



# Indigenous Student Community Wellbeing Index

University of Ottawa

January-April 2017

# Executive Summary

## Background

- The University of Ottawa is one of Canada's oldest and largest universities.
- The University's history with Indigenous peoples goes back to its inception... and it is not all positive.
- While the landscape is changing, Indigenous students at uOttawa still face barriers.

## Introduction

- To identify these barriers, the EAS3101 class undertook a Community Wellbeing Index (CWI).
- The CWI explores the wellbeing of Indigenous students with respect to indicators.

# Executive Summary (cont'd)

## Methods

- The CWI was completed using a two-eyed seeing approach to research.
  - Community Advisory Committee
  - Student Sharing Circle (focus group)
  - Additional Sampling

## Results/Discussion

- Researchers identified common elements within participant suggested indicators.
  - Indigenous culture and community on campus
  - Creating accessible safe spaces
  - Professors and curriculum
  - Indigenizing the academy

## Next Steps

- The CWI does not end here.
  - Survey to remain open.
  - Additional EAS3101 classes.

# Objective

This presentation aims to introduce the **Indigenous Student Community Wellbeing Index**. As such it provides insight as to its purpose, methodology, results and next steps.



# Outline

- Executive Summary
- Background
  - uOttawa's history
  - The Indigenous student body
- Introduction
  - CWI project
- Methods
  - Community Advisory Committee
  - Sampling
- Results & discussion questions
- Next Steps





# The University of Ottawa is one of Canada's oldest and largest universities.

- Founded in **1848**, the University of Ottawa, is the largest bilingual (English-French) university in the world.
  - Located at the **heart of Canada's capital**, Ottawa.
  - Home to more than **40,000 undergraduate and graduate students**, and **5000 employees**.
  - Offers more than **450 programs** in **10 faculties**.



## The University's history with Indigenous peoples goes back to its inception... and it is not all positive.

- In 1848, Bishop Guigues opened a major college in Bytown. In 1856 he open a new college in stone on the site of what today is the University of Ottawa appointing Father Joseph Tabaret to superior.
- Bishop Guigues was a huge proponent of colonization and established a society for colonization of which he headed.
- The college served as a training house for the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The Oblates were the most widespread missionary organization whose **“interest in missionary work among Canada's...Indians and...Eskimos has been maintained for over 100 years”**.
- The Oblates activities have reached the peak of maintaining 199 mission posts, including 41 **missionary schools**, in Canada.



# While the landscape is changing, Indigenous students at uOttawa still face barriers.



## Underrepresented

- There are currently **500 registered Indigenous students** studying at the University of Ottawa.
  - i.e. Those who self-identify as Indigenous on their applications through the Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC).
- However, there is strong evidence to suggest that many Indigenous students choose not to identify in their application.
  - **Estimates** as to the actual number range between **1000-1300** Indigenous students.

## High Attrition Rate

- Approximately **30% of Indigenous students drop out** of uOttawa after first year. This is 10% higher than non-Indigenous students.

## Few Indigenous Professors

- **Only 9 Indigenous professors** teaching in 4 different faculties.
  - 4 teach in the Faculty of Law, Common Law Section and 3 teach in the Faculty of Arts



# Introduction

To identify these barriers, the EAS3101 class undertook a **Community Wellbeing Index**.

- **EAS3101-Research and Methodologies in Aboriginal Studies**
  - Course Description: Study and analysis of methodologies associated with Indigenous approaches to research.
- As part of the class material, students worked to develop a **Community Wellbeing Index (CWI)**, with respect to specific Indigenous issues (indicators) on-campus.

## The CWI explores the wellbeing of Indigenous students with respect to indicators.

1. Students' **present level of satisfaction** regarding specific indicators and their general level of satisfaction with respect to Indigenous issues at the University overall, and
2. Students' **anticipated level of satisfaction** regarding specific Indigenous issues on campus (indicators) given specified annual improvements, and their anticipated general level of satisfaction with respect to Indigenous issues at the University overall should the specified annual improvements be made. \*

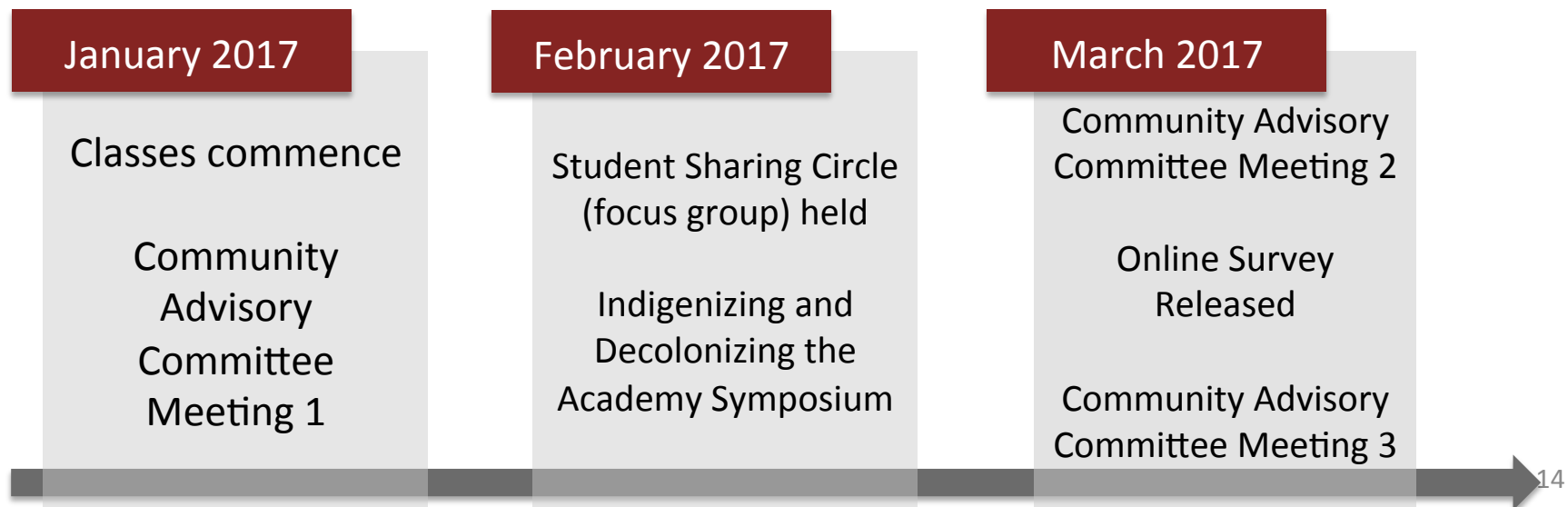
*\*To be completed in subsequent classes.*



# Methods

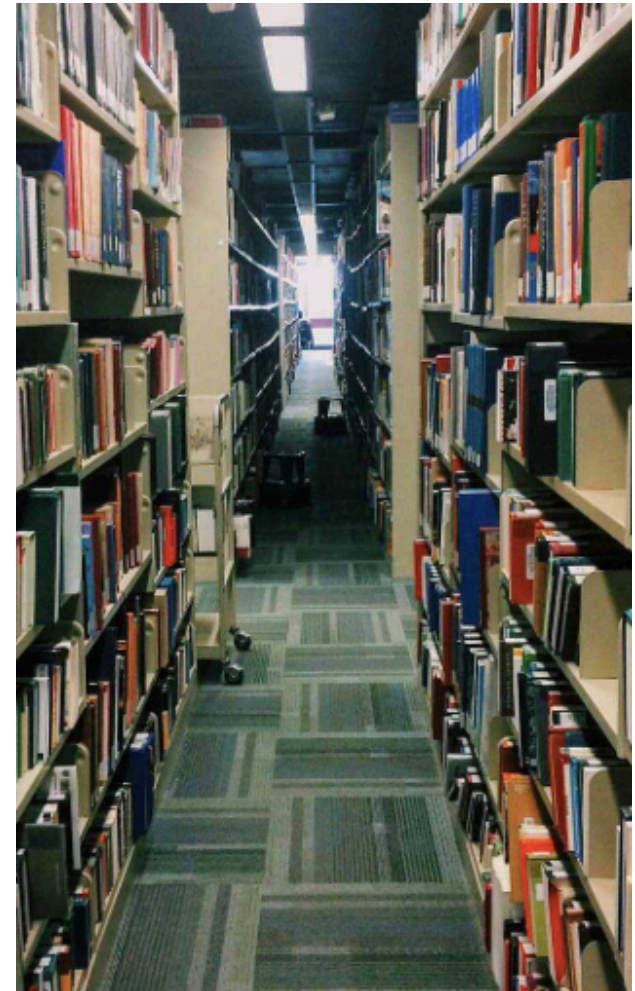
# The CWI was completed using a two-eyed seeing approach to research.

- **The two-eyed seeing approach:** conducting research calling upon strengths of Indigenous and Western knowledges and ways of knowing.
  - Study contains **both qualitative and quantitative components:**
    - Qualitative: oral account from Focus Group, individual discussions and survey comments.
    - Quantitative: survey data collected using an Online Survey.



# Element 1- Community Advisory Committee

- A **Community Advisory Committee (CAC)**, consisting of experts (most of whom were Indigenous) was created to **oversee the development** of the project and **provided insights** to student researchers.
  - Members came from **varied backgrounds**:
    - Undergraduate and graduate student associations
    - uOttawa staff and specialists
    - Consultants specialized in Indigenous populations
    - Traditional knowledge keepers
- Over the course of the semester the CAC **met on 2 separate occasions** and provided insights related to:
  - Key issues of concern to students
  - Methodology
  - Accessing information
  - Presentation of findings

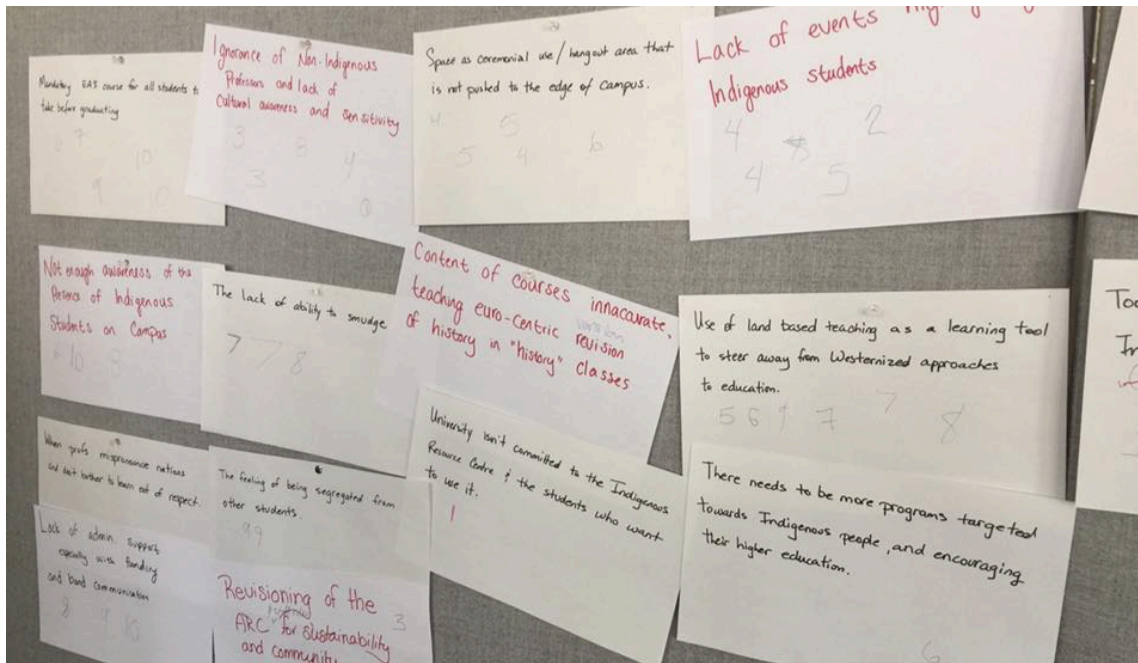


## Element 2- Student Sharing Circle

- A student knowledge sharing circle (focus group), was held early in the research process to identify key indicators
  - Participants: Indigenous students at the University of Ottawa.
    - N=6; five First Nations, one Metis.
    - Methodology for gathering participants: Snowball sampling.
  - Format:
    1. Participants were asked to write down their top concerns as Indigenous students. Written issues collected and compiled with sharing circle input.
    2. Sharing circle round 1: Participants asked to discuss key issues and explain related impacts. Researchers recorded participant comments.
    3. Sharing circle round 2: Participants were asked if they had anything further to add. Researchers recorded participant comments.
    4. Key issues (indicators) identified via the written component and rounds 1 and 2 were placed on a board and participants were asked to rank the identified key issues from 1-10 (1 = highest priority issue)



## Element 3- Additional Sampling



- **Online Survey:** A confidential survey was developed and sent out to uOttawa Indigenous students.
  - Media: Fluid Surveys
  - Dissemination technique: Online distribution (email, social media)
- **Indigenizing and Decolonizing the Academy Symposium** (February 27, 28): A booth was kept at the symposium for attendees wishing to rank the key issues, as identified by the sharing circle participants, from highest to lowest.



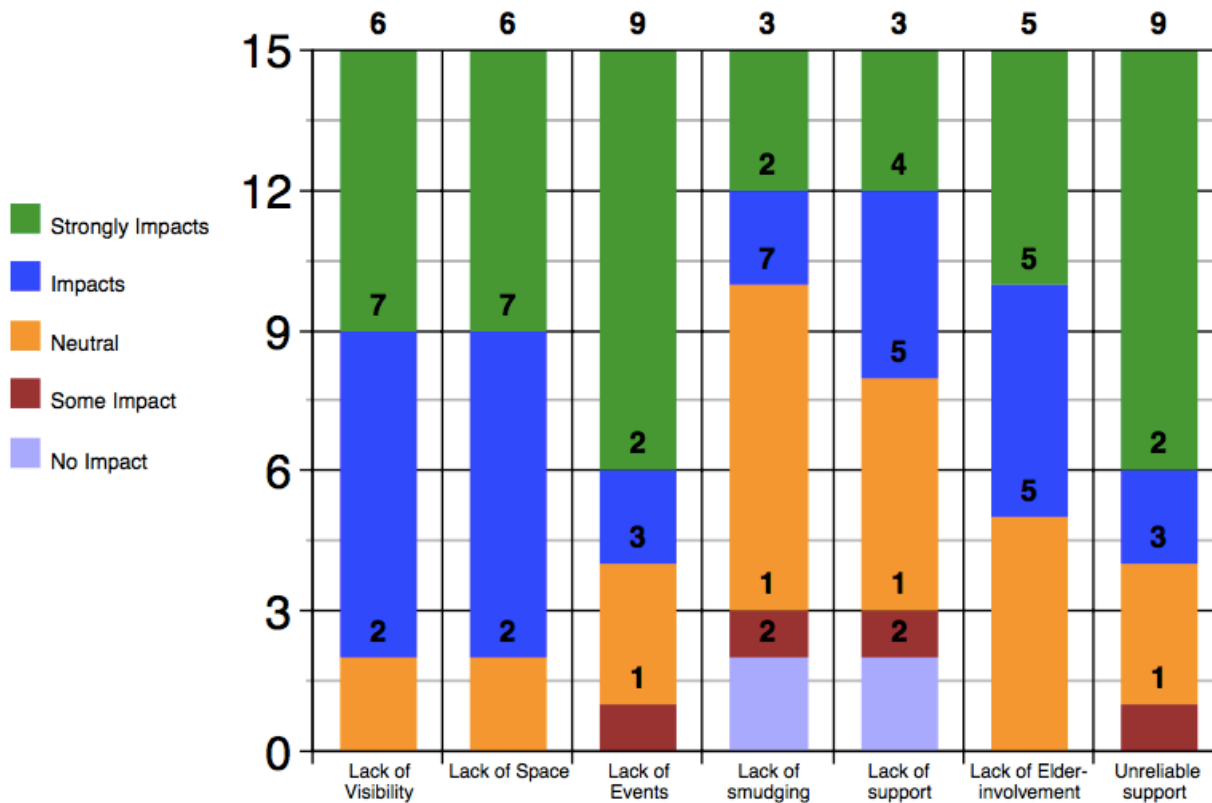
# Results/Discussion

# Researchers identified common elements within participant suggested indicators.

- Indigenous culture and community on campus
- Creating accessible safe spaces
- Professors and curriculum
- Indigenizing the academy



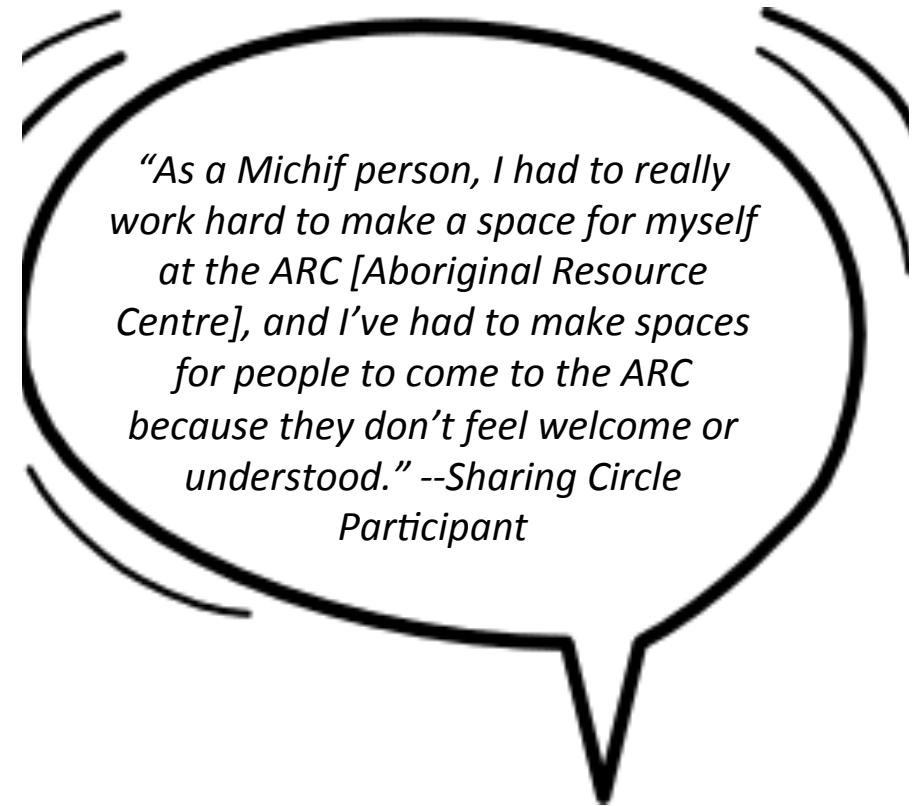
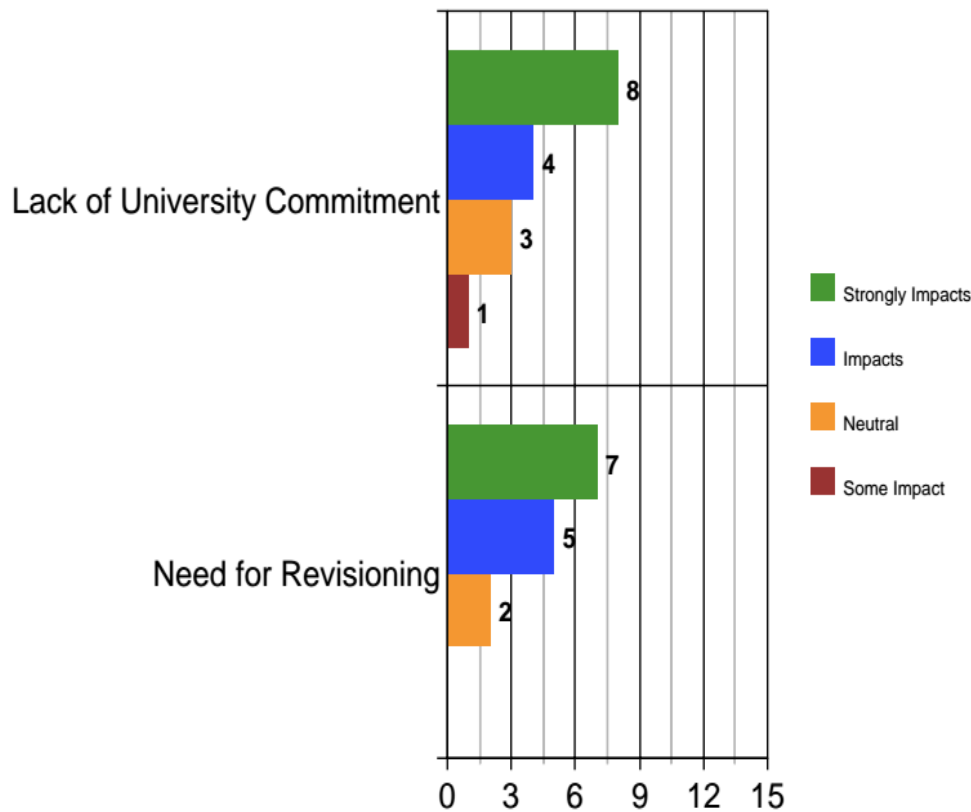
# Major Theme 1: Indigenous Culture and Community on Campus



*"I don't know if I would choose the University of Ottawa again because of the lack of community. [Indigenous student support] It's not easy to find."*  
 --Sharing Circle Participant

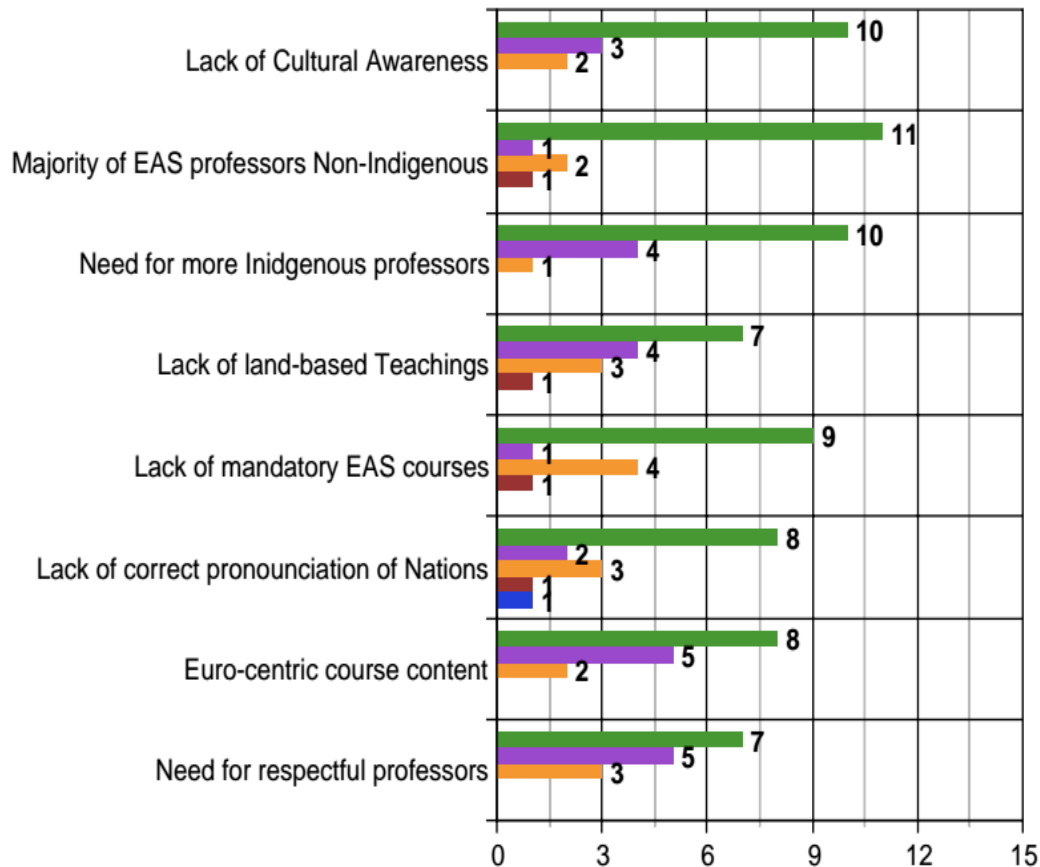
**Q:** What role does the University of Ottawa play in relation to improving Indigenous culture and community on campus? What has been done by other Universities in this regard? How can we use these best practices?

# Major Theme 2: Creating Accessible Safe Spaces



**Q:** Why do you think it important for Indigenous students to have accessible safe spaces? Would it be difficult to accommodate?

# Major Theme 3: Professors and Curriculum

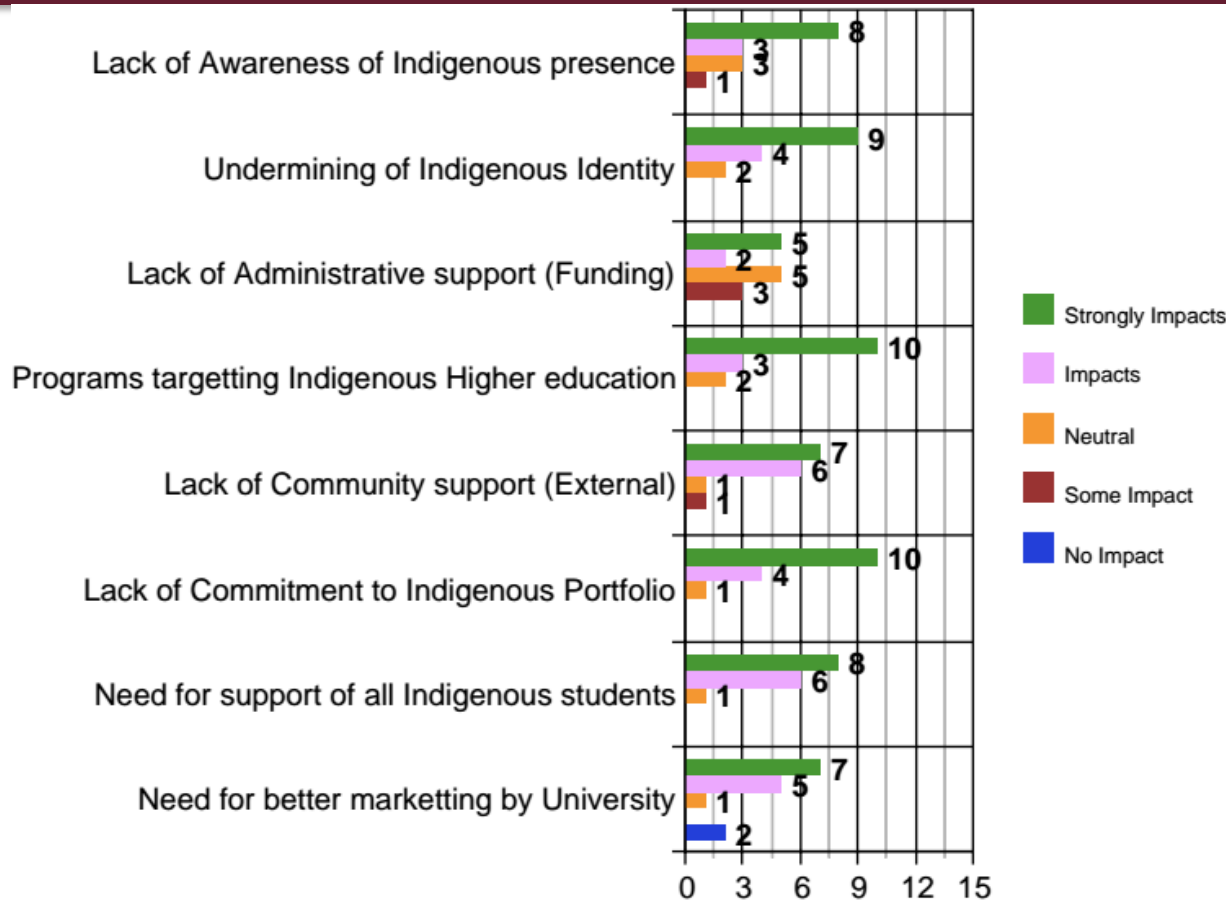


*“The classes I enjoy the most in the Aboriginal studies program have Indigenous professors. I haven't had a very bad experience with non-Indigenous professors, but they [Indigenous profs] bring a whole lot more [Indigenous knowledge and background] that I can connect with”*

*--Sharing Circle Participant*

**Q:** Why do you think it important that Indigenous professors teach courses related to Aboriginal studies, from an Indigenous student’s perspective? A non-Indigenous student’s perspective?

# Major Theme 4: Indigenizing the Academy



*"I don't know if I would choose the University of Ottawa again because of the lack of community. Indigenous student support] it's not easy to find."*  
 --Sharing Circle Participant

**Q:** What does "Indigenizing the Academy" mean to you? What could be a first step in going about doing this?



# Next Steps



## The CWI does not end here.

- **Survey to remain open:** The survey will remain open to allow for additional responses.
  - Deliverable will be updated as more data comes in.
- **Additional EAS3101 classes:** The next Research and Methodologies in Aboriginal Studies class will continue the project to obtain a greater sample of views/input from Indigenous students.
  - Non-Indigenous students to be added in subsequent years.