



FIRE KEEPERS

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AT TRENT UNIVERSITY

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1964

Mississauga Anishnaabe of Curve Lake First Nation among group of original donors who banded together to help create Trent University

1969

Trent creates Canada's first Department of Indigenous Studies, then known as the Department of Indian and Eskimo Studies

FIRST IN CANADA

Trent launches a Bachelor of Arts degree in Native Studies

1972

Native Studies Lounge opened in Otonabee College, the first Aboriginal student space at a Canadian University

1973

Trent names largest lecture theatre on campus in honour of Chanie Wenjack, recognizing the impact of Indian Residential Schools in Canada

1999

Trent launches Canada's first Indigenous Studies Ph.D. program and establishes the Indigenous Studies' Ph.D. Council - Creating a vision to guide the development and implementation of the program. This council still meets regularly and continues to provide guidance.

FIRST IN CANADA

...2016

Unique Indigenous Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program launched, putting Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives at the forefront of teacher training.

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OVERVIEW OF THE FIRE KEEPERS PROGRAM

- An experiential learning opportunity for students in Education programs
- Aspiring teachers learn to host social fires in the School of Education tipi
- Work with Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers

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SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES

- i) build positive relationships and community with Knowledge Keepers and with those attending the fires;
- ii) understand and apply protocols and practices while hosting a social fire;
- iii) infuse Indigenous Knowledge into the education program;
- iv) collaborate with the First Peoples House of Learning who provides the necessary safety training and traditional protocols of hosting a social fire;
- v) demonstrate safety of handling an axe, care for a burn, starting and putting out a fire.



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WHAT DO FIREKEEPERS DO?

- Host weekly social fires
- Maintain a welcoming Traditional Area
 - *Offer guests a smudge (pending)*
- Build meaningful relationships with Elders/Traditional Knowledge holders
- Explore Traditional Teachings associated with the fire – Doug Williams
 - *Ceremony Fire vs social/utility fire*
- Participate in Indigenous events on campus
 - *Elders Gathering*
 - *Traditional Teachings*
 - *Indigenous Women's Symposium*



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WHAT DO FIREKEEPERS DO?

- Learn about the meaning of a Traditional Area
- Build capacity to create an Indigenous space in schools
- Connect learning from courses to the Traditional Area e.g., positive learning environment
- Engage in reflection processes:
 - *Daily logs*
 - *Traditional Teaching reflection papers*
 - *Reflection notebooks*
 - *Sharing circles*



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BROAD OUTCOMES OF INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP

- i) Through role as a learning Fire Keeper who develops and shares Indigenous Knowledge, fire keeping skills, and a deep understanding of cultural practices related to fire keeping
- ii) Through the setting of a positive and safe environment in the tipi during a fire
- iii) In preparation to become Head Fire Keepers – a paid placement



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WISE PRACTICES*

- Receive authentic knowledge/training from local Indigenous Knowledge holders
- Explore an Indigenous way of knowing through reflective work
- Build reciprocal relationships with Indigenous students, faculty, and the wider College/University community

* Wesley-Esquimaux, C. C., & Snowball, A. (2010). Viewing violence, mental illness and addiction through a wise practices lens. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 8(2), 390-407.



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