# Indigenous Studies 493 **Individual Directed Research in Government and Laws**

# Course Description

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Directed 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 research into government and laws.

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 493: Individual Directed Research in Government and Laws. This Course Description explains how the course is organized, and how you, the prospective student, should prepare a directed research project proposal.

### What Is a Directed Research Course?

Many adults who wish to upgrade their education find that regular university courses are too restrictive in their content, pacing, or grading. Directed research courses are more flexible. In directed research 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. Directed research 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. Directed research courses encourage development of both intellectual and technical skills.

With the help of a professor or supervisor, students learn 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 493: Individual Directed Research in Government and Laws?

Indigenous Studies 493: Individual Directed Research in Government and Laws is similar to most research project courses: it is a student-initiated course that is based on a contracted study arrangement worked out between a student, an approved research project supervisor, and Athabasca University. It is an advanced course, intended for students who have completed one or more of the foundation courses (Indigenous Studies 348, 377, and 426).

Indigenous Studies 493: Individual Directed Research in Government and Laws will help you to

1. improve your skills in initiating, planning, carrying out, and reporting on research on an aspect of Indigenous Studies related to government and law.
2. obtain formal recognition for some Indigenous Studies or related interdisciplinary research or training in government and law.

In the process of completing a Directed Research in Government and Laws 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 criticizing statements.
5. reporting the ideas and conclusions of yourself and others.

By planning a project in government and law 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.

A Directed Research in Government and Laws 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 Directed Research in Government and Laws project, how and when it will be done, how it will be evaluated, and how many credits will be awarded (Indigenous Studies 493 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 Directed Research in Government and Laws proposal to the course coordinator. The Directed Research in Government and Laws proposal is, in effect, the first stage in the preparation of a learning contract and in the location of a suitable project supervisor.

### The Role of the Course Coordinator

The course coordinator for Indigenous Studies 493: Directed Research in Government and Laws is a professor at Athabasca University. The coordinator’s role is to ensure that

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

### The Role of the Project Supervisor

The role of the supervisor for a Directed Research in Government and Laws project 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 Directed Research in Government and Laws 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 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 493: Directed Research in Government and Laws, a learning contract is a written agreement, jointly prepared by a student and a project supervisor, that states the learning objectives, activities to be undertaken, timelines, and criteria for evaluating the research undertaken. Once the Directed Research in Government and Laws proposal is accepted, students are given access to a Course Guide containing a more detailed course description and examples of learning contracts.

## Research Proposals

This section contains

1. examples of three hypothetical research proposals.
2. a completed research proposal form.

### Hypothetical Research Proposals

The following summaries briefly describe some hypothetical projects in Indigenous Studies 493: Individual Directed Research in Government and Laws that students might complete. We hope that they will give you an idea of the range of projects that can be undertaken, and the types of projects that supervisors and the course coordinator would consider acceptable. Note that all of the people and proposals are fictitious.

#### Analysis of the Canadian Government’s Proposed First Nation Government Legislation

Mathias E. is currently employed by a provincial government organization. In his capacity as an administrative assistant, he has realized that little or no information is available on the potential impact of the proposed federal legislation on the provincial government. Hoping to move forward in the organization, he wants to write a report that will inform both himself and any reader of issues of which the provincial government needs to be aware.

#### 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 an online database to house and store the women’s laws and to link to Indigenous women’s sources, generally.

#### Indigenous Government Effectiveness Survey

Lesley A. has read media reports that refer to “accountability” and “clarity” in Indigenous governments. She also hears discussion about Indigenous government problems and issues, but knows of none of these issues arising in her own experience. While she feels the concerns raised are grounded in racially biased notions and stereotypes, she has no proof of her belief. As a result, she decides to do primary research and conceives of creating a website that will allow individuals to answer one of three different surveys related to Indigenous government: one geared at getting responses from Indigenous citizens respecting their perceptions of Indigenous government, one geared at getting responses from Indigenous governmental officials, and one aimed at eliciting the perceptions of non-Indigenous people about Indigenous governance.

### Completed Research Proposal Form

Note that the sample completed form that follows is 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).

# Indigenous Studies 493 **Individual Research Projects in Indigenous Studies**

## Sample Project Proposal

Email to

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

Indigenous Studies, Nukskahtowin

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Course applied for: Indigenous Studies 493

Name: William Smith

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

Address: Box 15, Nipawin, Saskatchewan

Telephone number: (306) 555-5555

Athabasca University student number: 2000000

General background and educational goals:

I have been a summer student for the Town of Nipawin for three years. This year, I would like to propose programming for Indigenous students in Nipawin. I would like to address the jurisdictional issues which might face me in setting up this plan (i.e., Indigenous authorities and jurisdictions, potential funding sources, and collaborative responsibilities).

The Directed Research in Government and Laws course would allow me to tailor programming for Indigenous people in a non-Indigenous government context.

Completed university-level Indigenous Studies courses:

I have completed INST 200 and INST 377 at Athabasca University.

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

How can effective programming for Indigenous people be respectfully and representatively reflected in non-Indigenous governmental bodies? How can collaborative efforts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous entities be addressed towards Indigenous people living in areas governed by non-Indigenous governments?

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 citizens and government officials, development of responses into an information package, development of information package for citizenship 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 online resources, the University of Saskatchewan library, the Nipawin Regional Library, and materials in the Red Earth Nation government offices for development of this Directed Research in Government and Laws course.

* **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 Directed Research in Government and Laws supervisor:

[name of Athabasca University faculty member]

Expertise of proposed supervisor in project area:

Member of the Alberta bar and holder of Masters of Law from the University of Alberta.

Have you talked with this person about being an Indigenous Studies 493: Directed Research in Government and Laws supervisor?

Yes

Signature:

[signature]

### Schedule of Events

The following schedule provides a brief outline of events during the course of most Directed Research in Government and Laws 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 learns that a Directed Research in Government and Laws course is available in Indigenous Studies, and wishes to know more.
2. The student downloads the Indigenous Studies 493: Individual Directed Research in Government and Laws Course Description document from the syllabus page.

You are here already!

1. The student is interested in doing a Directed Research in Government and Laws course and submits a Directed Research in Government and Laws proposal to the course coordinator. The student also suggests a Directed Research in Government and Laws 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 Directed Research in Government and Laws project.
3. If not, the course coordinator asks the student to submit another proposal.
4. Once the Directed Research in Government and Laws 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 493. Once the student is registered and has access to their course home page, they will also be able to access the Indigenous Studies 493: Directed Research in Government and Laws Course Guide. This manual gives information on how to prepare a learning contract and how to write a Directed Research in Government and Laws project report.

**Note:** At this point, the course coordinator may assign a supervisor to oversee the research project, or may retain oversight responsibility for the project.

1. The student contacts the project supervisor and they meet, probably several times, even if it is only virtually or by phone. It is preferable that they be able to meet with the course coordinator, if she or he is not the supervisor. Together they agree on a learning contract that states the objectives of the directed research 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 or supervisor approves the contract, the student may proceed with the research project.
3. If the coordinator or supervisor does not approve the contract, she or he will point out the reasons why, suggest changes, and ask the student (and project supervisor, if appropriate) 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 and the project supervisor.

**Note:** If anything goes wrong, inform your course coordinator and the 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 by the agreed-on deadline.

**Note:** The project submitted must have the approval of the project supervisor. In case of disagreement, please contact the course coordinator.

1. The report is evaluated by the course coordinator. After consultation with the project supervisor, the coordinator prepares written comments and a grade, based on the objectives stated in the contract.
2. 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.
3. 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 important that students fill in and return this form. Regular evaluation helps ensure that the course improves over time.

**Note:** The following pages contain two copies of the standard Directed Research in Government and Laws project proposal form. *Good luck with formulating your proposal!*

# Indigenous Studies 493 **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 Directed Research in Government and Laws supervisor:

Course coordinator:

Expertise of proposed supervisor in project area:

Have you talked with this person about being an Indigenous Studies 493: Directed Research in Government and Laws supervisor?

Signature:

# Indigenous Studies 493 **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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Athabasca University student number:

General background and educational goals:

Completed university-level Indigenous Studies courses:

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Course coordinator:

Expertise of proposed supervisor in project area:

Have you talked with this person about being an Indigenous Studies 493: Directed Research in Government and Laws supervisor?

Signature: