



**CANADA FOUNDATION FOR INNOVATION
Innovation Fund**

Notice of Intent

1. Completed NOIs must be submitted by the Associate Dean (Research)/Research Liaison Officer of the “Lead” Unit to the Office of Research Services to: Birtukan.Gebretsadik@umanitoba.ca by May 15, 2018.

| | |
|--|---|
| Proposed name of project: Investigating Indigenous Language Education: A Research Commons | Estimated Total Project Costs: \$236,600 |
| Designated Project Leader/Faculty/Dept: Frank Deer, Faculty of Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| List Principal Users/Faculty/Dept: | |
| 1. Dr. Laara Fitznor | C <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Dr. Sandra Kouritzin | C <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Dr. Cary Miller | C <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ‘Lead’ Unit ADR/RLO: | |
| Name: Charlotte Enns | |

Briefly describe (max 1 page, 12 pt. font size, 2 cm margins):

- The proposed research and how it is world-class, innovative and demonstrates clear benefits to Canada.
- The infrastructure and how it will enhance the University’s existing research capacity.
- The excellence of the team, including expertise and existing collaborations necessary to conduct the proposed research.
- Plans to secure matching funds and the potential funding sources for the operation and maintenance of the infrastructure.

Proposed Name of the Project: Investigating Indigenous Language Education: A Research Commons

Estimated Project Cost: \$236,600

Brief Description

Indigenous languages in Canada are in crisis. As schools have become increasingly responsible for incorporating culturally relevant material/programs to reflect their respective Indigenous communities (Deer, 2012), the notion of language revitalization as an essential part of personal and communal growth of Indigenous peoples in a post-colonial era (social development) and identity affirmation has become increasingly important (Bear Nicholas, 2008). In speaking specifically about Cree people and their ancestral language, Treuer (2001) stated, “at stake is the future of not only the language, but the knowledge contained within the language, the...connection to the past, to the earth, and to the future” (p. 5). It is this relationship between language and culture that drives efforts to develop Indigenous language programming (McCarty & Nicholas, 2014).

The purpose of *Investigating Indigenous Language Education: A Research Commons* (“the Commons”) is to support research that investigates Indigenous languages and thereby supports Indigenous language revitalization in primary and secondary schools and Indigenous community contexts. The Commons would be developed to principally support the programme of research of Frank Deer, Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Education. The general purpose of Frank’s programme of research is 1) to understand the ways in which Indigenous languages are important to the social development and cultural identities of Indigenous peoples and, 2) to understand how Canadian Indigenous language revitalization and its sustainability can be appropriately incorporated into primary and secondary schools.

There are some fundamental challenges to developing and sustaining Indigenous language education. This is particularly apparent when Indigenous languages are brought into the realm of the trans-cultural commons where English and/or French are the *lingua franca* - the languages of conducting official business, including educational discourse. Contemporary efforts to support language revitalization are adversely affecting the revitalization journey by failing to privilege the Indigenous meanings of Indigenous languages, and failing to understand that Indigenous languages are primary oral languages unable to maintain their integrity when taught through standard writing-focused programs such as those commonly used in teaching foreign languages. For language revitalization to be successful, the friction between Indigenous languages and English translation, and the impact of this friction on Indigenous culture, must be explored.

The Commons will be necessary to facilitate dialogue across communities and to develop resources that are responsive to the needs of indigenous languages with the use of appropriate technology. The Commons will be of use for other researchers who are interested in indigenous language education as well as for those with similar areas of scholarly interest such as narrative research in indigenous education, English as an Additional Language, and Native Studies. As a platform for discussion of Indigenous identity issues in Canada and abroad, the Commons will be focused not merely on Canada, but also in international contexts. Collaborators such as Dr. Sandra Kouritzin and Dr. Carry Miller, whose work has been in Asian and American contexts respectively, will find the Commons to be an important space in which indigenous research may be conducted.

Infrastructure

The Commons will be a research space that will serve the purposes of indigenous language research as well as those involved in indigenous community research projects. The focal point of the Commons is a research facility that will be responsive of Indigenous peoples and their cultural, political and intellectual traditions. The Commons will facilitate research into the Canadian indigenous experience with a focus upon languages, community, and spirituality. The Commons will offer researchers an opportunity to engage with indigenous peoples and knowledge that will facilitate partnership development between the University of Manitoba and First Nation, Metis and Inuit communities. This space will exist in response to the University of Manitoba’s strategic plan *Taking Our Place* where the *Creating Pathways to Indigenous Achievement* priority area to which our university is committed. Specifically, the goal of “enhancing the University’s research capacity on issues of importance to Indigenous peoples and populations” has informed the conception of the Commons as a safe space in which indigenous research may take place.

The Commons is planned to be closely associated with the forthcoming indigenous space that is planned in an adjacent room in the Faculty of Education. Due to the shared hope that both spaces will offer a climate that is reflective of indigenous peoples and cultures. Thus, a connection, by way of a door, will allow research to take place in both areas as the need arises. This may be particularly important with large meetings for the purposes of research consultations, presentations, and other events.

A small enclosed room, in the northwest corner of the identified space which may be accessible to the next room’s indigenous space as described above, would contain such things as a fridge, ceremonial materials,

and other items that may be stored. A sink with running water would be in this room.

Because The Commons would be one in which indigenous research would take place, the climate of the room should be affected in such a way as to reflect indigenous art, symbolism and motifs. Any furniture (especially the meeting room) should reflect indigenous culture and experience.

The Commons would require the following technology:

- Networking equipment that facilitates video and audio conferencing that will suit the infrastructure needs stated above. The Cisco Webex Room Series may serve as an example.
- Audio Recording equipment:
- Hardware: M-Audio M-Track 2X2 Vocal Studio Pro Bundle; Yamaha 01V96 V2 Digital Mixer
- Appropriate size and style conference table (the nice ones with the network and electrical outlets on them) with comfy chairs.
- Work station with computer and other equipment.

Excellence of the Team

In being asked to provide up to six users for the Commons, the applicant has assembled a team of researchers for whom indigenous research has been a strong interest. The applicant is Frank Deer, who is a Kanien'kéhaka scholar from Kahnawà:ke – keepers of the eastern door of the Haudenosaunee territory. Frank brings his knowledge and expertise in indigenous research to the Commons. Frank is an Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair in the Faculty of Education. Frank has been studying indigenous language education for several years and has served as a classroom teacher and school administrator in remote northern settings and in Winnipeg's inner city. He has acquired valuable experience working with Cree and other indigenous groups while working as a researcher for First Nations schools in Manitoba, an experience that has fostered the development of strong relationships with Cree schools and communities in Manitoba. Frank is currently completing several externally-funded projects in the area of indigenous education – many of which are focused on languages.

Frank is joined on this Notice of Intent by three other researchers whose work will complement that of the applicant quite well. Dr. Laara Fitznor (Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology) has been researching indigenous education for over 20 years. Dr. Sandra Kouritzin (Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning) specializes in English as an Additional Language and her work in second language learning complements that of the applicant and the Commons. Finally, Dr. Carry Miller (Department of Native Studies) will be working in the Commons as a researcher and administrator in her role as a Department Head that is actively working toward improved scholarship in the area of indigenous languages.

Matching Funds/Potential Funding Sources

The Faculty of Education has secured matching funds through its operating costs, and has budgeted for ongoing maintenance of this facility, including replenishing materials and supplies, and custodial services.