# Indigenous Studies 391 **Group 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 a group of students interested in an area of Indigenous Studies. Students registering in Indigenous Studies 391 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 391: Group 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 students 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 391: Group Research Projects in Indigenous Studies?

Indigenous Studies 391: Group 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 a group of students, an approved project supervisor, and Athabasca University. It is an advanced course, intended for students who have completed the foundation courses.

Indigenous Studies 391: Group 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 students and the research project supervisor in a learning contract among the students, 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 391 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.

A group of 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 391: Group 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 students and the research project supervisor.

### The Role of the Project Supervisor

The role of the research project supervisor is to

1. help the students 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 students fulfil the contract.
3. provide information (verbal or written) to the students.
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 students wish to study.

### The Learning Contract

In Indigenous Studies research projects, a learning contract is a written agreement, jointly prepared by the students and a research project supervisor, that states the learning objectives, activities to be undertaken, timelines, and criteria for evaluating the research project undertaken, including feedback on the group process. 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 is an example of a hypothetical proposal form that shows the kind of research project that students propose. Please note that this example 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).

**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 391 **Group 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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Course applied for: INST 391

Names: [15 students]

Email addresses: appended

* Please make sure to append this information.

Address: c/o President’s Office, First Nations College, P.O. Box 279 Grande Prairie, AB

Athabasca University student number: appended

* Please make sure to append this information.

General background and educational goals:

Institutional request for a research project pertaining to the oral and written histories of residential schools in Canada. All students have credit for the University transfer course INST 200 and would like to complete a research project as part of their degree requirements for graduation.

Completed university-level Indigenous Studies courses:

Indigenous Studies 200 (equivalency).

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

The students would like to determine the effect of Western religion and educational institutions on the traditional learning techniques of Indigenous peoples in and around Northern Alberta.

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.

The students will examine published studies and locate those oral interviews already recorded.

The students will follow traditional and academic protocols and ethical procedures to interview, interpret, and transcribe the words of elders and educators in the chosen First Nations.

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):

The students will use the electronic databases at AU as well as research sites on the Web. All students have access to a college and public library.

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

Expected start date: September 6

Expected completion date: within six months of start date

Possible project supervisor:

Course Coordinator

Expertise of proposed supervisor in project area:

N/A

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

Yes

Signatures:

[signatures]

### 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 students submit a project proposal to the course coordinator. The students also suggest 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 students to submit another proposal.
4. Once the project is deemed suitable, the course coordinator informs the students, asks them to register with the University, and to each pay the tuition fee for Indigenous Studies 391. Once the students are registered and have access to their course home page, they will also be able to access the Indigenous Studies 391: Group 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 students contact the course coordinator or project supervisor and they meet, probably several times, even if it is only virtually or by conference call. 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 students 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 students:
2. If the coordinator approves the contract, the students 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 students and project supervisor to reconsider the contract.
4. Once the course coordinator approves the contract, the students work on the project and report 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 students submit 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 students, and informs the Office of the Registrar of the final grade.
4. The students fill 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 Indigenous Studies students. 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**

A group of students is currently employed by a national Indigenous organization. In their capacities as educators and administrators, they have access to many published sources related to First Nations education. They are 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

A group of students want to spend the summer visiting with the older women in their communities and recording the traditional Dene laws governing women’s conduct and lifestyles. They also want to research and prepare a bibliography of sources related to Indigenous women’s laws.

#### History of First Nations Communities

A group of students are Political Studies majors at the University of British Columbia. They want to organize a research project to examine the history of a particular First Nation in the context of interaction with non-First-Nation neighbours. They want to do so to establish proof of their 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!*

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## Project Proposal

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

Indigenous Studies, Nukskahtowin

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Names:

Email addresses:

* Please make sure to append this information.

Addresses:

* Please make sure to append this information.

Athabasca University student numbers:

* Please make sure to append this information.

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 students’ 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?

Signatures:

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