

Course Overview

No successful international business person would go to another country to do business without researching legal and cultural differences and considering their impact on existing business processes and practices. That business person would undertake the research in-house so that in meetings they are aware, up to speed, and respectful. It's unlikely they would just ask their potential partner to "fill them in." So, why wouldn't you research the nation you're consulting with or the community you're visiting? It's not up to the community to educate you.

–Joseph and Joseph (2019, n.p.)¹

This quote from Bob and Cynthia F. Joseph highlights the importance of understanding the cultural and legal context in which businesses operate. Legal issues specific to Indigenous Peoples in Canada are complex and evolving, but this course will provide you with the foundational knowledge necessary to conduct more targeted research specific to particular Indigenous Nations and communities. You will develop a familiarity with approaches in business that are guided by respect for Indigenous protocols and processes of Indigenous empowerment.

An essential aspect of this course is that it is guided by the principles of Indigenous ways of knowing:

- Experience is a legitimate form of knowledge.
- Storytelling is a foundational way of sharing knowledge.
- Reciprocity and relationship are foundational tools for Indigenous engagement.
- Collectivity and fluidity are principles of Indigenous engagement.

Through exposure to Indigenous stories, law, and languages, you will begin to identify worldview differences and improve comprehension in business and social activities. You will also consider how historical and contemporary elements of Indigenous-settler relations, as well as the unique governance structures and laws of different Indigenous Nations, can impact businesses. This will help you communicate more successfully in a broad range of business contexts and avoid the risks associated with cultural misunderstandings.

However, it is important to avoid a “pan-Indian” perspective on Indigenous issues, which obscures important differences between Indigenous Nations and communities. To that end, this course incorporates material from a variety of First Nations and Aboriginal authors with distinct and diverse perspectives.

This course draws from interdisciplinary materials to facilitate the development of communication skills across a range of academic disciplines. Language and terminology are perhaps the most important aspect of this course. Several key concepts will be introduced in early lessons and explored further in later lessons. Exploring the terms used throughout the course materials will help students understand the complexity of Indigenous business.

¹ Joseph, B., & Joseph, C. F. (2019). *Indigenous relations: Insights, tips and suggestions to make reconciliation a reality*. Indigenous Relations Press.