONING YOURSELF

—

In order to meaningfully recognise the traditional territories of the Indigenous Peoples whom you live and work on, it is important to first gain a true understanding of how your relationship with the territory and the Indigenous Peoples is informed by the legacies of colonialism. In fact, the recognition of territory must be understood as being relational, which means that it must be an opportunity not only to name the territory you are on, but also to position yourself (as a guest, for example) and to open up channels for dialogue.

As such, each statement should be adapted to the context and to the person making the statement.

We therefore recommend that you:

1. Learn about the history and realities of Indigenous Peoples, keeping in mind that education is a lifelong process that must be continually renewed.
2. Identify the territory you are in, taking care to use sources recognised by the communities and to verify the information with the local Indigenous communities and organisations

To undertake the work of identifying the Indigenous territory/territories of your institution, you can approach the peoples and nations concerned. For mapping information on Indigenous and treaty rights in Canada, you can consult the Indigenous and Treaty Rights Information System (ITRS), which provides information on the land claims of Indigenous Peoples.

Lastly, although the legitimacy of this tool is disputed, here is a map developed by the Indigenous organisation Native Land in collaboration with the Indigenous communities concerned: native-land.ca.

As stated on the home page of the site, this map does not represent - and does not intend to represent - the official or legal borders of any Indigenous territory. Rather, it serves to illustrate territorial overlaps and the fluidity of borders.

ACTION 3 :

FORMULATE A LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

—

To create a declaration of land acknowledgment, you must go through the following steps:

1. Identify the Indigenous territory/territories where you are located.
2. Explain how you or your institution, depending on the context, relate to this territory and the Indigenous peoples who are inhabiting it.

If you want to go further, it may be relevant to consider the following points :

3. Determine the intentions and motivations behind your land acknowledgment .

4. Present how the rights of Indigenous peoples relate to the context of your statement. It is possible to mention, in particular, issues specific to the territory that concerns you (see the example of the University of Maine in the section on action 5).

Recognition of territory is often rather brief and is usually given at the beginning of a meeting or event. While typically done in the context of a public activity, it can also be done in official communications, in email signatures, on a website, on a building (inscription, plaque, artwork), etc.

Consideration of language and pronunciation

Language is an important element of identity for many Indigenous Peoples, often even for those who were forced to abandon their language as a result of colonial policies. So when you make a statement of land acknowledgment verbally, in a formal speech for example, it is essential to practise pronouncing Indigenous names correctly.

Furthermore, beyond the context of your recognition of territory, it would be useful to learn one or more Indigenous languages and their proper pronunciation, in the context of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032 declared by the UN last January.

This decade aims to contribute to the preservation, revitalisation and promotion of Indigenous languages, which are currently facing serious threats of extinction.

ACTION 4 : OPEN DIALOGUE

—

Land acknowledgment is a privileged moment to give a voice to Indigenous individuals, families and communities, to those whose side of the story has not been heard, and to value Indigenous traditional knowledge.

Therefore, it is recommended to consult the communities concerned in your territorial declaration to see how they receive your proposal, respecting the fact that within the same community opinions may differ from one person to another and that if you are on a territory of interest to several communities or peoples, you will need more than one opinion.

It is equally important to pay close attention to the authors of the sources you are referring to and to make maximum use of resources created by and with Indigenous people.

By doing so, you will make a tangible contribution to the creation of a balanced relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

Develop contacts in Indigenous communities and organisations in your area.



To help you, consult [the map of First Nations and Inuit in Quebec](#).

ACTION 5 : GET INSPIRED

As part of your approach, it would be advisable to keep up to date with what has been developed in the various educational institutions in terms of land acknowledgment. It might be helpful to analyse different wordings and develop a critical view of what has been done so far.

CANADIAN DIRECTORY

This guide presents the forms of land acknowledgment that have been developed in Canadian educational institutions, listed by province. So you can take inspiration from what has been done elsewhere or build on what your university has produced.



Consult the [First Nations and Traditional Territories Recognition Guide](#).

Some examples in a university context that deserve special attention:

- [Concordia University](#) – the institution has taken care to explain and justify its approach and its declaration of recognition in a comprehensive manner on its website, which illustrates a thorough and transparent approach. It has also provided the spoken pronunciation for many of the Indigenous language statements.
- [University of Toronto](#) – the institution allows the community to deepen their knowledge of Indigenous realities by providing links to additional resources to those who visit the land recognition page.
- [University of Ottawa](#) – the institution provides the audio version of the land recognition translated entirely into Anicinapemowin (Algonquin language).
- [University of Maine](#) – the institution took care to mention territorial issues that are still relevant in its land acknowledgment, which was carried out in collaboration with the surrounding Indigenous communities.

BIBLIO- GRAPHY

Asselin, H. (2015). Indigenous forest knowledge. Dans Peh, K., R. Corlett et Y. Bergeron (dir.). Routledge Handbook of Forest Ecology (1er éd., pp. 588-589). Earthscan.

Canadian Association of University Professors, First Nations and Traditional Territories Recognition Guide. <https://www.caut.ca/fr/content/guide-de-reconnaissance-des-premieres-nations-et-des-territoires-traditionnels>

Bélanger, É. and C. Wilde. (2020, December). Indigenous territories [conference]. Training offered by the working group on Indigenous realities of the Quebec Interuniversity Network in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (RIQEDI).

Brodeur-Girard, S. (2020, October). Establishing a relationship balance with Indigenous people. Policy Options Policies.

Brodeur-Girard, S. (2020, December). Land acknowledgment [conference]. Training offered by the working group on Indigenous realities of the Quebec Interuniversity Network in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (RIQEDI).

Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS). (2018). Indigenization and Decolonization in Canadian Student Affairs. Communication 18(2), 1-24. https://www.cacuss.ca/files/Communique/Communique_Winter2018_Final.pdf

Chan, L., B. Hall, F. Piron, R. Tandon and W. L. Williams. (2020, July). Open Science Beyond Open Access: For and with Communities. A step towards the decolonisation of knowledge. Canadian Commission for UNESCO. <https://zenodo.org/record/3947013#.YJrsJGZKhTa>

Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015). Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. McGill-Queen's University Press. http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/French_Executive_Summary_Web.pdf

Abitibiwinini First Nation Council. (2021) Our history. <https://pikogan.com/page/1024699>

Consortium of Animation on Perseverance and Success in Higher Education (CAPRES). (2020). Publication | Autochtonisation of higher education. <https://www.capres.ca/caracteristiques-socioculturelles-de-letudiant/etudiant-autochtone/publication-autochtonisation-de-lenseignement-superieur/>

Cull, I., RLA Hancock., S. McKeown, M. Pidgeon, and A. Vedan. (2018). Pulling Together: A Guide for Front-Line Staff, Student Services, and Advisors. Victoria: BCcampus. <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfrontlineworkers/>

Dussart, F. and S. Poirier (dir). (2017). Entangled territorialities: Negotiating Indigenous lands in Australia and Canada. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Guimond, E., N. Robitaille and S. Senécal. (2009). Canada's Indigenous Peoples: A Population of Many Definitions. Quebec Journal of Demography, 38 (2), 221–251. <https://doi.org/10.7202/044815ar>

Guimont Marceau, SJ-O. Roy and D. Salée (eds.). (2020). Indigenous peoples and politics in Quebec and Canada Identities, citizenship and self-determination. Québec: University of Quebec Press.

Kermool, N. (2018). The Role of Canadian Universities in the Decolonisation of Knowledge: The Case of Alberta, ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies, 17(3), 651-670. <https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/1260>

Landry, V. (2020). Native link to the territory : different manifestations according to place of residence and generation [Doctoral thesis, University of Quebec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue]. Depositum. <https://depositum.uqat.ca/id/eprint/969>

Lepage, P. (2019). Myths and Realities About Indigenous Peoples. Quebec Human Rights and Youth Rights Commission and Tshakapesh Institute. <https://www.cdpdj.qc.ca/storage/app/media/publications/Mythes-Realites.pdf>

Lévesque, C. (2017, June 19). Elements of reflection and avenues of action to improve the living conditions of Indigenous people, combat racism and promote cultural security or within public services, oral presentation to the Listening, Reconciliation and Progress Commission, Conservatory of Music and Drama. https://www.cerp.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/Fichiers_clients/Documents_deposes_a_la_Commission/P-036.pdf

Shaginoff, M. (2020, October). Land Acknowledgment Workshop [conference]. Amnesty International events.

Simpson, LB (2014). Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation. Decolonisation: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 3(3), 1-25.

Smith, LT (2012). Decolonising methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples (3e éd.). London : Zed Books Ltd.

Wilson, K. (2018). Pulling Together: Pulling Together. Victoria: BCcampus. <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/>

**LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT
IN THE QUEBEC UNIVERSITY CONTEXT**

