

## Pamphlet # 15

### Teaching From an Aboriginal Perspective Theme 4\*

The material in this section is adapted from two sources: "Teaching from an Aboriginal Perspective" (2000) by Herman Michell, faculty member of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, now the First Nations University of Canada, and a research report "Strengthening the Circle: Facilitating Success of First Nations Students in a Non-Native Post Secondary Institution" (2000) by Joan Roy and Mary Hampton, faculty members of the University of Regina and Luther College respectively, and professors of Psychology. The authors agree on the importance of distributing this information as widely as possible.

Please refer to Pamphlet #12 for the complete introduction and Conclusion.

#### Theme Four: Teaching Style and Classroom Climate: "You don't take a class, you take a person."

- 1) Let the students know that as a university teacher you are a researcher and learner too. Be genuine. Say so when you don't know. Promote a community of scholars. Humility is a teaching style.
- 2) Promote a sense of place and belonging in the classroom steeped in humility and reverence for all life.
- 3) Do not attempt to 'rescue', 'save', or 'lower

standards' for Aboriginal students. Try to balance humanistic concerns with high expectations for achievement.

- 4) Show them their successes; provide feedback that is immediate and consistent. Give praise that is specific. Some Aboriginal students prefer praise in private so that they do not appear to be superior to their peers.

#### Conclusion

The above are guidelines and examples to assist you in the classroom. For Aboriginal people, learning has always been regarded as a life-long process and there are many ways of teaching and learning. For instructors at the post-secondary level, it is important to remember that all of us are on a life-long journey in the learning process.

People perceive the world in different ways, learn about the world in different ways, and demonstrate what they have learned in different ways. An individual approach to learning and demonstration of what he or she has learned is influenced by values, norms, and socialization practices of the culture in which that individual has been acculturated

The research results offer strategies for individual faculty members to use in facilitating success. However, it would be a mistake to assume that as some individual faculty members change attitudes and behaviour, the success rate of Aboriginal students will automatically increase. Changes need to be systemically and scientifically implemented to make certain their addition is organizational in nature rather than isolated subsystems of an educational institution.

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