

Press Release

**Animating Mi'kmaw Humanities in Atlantic Canada**

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada has granted the University of Saskatchewan \$249,858 for a three-year project to “Animate the Mi'kmaw Humanities”. Principal Investigator Dr. Marie Battiste will collaborate with Mi'kmaw scholars and teachers, working in a respectful and continuing partnership with scholars at the University of Saskatchewan—Drs. Lynne Bell, Art and Art History; Isobel Findlay, Edwards School of Business; Len Findlay, English; and Sakej Henderson, Law—who bring a blend of intercultural and interdisciplinary knowledge, skills, and talents to the task of animating the Mi'kmaw humanities in the educational enterprise, whether in elementary, secondary or postsecondary contexts.

While contemporary societies are moving toward an inclusive and informed vision of humanity connected to the realities of a diverse population, humanities studies in conventional institutions and curricula have largely ignored Indigenous peoples' humanities. “In the educational environment, including but not limited to residential schools, Aboriginal people's experiences are relayed in spoken and unspoken messages, complete with statistics telling them that it is not okay to be who they are. Children suffer the most from these experiences,” says Dr. Battiste. The humanities have thus ignored or undermined core capacities and the rich legacy of Indigenous knowledge that should inform the concept of human nature and nourish each learning spirit—and could engender new ways of thinking, innovations that could benefit diverse communities who share a fragile planet.

As a result, this research project is designed to remedy past abuses of educational practice and to generate inclusive humanities, in particular, building new theoretical, practical, and methodological approaches derived from Mi'kmaw knowledge to promote public understandings about the place of the Mi'kmaq in Atlantic Canada, contributing to a vibrant agenda for much delayed educational change and new relations within and across communities.

The research will ultimately articulate Mi'kmaw humanity through focused research of Mi'kmaw textual and oral traditions, stories, legends, visual expressions, and analysis of language structures. Such a focus will reveal a unique humanity and worldview in multiple forms. In a series of structured dialogues, the team will engage with the Mi'kmaw community of Elders, educators, scholars, and leaders.

Drawing on Mi'kmaw intellectual, cultural, and economic capacity, the research seeks to shift educational and public discourses about the Mi'kmaq from deficiency to accomplishment, from misunderstanding to respect, from exasperation to pride, and from division to co-operation. While education has been part of the problem for the Mi'kmaq, it must now become, quickly and emphatically, part of the solution.