

Pamphlet # 14

Teaching From an Aboriginal Perspective Theme 3*

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 Three: Teaching Methods: Learning is a shared endeavour and co-operative experience

- 1) Use examples from Aboriginal contexts in order to explain concepts and lessons. Start from what the student is familiar with and incorporate one aspect at a time with the newer learning aspects. Focus on community concerns, issues and problems - use local terms.
- 2) Encourage students to participate in what is learned, when it is learned, how it is learned and how learning is assessed.

3) Use Aboriginal resource people in your courses. Be specific as to what you want them to do or talk about. Ensure that it is in line with your course objectives.

4) Use a multi-sensory approach to teaching. The more input channels that are accessed, the more likely it is that learning will occur. Different sensory channels provide alternative memory anchors from which students can access information.

5) Use a variety of visual aids when explaining lessons, information and new concepts. Many Aboriginal people are highly visual in how they come to understand the world.

6) Traditional Aboriginal cultures have a rich and diverse array of approaches to education. These approaches include experiential learning and storytelling, as well as observation and apprenticeship. Use class discussions to balance lectures.

7) A good sequence for classroom instruction includes the following: review material from the last class - solicit questions - teach new content - solicit questions - do an activity - review today's lesson.

8) Introduce problem-solving circles with scenarios that reflect Aboriginal community realities.

9) Allow for peer teaching and group projects to encourage interaction where students can freely participate verbally in private. Many Aboriginal students appear shy when asked to speak up in public. Do not isolate them or put them 'on the spot'. Many Aboriginal cultures teach that we should listen more than we should speak.

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

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