

## Pamphlet # 16

### Teaching From an Aboriginal Perspective - Theme 5\*

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 Five: Understand the life of Aboriginal post-secondary students

- 1) Provide students the opportunity to explore their own identities and communities. This will deepen their understanding of themselves as well as their local and social world.
- 2) Do not ask Aboriginal students or expect them to be able to provide information about their cultures. Such learning is life-long and acquired over a lifetime. Some beliefs cannot be shared.
- 3) Allow enough time for a verbal response, especially for Native language speakers. They

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need time for second language processing. Do not interrupt the process and do not allow other students to interrupt.

4) Be aware of communication patterns that are specific to different cultures. For example, some Aboriginal people regard direct eye contact as confrontational.

5) Understand that extended family obligations sometimes take precedence over school. For example, funerals usually involve the entire community and can take up to a week or more for all the ceremonies involved. Also, appreciate that for some First Nations and Métis students, life experience will have been grounded in poverty.

6) Know too that First Nations and Métis students deal with personal and systemic racism on a daily basis.

7) Other barriers to success can be a lack of preparation for the university setting because of their prior educational experience and a lack of appropriate role models in their life. They may be the first person in their immediate family to attend university

### 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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Accessibility



**Aboriginal Information Series**  
**Office of University Accessibility**  
**August 2006**  
**Number 16**