# Indigenous Studies 390 **Individual Research Projects in Indigenous Studies**

## Course Description

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Research projects must be chosen in consultation with the course coordinator and are intended for completion by an individual student interested in an area of Indigenous Studies. Students registering in Indigenous Studies 390 must have completed Indigenous Studies 200: Introduction to Native Studies, [Indigenous Studies 203: Indigenous Studies I](https://www.athabascau.ca/syllabi/inst/inst203.php), or an equivalent course from another institution.

For further information please contact:

[Dr. Josie Auger](http://indigenous.athabascau.ca/faculty/josie/), Course Coordinator  
Indigenous Studies, Nukskahtowin

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### Introduction

Thank you for your interest in Indigenous Studies 390: Individual Research Projects in Indigenous Studies. This Course Description explains how the course is organized, and how you, the prospective student, should prepare a project proposal.

### What Is a Project Course?

Many adults who wish to upgrade their education find that regular university courses are too restrictive in their content, pacing, or grading. Project courses are more flexible. In project courses, students may learn what they want to learn; such courses may even allow students to do things that no one else has done before. Project courses let students learn using their own learning styles and working at their own pace. They allow students to continue at their jobs, and may even encourage them to use their jobs in their learning activities. Projects encourage development of both intellectual and technical skills.

With the help of a professor or supervisor, a student learns how to tackle a defined topic. Together, the student and supervisor work out what the research project should consist of, when various aspects of the project should be completed, and how the final results should be evaluated.

### What Is Indigenous Studies 390: Individual Research Projects in Indigenous Studies?

Indigenous Studies 390: Individual Research Projects in Indigenous Studies is similar to most project courses: it is a student-initiated course that is based on a contracted study arrangement worked out between an individual student, an approved project supervisor, and Athabasca University. It is an advanced course, intended for students who have completed the foundation courses.

Indigenous Studies 390: Individual Research Projects in Indigenous Studies will help you to

1. initiate, plan, carry out, and report on the examination of an aspect of Indigenous Studies.
2. obtain formal recognition for an Indigenous-Studies-related research project or training.

In the process of completing a research project, you will improve your skills in

1. choosing tasks that you are capable of completing within time constraints.
2. using libraries, museums, books, journals, databases, television, film, surveys, and other resources to obtain information.
3. planning methods to test hypotheses.
4. organizing facts and ideas for analysis.
5. reporting the ideas and conclusions of yourself and others.

By planning a research project and carrying it out, you will also experience some of the problems faced by Indigenous Studies scholars, and you will learn to make a critical analysis of scholarly literature.

The research project may involve any combination of library or field research, as agreed to by the student and the research project supervisor in a learning contract among the student, the supervisor, and Athabasca University. The learning contract states what is to be done in the research project, how and when it will be done, how it will be evaluated, and how many credits will be awarded (Indigenous Studies 390 is a three-credit course). Although the University may provide some help, students are expected to obtain and pay for all of the materials used in their research project.

Students may enrol at any time during the year, but before enrolling, they must submit an acceptable research project proposal to the course coordinator. The research project proposal is, in effect, the first stage in the preparation of a learning contract and in the location of a suitable supervisor.

### The Role of the Course Coordinator

The course coordinator for Indigenous Studies 390: Individual Research Projects in Indigenous Studies is a professor at Athabasca University. The coordinator’s role is to ensure that

1. a willing and able person serves as a supervisor.
2. a fair and reasonable learning contract is prepared and followed by both the student and the research project supervisor.

### The Role of the Project Supervisor

The role of the research project supervisor is to

1. help the student in preparing a learning contract that has clear and attainable objectives.
2. help in identifying materials (for example, books, periodicals, equipment) that will help the student fulfil the contract.
3. provide information (verbal or written) to the student.
4. evaluate the project using the objectives and evaluation scheme agreed on in the learning contract and assign a percentage grade.

The research project supervisor acts as a representative of Athabasca University. They may or may not be a full-time employee of the University. (If not an employee of the University, the supervisor is paid a small honorarium.) A research project supervisor normally holds a master’s degree or doctorate in the area in which the student wishes to study.

### The Learning Contract

In Indigenous Studies research projects, a learning contract is a written agreement, jointly prepared by a student and a research project supervisor, that states the learning objectives, activities to be undertaken, timelines, and criteria for evaluating the research project undertaken. Once the research project proposal is accepted, students are given access to a Course Guide containing a more detailed course description and examples of learning contracts.

### The Project Proposal

Following this section are two examples of hypothetical proposal forms. Although the people referred to in these forms are fictitious, the examples do reflect the range of research projects that students propose. Please note that all of these examples are very brief. If you can supply more details about what you would like to do, please do so: the more information the better.

Please note as well that any research that involves people (for example, surveys) will need to meet the criteria for ethical research with humans, as set out in the [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans](https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy.html) and as determined by Nukskahtowin (formerly the Centre for World Indigenous Knowledge and Research).

**Note:** Students must successfully complete one research project course before proceeding to the next. The research project may address different phases of one large research project, different aspects of a topic, or completely unrelated topics.

# Indigenous Studies 390 **Individual Research Projects in Indigenous Studies**

## Sample Project Proposal 1

Email to

[Dr. Josie Auger](http://indigenous.athabascau.ca/faculty/josie/), Course Coordinator

Indigenous Studies, Nukskahtowin

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Name: Trish Lonerider

Email address: t\*\*\*\*\*\*@email.com

Address: R.R. #5, Akwesasne Nation

Telephone number: (613) 555-1212

Athabasca University student number: 5555555

General background and educational goals:

I have completed a degree in Nursing and have worked for the last six years as a Public Education Nurse on the Akwesasne reserve. I would like to take a few Indigenous Studies courses to develop an education strategy that takes into account Indigenous history, traditions, and understandings.

The research project course would allow me to tailor my educational program in health care to my Indigenous background.

Completed university-level Indigenous Studies courses:

I have completed INST 200.

Specific problem to be solved, question to be answered, or topic to be discussed:

I would like to address strategies for effective distribution of information and education related to health and wellness on reserve. As part of this, I would conduct a needs-assessment survey and develop an information package for on-reserve populations.

Methods to be used (may involve library research, surveys, questionnaires):

* **Note:** All surveys and questionnaires must be approved by the supervisor before being administered in the field.

Library research; questionnaires for reserve membership; development of responses into an information package; development of information package for reserve membership based on library research and review of survey results.

Materials to be used (may include print books and electronic resources such as AU Library’s e-book, journal, and documentary collections and the Internet):

I will be using on-line resources, the University of Ottawa library, and materials in the band office (provided recently by Health and Welfare Canada) for this project.

* **Note:** It is the student’s responsibility to acquire or make arrangements to access the necessary materials.

Expected start date: Fall of this year or earlier.

Expected completion date: Four to six months after beginning.

Possible project supervisor:

[name of Athabasca University faculty member]

Expertise of proposed supervisor in project area:

Athabasca University faculty member

Have you talked with this person about being a research project supervisor?

Yes

Signature:

[signature]

# Indigenous Studies 390 **Individual Research Projects in Indigenous Studies**

## Sample Project Proposal 2

Email to

[Dr. Josie Auger](http://indigenous.athabascau.ca/faculty/josie/), Course Coordinator

Indigenous Studies, Nukskahtowin

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Course applied for: INST 390

Name: Jeff Gladue

Email address: j\*\*\*\*\*\*@email.com

Address: 654 Lubicon Lake Nation

Telephone number: (780) 539-3735

Athabasca University student number: 4444444

General background and educational goals:

Have completed INST 200 and wish to build on that project with further work on the topic.

Completed university-level Indigenous Studies courses:

Have completed INST 201 and 258.

Specific problem to be solved, question to be answered, or topic to be discussed:

I work part-time at the band office on my First Nation reserve and would like to do a research project assessing First Nation governance and band manager powers and authorities. This would involve primary research involving band managers across the country. I would also examine the powers and authorities that band managers have under the Indian Act.

Methods to be used (may involve library research, surveys, questionnaires):

* **Note:** All surveys and questionnaires must be approved by the supervisor before being administered in the field.

Questionnaires to be approved and distributed to all band managers in Canada.

Library research; survey of management authorities in various legislative and policy guidelines of Indian Affairs.

Research in archives for information pertaining to roles of chiefs and band managers, historically.

Materials to be used (may include print books and electronic resources such as AU Library’s e-book, journal, and documentary collections and the Internet):

I have access to business databases through the AU Library; I live close to several college and university libraries and have access to the company’s archives.

* **Note:** It is the student’s responsibility to acquire or make arrangements to access the necessary materials.

Expected start date: April 1

Expected completion date: September 1

Possible project supervisor:

Course coordinator

Expertise of proposed supervisor in project area:

N/A

Have you talked with this person about being a project supervisor?

Yes

Signature:

[signature]

### Schedule of Events

The following schedule provides a brief outline of events during the course of most projects. Although there may seem to be many steps and checkpoints, they are all there for your benefit. The more you know about the procedures, the less will go wrong.

1. The student submits a project proposal to the course coordinator. The student also suggests a project supervisor.

**Note:** If you need help or further information, please email the course coordinator at [jauger@athabascau.ca](mailto:jauger@athabascau.ca). *You must submit your project proposal at least one month before you plan to start the project.*

1. The course coordinator reads the proposal and determines if the project is equivalent to three senior-level credits in Indigenous Studies.
2. If so, the course coordinator verifies the acceptability of the suggested project.
3. If not, the course coordinator asks the student to submit another proposal.
4. Once the project is deemed suitable, the course coordinator informs the student, asks them to register with the University, and to pay the tuition fee for Indigenous Studies 390. Once the student is registered and has access to their course home page, they will also be able to access the Indigenous Studies 390: Individual Research Projects in Indigenous Studies Course Guide. This manual gives information on how to prepare a learning contract and how to write a project report.
5. The student contacts the course coordinator or project supervisor and they meet, probably several times, even if it is only virtually or by phone. Together they agree on a learning contract that states the objectives of the project, how the objectives are to be achieved, the evaluation procedure, and the deadline for the project report.

**Note:** The contract must be agreed-on and must reach the course coordinator within two months of the date on which the student registered in the course. We suggest that students schedule about four months for each three-credit course, after the learning contract is prepared.

Although a slide presentation, audio or video recording, or a website may be part of the outcome of a project, a written report is still required. Directions for writing reports are provided in the Course Guide.

1. The course coordinator receives the contract from the student:
2. If the coordinator approves the contract, the student may proceed with the research project.
3. If the coordinator does not approve the contract, she or he will point out the reasons why, suggest changes, and ask the student and project supervisor to reconsider the contract.
4. Once the course coordinator approves the contract, the student works on the project and reports regularly to the course coordinator or project supervisor.

**Note:** If anything goes wrong, inform your course coordinator or project supervisor immediately. The deadlines in the contract, or the contract itself, may have to be changed.

1. The student submits the project report to the course coordinator or project supervisor by the agreed-on deadline.
2. The report is evaluated by the course coordinator or project supervisor. After consultation, they prepare written comments and a grade, based on the objectives stated in the contract.
3. The coordinator sends the final comments, the grade, and a copy of the report to the student, and informs the Office of the Registrar of the final grade.
4. The student fills out a Nukskahtowin Course Evaluation Questionnaire on the course home page.

**Note:** This course evaluation questionnaire is distinct from that sent out by the University and it seeks different information. It is very important that students fill in and return this form. Regular evaluation helps to ensure that the course improves over time.

### Examples of Hypothetical Projects

The following summaries briefly describe some hypothetical projects that might be completed by an Indigenous Studies student. We hope that they will give you an idea of the types of projects that can be done, and that the project supervisors consider acceptable.

### Analysis of Educational Resources Available in the Treaty 6, 7, and 8 Areas

Jane G. is currently employed by a national Indigenous organization. In her capacity as an administrative assistant, she has access to many published sources related to First Nations education. She is very interested in creating a provincial database in which all of the resources in Treaties 6, 7, and 8 are compiled and stored on a website.

### Indigenous Traditional Law

Betty S. wants to spend the summer visiting with the older women in her community and recording the traditional Dene laws governing women’s conduct and lifestyles. She also wants to research and prepare a bibliography of sources related to Indigenous women’s laws.

### History of First Nations Communities

Cheryl C. is a Political Studies major at the University of British Columbia. She wants to organize a research project to examine the history of her First Nation in the context of interaction with non-First-Nation neighbours. She wants to do so to establish proof of her thesis: that the interaction of the First Nation and non-First Nation neighbours was much more positive in economically strong periods.

**Note:** The following pages contain two copies of the standard project proposal form. *Good luck with formulating your proposal!*

# Indigenous Studies 390 **Individual Research Projects in Indigenous Studies**

## Project Proposal

Email to

[Dr. Josie Auger](http://indigenous.athabascau.ca/faculty/josie/), Course Coordinator

Indigenous Studies, Nukskahtowin

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Name:

Email address:

Address:

Telephone number:

Athabasca University student number:

General background and educational goals:

Completed university-level Indigenous Studies courses:

Specific problem to be solved, question to be answered, or topic to be discussed:

Methods to be used (may involve library research, surveys, questionnaires):

* **Note:** All surveys and questionnaires must be approved by the supervisor before being administered in the field.

Materials to be used (may include print books and electronic resources such as AU Library’s e-book, journal, and documentary collections and the Internet):

* **Note:** It is the student’s responsibility to acquire or make arrangements to access the necessary materials.

Expected start date:

Expected completion date:

Possible project supervisor:

Course coordinator:

Expertise of proposed supervisor in project area:

Have you talked with this person about being a project supervisor?

Signature:

# Indigenous Studies 390 **Individual Research Projects in Indigenous Studies**

## Project Proposal

Email to

[Dr. Josie Auger](http://indigenous.athabascau.ca/faculty/josie/), Course Coordinator

Indigenous Studies, Nukskahtowin

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Name:

Email address:

Address:

Telephone number:

Athabasca University student number:

General background and educational goals:

Completed university-level Indigenous Studies courses:

Specific problem to be solved, question to be answered, or topic to be discussed:

Methods to be used (may involve library research, surveys, questionnaires):

* **Note:** All surveys and questionnaires must be approved by the supervisor before being administered in the field.

Materials to be used (may include print books and electronic resources such as AU Library’s e-book, journal, and documentary collections and the Internet):

* **Note:** It is the student’s responsibility to acquire or make arrangements to access the necessary materials.

Expected start date:

Expected completion date:

Possible project supervisor:

Course coordinator:

Expertise of proposed supervisor in project area:

Have you talked with this person about being a project supervisor?

Signature: