

An Indigenous Lens on Disability Rights: Honouring Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Diverse Ways of Being

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Purpose of the Presentation

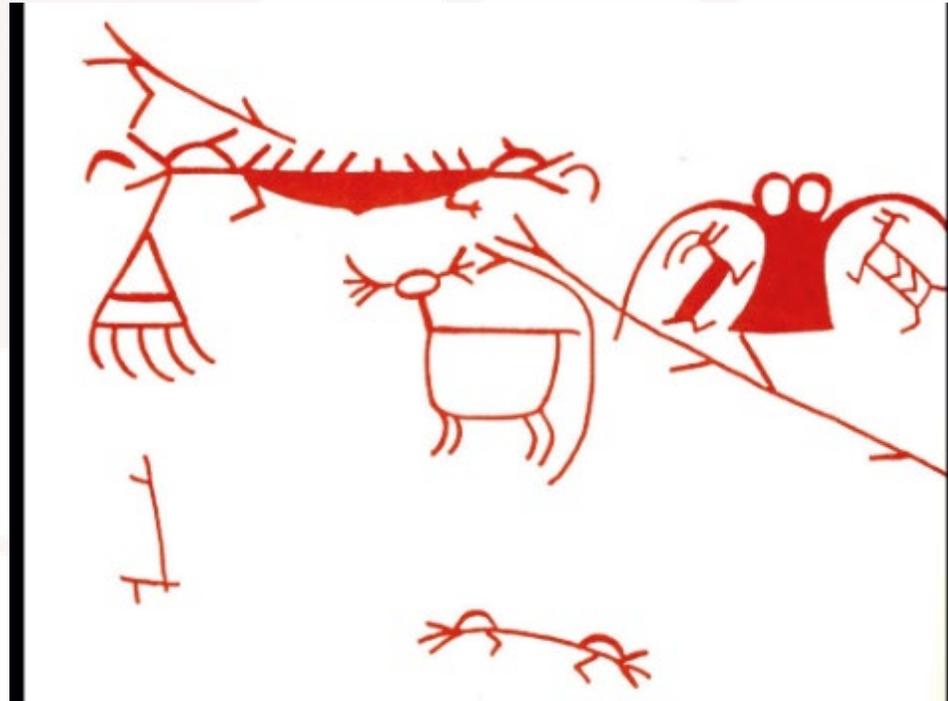
- Nsk^wést / Introduction
- Examine Indigenous student rights in post-secondary education
 - Understand Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge as a rights-based foundation
 - Apply the Declaration of the Rights for Indigenous Peoples Act to institutional advocacy
 - Focus on Indigenous students with disabilities

Our Story

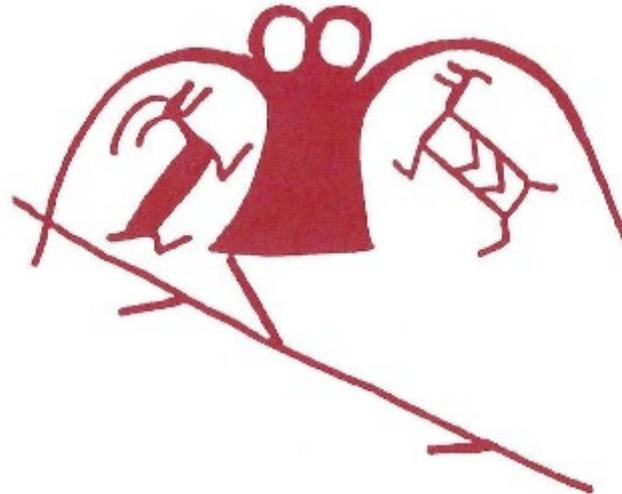


Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)

“TEK is an accumulating body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations. It is specific to location and includes the relationship of living beings with one another and with the environment



Indigenous Knowledge



Respectful, relational model including the family, extended family and community (Wilson, 2008)

Derives from Nte?kepmx Spték^{wł} (Ancestral) and Spíləxm (Personal) stories

Statistics in B.C.

- Indigenous Peoples can mean First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and make up 4.9% of the Canadian population in 2016, with more than half (56%) living off-reserve.
- Over 270,000 people in B.C. identify as Indigenous. This represents almost 6% of the overall population. Of that:
 - 1,615 identified themselves as Inuit
 - 89,405 identified themselves as Métis
 - 172,520 identified themselves as First Nations
- Up to 32% of off-reserve First Nations peoples, 30% of Métis, and 19% of Inuit live with disability compared to 22% of Canadians (Hahmann et al., 2019).

Indigenous Students in Post-Secondary

- Colonial education systems marginalize Indigenous ways of knowing
 - Persistent systemic barriers
 - Compounded barriers for students with disabilities
 - Need for culturally grounded approaches
- Frame accessibility as a rights issue
 - Move beyond accommodation toward inclusion
 - Require Indigenous participation in decision-making
 - Use both law and Indigenous knowledge

Rights Frameworks Impacting Indigenous Students in Post-Secondary

Framework	Purpose	Key Provisions for Indigenous Students	Post-Secondary Implications
UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)	International affirmation of Indigenous Peoples' inherent rights	Education without discrimination; protection of culture, language, and knowledge; full participation and accessibility	Institutions must respect Indigenous knowledge systems and provide culturally appropriate, accessible education
Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA – BC)	Implements UNDRIP in BC law	Alignment of laws and institutions with Indigenous rights and self-determination	Public post-secondary institutions must align governance, policies, and practices with Indigenous rights
BC Accessibility Act	Prevent and remove accessibility barriers	Recognizes disability as interaction with systemic barriers; emphasizes proactive planning	Requires institutions to move beyond accommodation toward inclusive design and planning
Post-Secondary Education (BC Context)	Delivery of public post-secondary education	Duty to provide equitable, accessible, and culturally safe learning environments	Integration of Indigenous rights, accessibility, and reconciliation across programs and services

Advocacy Map

Advocacy map: where TEK + DRIPA can be used in institutions

Common entry points

Policy & governance

- Academic senate / education council
- Indigenous engagement / reconciliation offices
- Accessibility policy and procedures
- Strategic plans and Indigenous frameworks

Student supports

- Accessibility services (accommodations)
- Indigenous student centre / Elders
- Counselling and health services
- Housing, financial aid, transportation

Systems & accountability

- Program review and quality assurance
- Capital planning (built environment)
- Procurement and IT (digital accessibility)
- Public reporting + complaints pathways

Tip for advocacy: pair *rights language* (UNDRIP/DRIPA) with *operational asks* (policies, budgets, roles, timelines, metrics).

Recommendation 1: Indigenous Disability Navigators

- Create Indigenous-led navigator roles
 - Bridge Indigenous services and accessibility offices
 - Provide advocacy and coordination support
 - Reduce burden on students, add Elders, knowledge keeper supports

Recommendation 2: Co-Develop Policies (DRIPA)

- Co-create accessibility policies with Indigenous peoples
 - Include Indigenous students with disabilities
 - Use distinctions-based approaches
 - Align policies with

Recommendation 3: TEK-Informed Accessibility

- Support Academic leaders to embed land-based and cultural learning
 - Ensure accessibility in ceremonies and field learning
 - Apply Universal Design for Learning
 - Honour multiple ways of demonstrating

Recommendation 4: Rights-Based Accessibility Framework

- Dedicated funding for Indigenous disability supports
 - Use Indigenous data governance principles
 - Measure holistic success outcomes
 - Public reporting and transparency
- Resource + measure + report (accountability)
 - Fund accommodations and cultural supports
 - Set service standards
 - Use Indigenous data governance approaches for outcomes tracking, and
 - Publicly report progress and barriers.

Sources

- UNDRIP (United Nations, 2007):
https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf -
- Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (BC) overview:
<https://declaration.gov.bc.ca/> - DRIPA text (CanLII):
<https://www.canlii.org/en/bc/laws/stat/sbc-2019-c-44/latest/sbc-2019-c-44.html> -
- Accessible British Columbia Act (BC Laws):
<https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/21019>
- BC Human Rights Code (BC Laws):
https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/00_96210_01 [/Sources]

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Indigeneity & Disabilities in Schools



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5GuKGkeip4&t=9s>