

The Department of Indigenous Studies vehemently condemns the anti-Indigenous rhetoric routinely disseminated by former MRU professor Frances Widdowson and deplores the fact that she is being given a platform to legitimize that discourse on our campus. Widdowson has left us in no doubt as to her positions; she has regularly espoused these views through published articles, public speaking, broadcast podcasts, and other public forums. She specifically denounces the TRC's classification of the Residential School system as genocide and disputes the veracity of the unmarked graves of Indigenous children found at the sites of multiple former Residential School sites.

The facts of the Residential School system and the experiences of Indigenous children within that system were rigorously established through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

- At least 150,000 Indigenous children across multiple generations were removed from their families and communities.
- They were processed through an alien education system that was designed to forcibly remove all vestiges of their original identities, cultures, and languages.
- These policies, which are a matter of historical record within Canada, clearly meet the United Nations definition of genocide, as listed in Article II of the [*Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*](#).
- Such was the extent of the abuses suffered by Indigenous children within this system that Pope Francis formally apologized “for the evil committed by so many Christians against the Indigenous peoples.”[1]

The University of Lethbridge's land acknowledgement states that,

Our University's name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University is located in traditional Blackfoot Confederacy territory. We honour the Blackfoot people and their traditional ways of knowing in caring for this land, as well as all Indigenous Peoples who have helped shape and continue to strengthen our University community.

This honoring must include a commitment from all faculty to ensure that Indigenous histories, cultures, memories, and lives, past and present, are represented faithfully, truthfully, and safely, on this campus. It must be a commitment to social justice. It must be a commitment to stand next to Indigenous students on our campus, Indigenous staff and faculty, as well as the communities upon whose territory we sit, and the communities to whom those students, faculty, and staff, belong. It must be a commitment from all faculty to ensure that Indigenous Peoples of all generations and nations are welcomed and acknowledged across campus. It must be a commitment from all faculty to vigorously reject ideologies which continue to propagate violence against Indigenous Peoples through the rhetoric of historical erasure, dismissal, diminishment, and dehumanization, such as that espoused by Dr. Widdowson.

That this scheduled public lecture has been granted space within Iniskim is a betrayal of every one of those commitments.

The Department of Indigenous Studies – January 2023

[1] <https://apnews.com/article/pope-francis-canada-apology-visit137ad23719603e9d370257f257ec0163>