



University of Victoria

Indigenous Education

SKEL, KÉL

SKEL, KÉL IS SENCŌTEN FOR "NEWS"



March 2026

IED PDPP



Pictured above: IED 403 students move through Mystic Vale with attention to pacing, safety, and group care, applying the OCC framework in real time. Two young eagles looked down overhead during this walk, a reminder that learning unfolds within living systems.

Setting the Canoe in the Water

by Kate Cruz and Shaylin Warren

In a canoe, it's the non-verbal communication, the subtle shifts in balance that signals readiness.

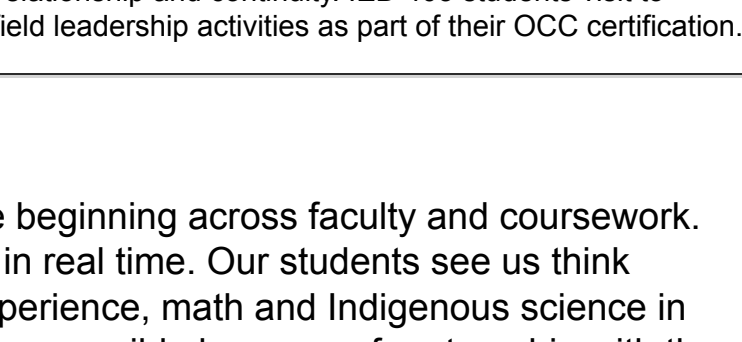
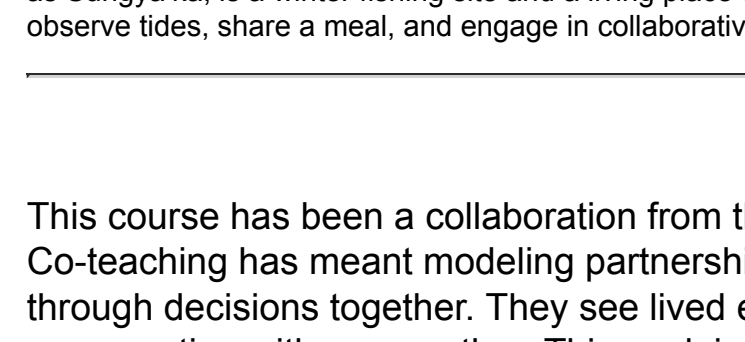
For IED 403: *Curriculum and Instruction in Indigenous Science*, Shaylin and I didn't want to just talk about land-based learning as culturally-responsive pedagogy. We wanted our students to feel prepared to lead it - safely, responsibly, and in a way that is relational. Shaylin's continued partnership and ability to instruct the Outdoor Council of Canada's Field Leader (Hiking) certification course gave us a way to do that.

For many of our students, this is the first time they may have been put into a position to seriously consider what it means to be accountable for others on the land. And for us, it has meant asking: **what do we really want future educators to carry with them in the places they go?**

Place shapes everything. Through the OCC framework, students are learning how to move through a place with intention. They are identifying hazards and defenses, preparing for collaboration with stakeholders, and building safe event plans grounded in their practicum settings. We've also been returning to Mystic Vale for sit spots, noticing what shifts when you visit a place again and again, instead of just once.

Students are beginning to see how learning deepens through repetition. Alongside this, they've been practicing:

- Tarp systems and knot work
- Risk and group management
- Relationship-building for success in their practicum classrooms and Indigenous Science
- Preparing for Class 1 Terrain leadership



1st photo: IED 403 students (Kaitlyn Charles, Sylvia St. Ledger, Emerald Maze - Saber Dergham, Kalya Haddad, Bonnie Reynolds, and guest student Jacoby Cruz) practice learning through movement, relationship, and shared experience, grounding theory in embodied engagement. **2nd photo:** Cassaro Bay, known to the Lakw'agan peoples as Surgya'ka, is a winter fishing site and a living place of relationship and continuity. IED 403 students visit to observe tides, share a meal, and engage in collaborative field leadership activities as part of their OCC certification.

This course has been a collaboration from the beginning across faculty and coursework. Co-teaching has meant modeling partnership in real time. Our students see us think through decisions together. They see lived experience, math and Indigenous science in conversation with one another. This work is also possible because of partnership with the OCC, with UVic IED, with guest contributors such as Izzy Ward from First Peoples House, Mr. Parks of the Nooka Sound Outdoor Program, Kailee Furnell and Tystan Dunn-Jones of Port Renfrew Elementary, author Samantha Beynon and with the communities our students are learning to serve.

The culmination of this work is embodied. Students will participate in the TIChes Spirit Canoe experience as a cohort and the Indigenous Education Department is actively seeking more opportunities to get in canoes. They will apply what they have practiced including safety planning, observation, ethnomathematical thinking, and relational awareness in real conditions on the water.

As leaders in the outdoors, we are constantly assessing and managing risks. We are reviewing our participants' medical histories, packing extra warm layers, tracking weather systems and hashing out our decisions together. We are documenting accidents and near-miss incidents to adjust our practices moving forward. We recognize that there is inherent risk in every decision that we make as outdoor leaders and we choose to do this work anyway, cautiously.

A question that came up in a discussion with Kate, during this course is: **What risks are we exposing students to when we choose to keep them inside?** Although the consequences may not be as obvious as hypothermia or blisters, I think that they are worthwhile for educators to consider.



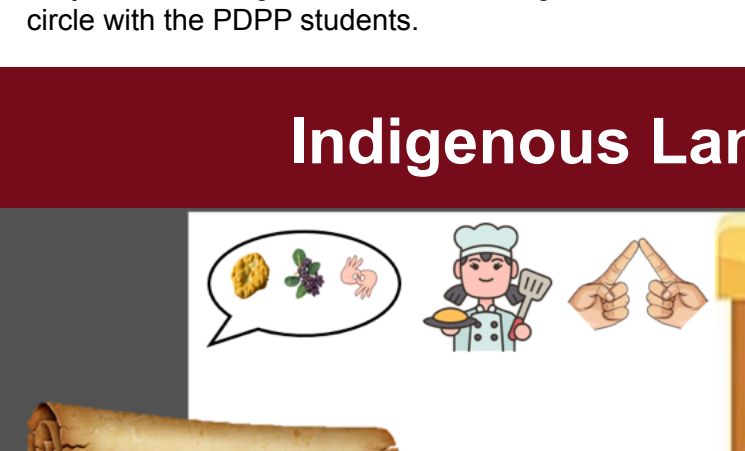
Pictured above: PDPP students in a drum circle at the Office of School District 61.

Building Connections before Practicum

The students in the IED PDPP have been busy preparing for the first practicum. As part of this preparation, they have visited various schools that have given them a sense of what they might expect and experience in their own teaching soon. Gary Crocker has been facilitating these visits as a complement to the course *IED 360 Field Experience Seminar* taught by instructor Julia Fellman. The culmination of the visits was a session at the Office of School District 61 where Indigenous Vice-Principal Kolette Cristante, Tanya Adams and Emma Milliken, Indigenous Teacher consultants for Middle and Secondary schools respectively, welcomed the students to the space.

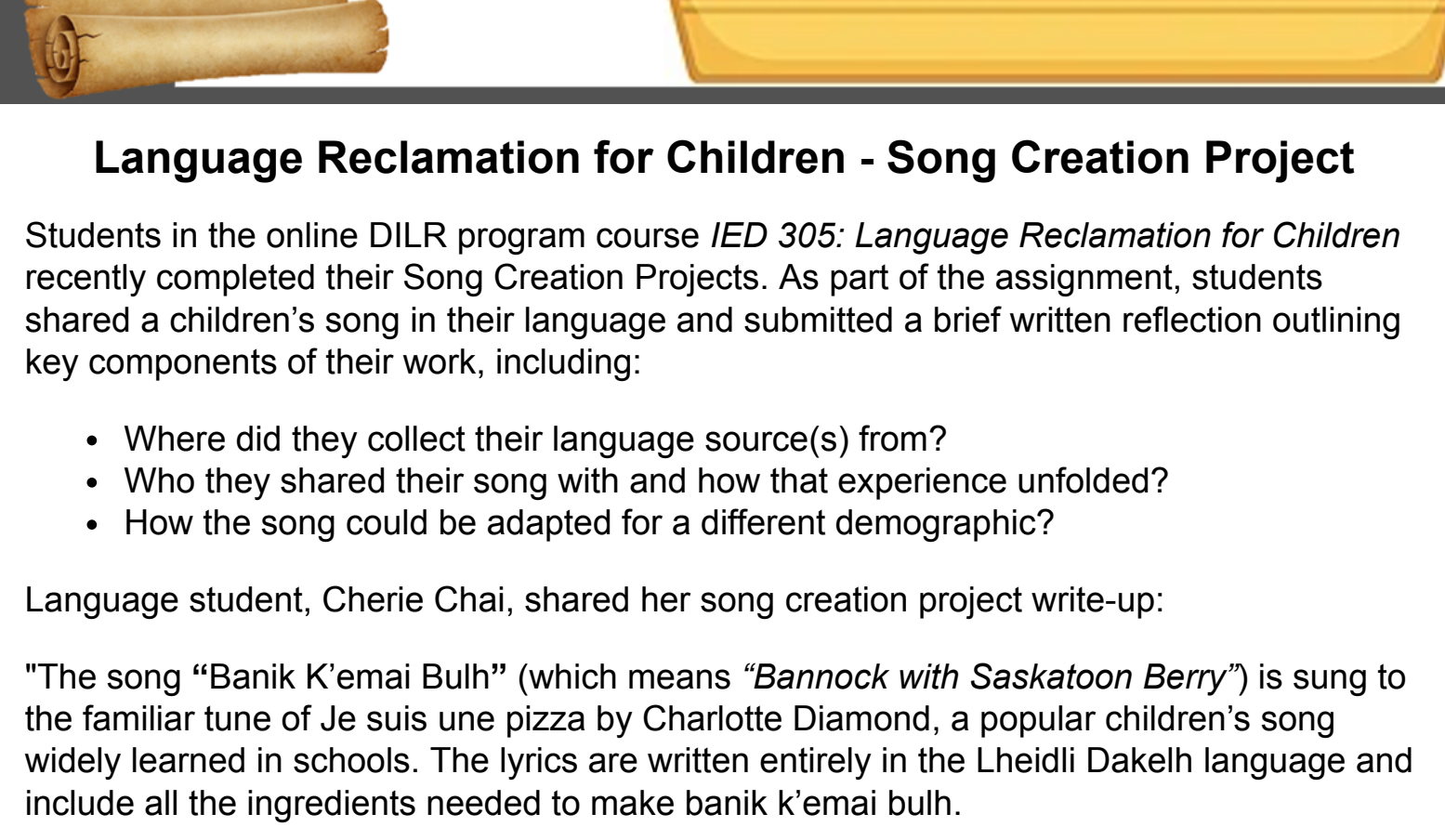
Teachings were shared along with resources and lunch. Songs were drummed and felt in the reverberation of the room and in the disposition of the students whose hearts were touched by the authenticity and honesty of their hostesses. The tables were filled with books by Indigenous authors and some by Indigenous and non-Indigenous collaborations. The students were advised on how to best use these resources, and were reminded of how Indigenous identity is not a single quality; rather, it is changing and re-defined by circumstances and diverse variables. Words of caution were also shared regarding entering a space like a school, with the best of intentions without knowing what is appropriate and respectful for the community where the school is situated. Everyone was reminded of the importance of always consulting with the school and its administrators to find out more about protocol, process, and respectful ways to do the work.

The Department of Indigenous Education appreciates the opportunity to collaborate with School Districts 61, 62, & 63 hosting the students in their visits and making them feel welcomed and appreciated as future teachers.



1st photo: Teaching resources shared during visit at the Office of School District 61. **2nd photo:** Drums ready for drum circle with the PDPP students.

Indigenous Language Programs



Language Reclamation for Children - Song Creation Project

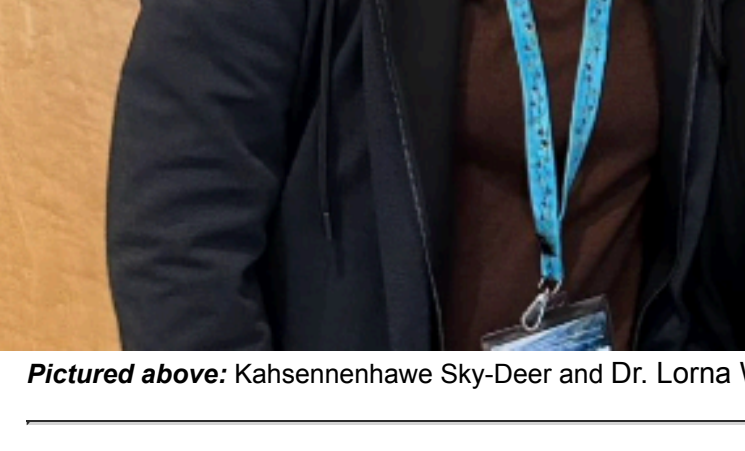
Students in the online DILR completed *IED 305: Language Reclamation for Children* recently and completed their Song Creation Projects. As part of the assignment, students shared a children's song in their language and submitted a brief written reflection outlining key components of their work, including:

- Where did they collect their language source(s) from?
- Who they shared their song with and how that experience unfolded?
- How the song could be adapted for a different demographic?

Language student, Cherie Chai, shared her song creation project write-up:

"The song 'Bank K'emai Buth' (which means 'Bannock with Saskatoon Berry') is sung to the familiar tune of Je suis une pizza by Charlotte Diamond, a popular children's song widely learned in schools. The lyrics are written entirely in the Lheidli Dakehl language and include all the ingredients needed to make bank k'emai bual.

Students can learn the song through engaging, interactive activities. One activity is a Bannock-Making PowerPoint game in which students practise their Dakelh communication skills by 'collecting' ingredients from a shelf, adding them to a mixing bowl and then 'cooking' it by singing the song. Another follow-up activity is the Bank Making Puppet Show & Song with an Elder, where students participate in an interactive puppet performance, helping the puppet choose the correct ingredients before singing and drumming the song together, as singing the song is the 'magic' to make the puppet's bannock. Students will also learn about drumming protocols from the Elder before drumming."



In Community



Pictured above: Kahsennhawe Sky-Deer and Dr. Lorna Wanosts'a7 Williams at the AFN Education Forum.

AFN Education Forum Centered Language Revitalization

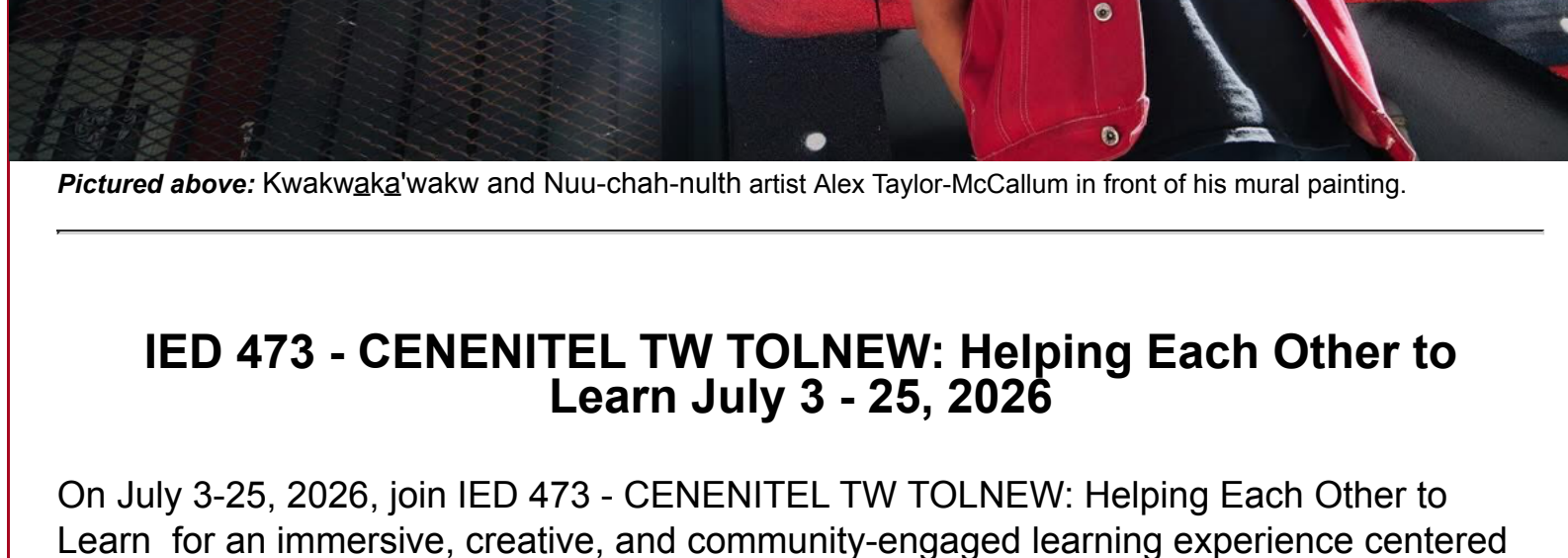
The Champions of First Nations (AFN) gathered First Nations leaders, educators, language champions, youth, and partners from across the country for the 2026 Education Forum, *Voices for Tomorrow, Lifting Our Nations Through Lifelong Learning*, held February 24–26, 2026, at the Vancouver Convention Centre.

A central focus of the forum was the celebration of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL). As communities across the globe worked to revitalize, reclaim, and strengthen Indigenous languages, the forum spotlighted First Nations-led strategies that embedded language and culture at the heart of education systems.

IED was well represented. Dr. Lorna Wanosts'a7 Williams was a keynote speaker. Alik Marinakis was invited to present on a panel about supporting community-based Indigenous language programs. Drs. Onowa McIvor Whithini and Belinda Daniels were shouted out as role models doing the right thing to increase language speakers. Workshops and plenary sessions also explored how to meaningfully integrate First Nations languages into education systems—moving beyond token inclusion toward full immersion models, land-based learning, Elder engagement, and intergenerational knowledge transmission.

The forum highlighted innovative initiatives underway in communities across the country, including technology-enhanced language learning, partnerships with post-secondary institutions, and culturally grounded approaches to student well-being. By bringing together leadership, technical experts, and community practitioners, the AFN strengthened networks of collaboration and inspired scalable solutions reflecting the unique identities and priorities of each Nation.

Program Opportunities



Pictured above: Kwakwaka'wakw and Nuu-chah-nulth artist Alex Taylor-McCallum in front of his mural painting.

IED 473 - CENENITEL TW TOLNEW: Helping Each Other to Learn July 3 - 25, 2026

On July 3-25, 2026, join IED 473 - CENENITEL TW TOLNEW: Helping Each Other to Learn for an immersive, creative, and community-oriented learning experience centered on storytelling, artistic expression, and collective healing.

Through this dynamic course, students will work with Kwakwaka'wakw and Nuu-chah-nulth artist Alex Taylor-McCallum and instructor Hector Vazquez-Cordova. Together, we will explore ancestry, land, culture, origin stories, traditional songs, dances, and ceremonies and examine how these integral aspects of Indigenous life have been impacted by colonization.

The course addresses historical and ongoing impacts of colonization, including the potlatch ban, the smallpox epidemic, and the residential school system. Students will explore how these events have contributed to intergenerational trauma and how creative artistic practice can serve as a powerful tool for healing.

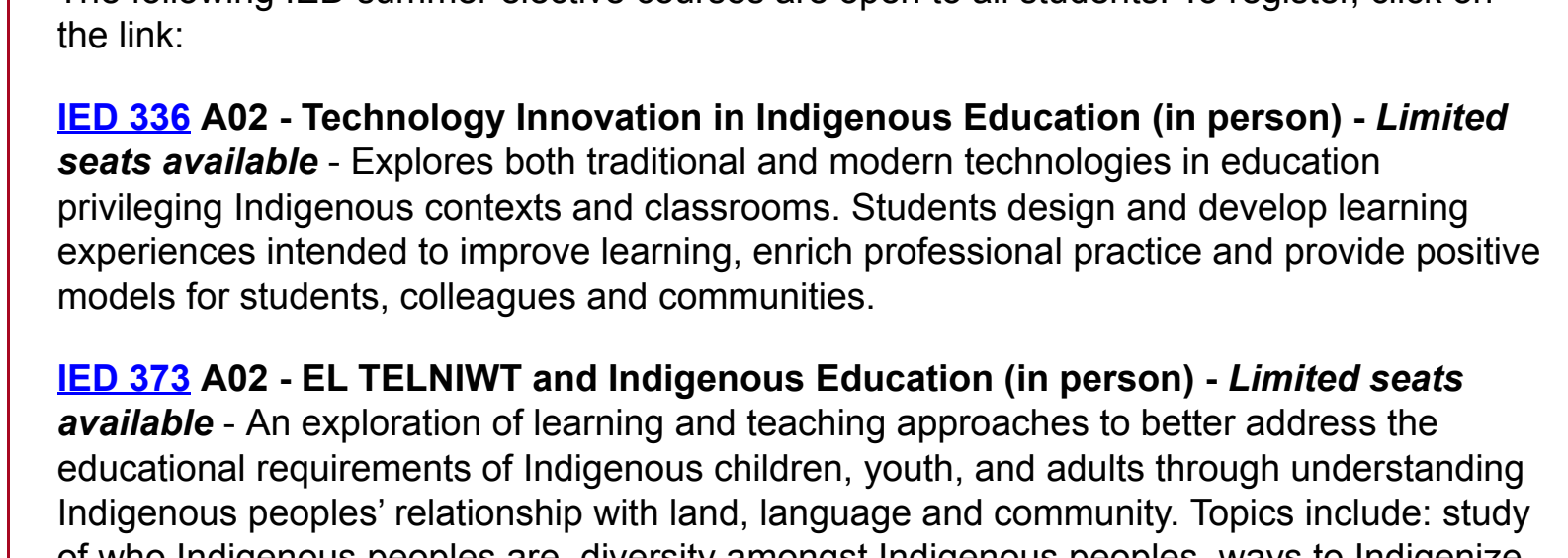
Through art mediums such as painting, singing, dance, theatre and more, Alex emphasizes how storytelling is an important part of not only his, but all cultures around the world. Indigenous artwork is a form of storytelling. Contemporary songwriting is a form of storytelling.

This course is open to all students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous and will be especially beneficial for teachers or future teachers. Students will be encouraged to reflect on and share their own stories as a meaningful and transformative act of creative expression.

To register, click on the button below.



1st photo: Alex with his mural located on Hereward Street. **2nd photo:** 2025 Artist-in-Residence, Alex Taylor-McCallum (L) and instructor Hector Vazquez-Cordova (R).



Building New Ways of Teaching and Learning Through Indigenous Perspectives

The following IED summer elective courses are open to all students. To register, click on the link:

IED 336 A02 - Technology Innovation in Indigenous Education (in person) - Limited seats available - Explores both traditional and modern technologies in education privileging Indigenous contexts and classrooms. Students design and develop learning experiences intended to improve learning, enrich professional practice and provide positive models for students, colleagues and communities.

IED 373 A02 - EL TELNIWT and Indigenous Education (in person) - Limited seats available - An exploration of learning and teaching approaches to better address the educational requirements of Indigenous children, youth, and adults through understanding Indigenous peoples' relationship with land, language and community. Topics include: study of who Indigenous peoples are, diversity amongst Indigenous peoples, ways to Indigenous learning and educational environment, and of the systems that impact teachers and learners.

IED 374 A02 - Indigenous Pedagogies (online) - Traditional and contemporary approaches to teaching and learning within an Indigenous worldview. Elements include distinctive features of Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy, learning by observation and doing, enjoyment, humor, and teachings of the Elders.

IED 486 A02 (in person) - Culturally Relevant Arts-Based Pedagogy for Education - Limited seats available - Explores various arts-based pedagogy for schools honoring diverse cultural identities to gain an appreciation of the depth and context of each arts discipline.

Faculty Publication



Dr. Belinda Daniels' publication
Custer, A., Sterzuk, A., Daniels, B., Khanam, R., & Fayant R. (2026). *Ni - nohtimithaw-masina'ikan: Writing in Indigenous languages in Canadian Universities*. In J. Corcoran, C. Payant, S. Sarmiento, L. Colombo, M.E. López-Gopar, & L. Córdoba Hernández (Eds.), *Pan-American perspectives (Indigenous/First Nations/Novo Americans, Afrolatinamerican, and Creoles) on scholarly writing for publication*. WAC Clearinghouse.

To view article go to [WAC Clearinghouse](https://wac.clearinghouse.org)

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