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Alberta teachers to benefit from linkage of U of L FNMI education database to provincial resource

A database of educational resources for First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) learners developed at the University of Lethbridge will gain wider exposure and use when it is added to resources at the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia (ARPDC) today.

Dawn Burleigh, a professor in the Faculty of Education, oversees the FNMI Curriculum Collection, a database of more than 1,200 educational resources that bring an FNMI perspective to the Alberta curriculum.

“As I see it, First Nations, Métis and Inuit education is the responsibility of all teachers in all classrooms with all students,” says Burleigh. “The new Truth and Reconciliation report has a number of action items related to education and, if teachers are agents in that system, they have to be informed about how to address First Nations, Métis and Inuit issues in the classroom. We also have to uphold our obligations under the treaties.”

The database was started several years ago by Dr. Cathy Campbell, a retired U of L education professor, and Johnel Tailfeathers (BEd '89), a former U of L education instructor.

“The resources have come primarily from students and teachers in the field. Our students have utilized it over the years and contributed to it as well,” says Burleigh.

She wanted to expand the collection and connect with other existing resources so she and Solange Lalonde (BEd '06), lead developer with ARPDC's Provincial First Nations, Métis and Inuit Professional Learning Project developed a partnership. ARPDC provides professional development for teachers and is the umbrella organization for six regional consortia in the province.

Funded by Alberta Education, the ARPDC project serves as a resource to bring FNMI perspectives and content to educational programming. Lalonde has developed a

Moodle course of FNMI resources linked to the Alberta curriculum. Moodle is free software that helps educators create online courses.

“We’re still in the implementation phase where we’re trying out different professional learning opportunities, introducing new resources, developing resources and working with leadership from the school divisions that are pilots on the project,” says Lalonde.

U of L students who are Native Education majors will be spending the day cross-linking and adding the U of L resources to the ARPDC Moodle directory. Once the resources are all in one place, teachers can consult with their local communities and Aboriginal liaison workers to ensure the resource is appropriate for their region or treaty area.

“It brings more usage to the collections and makes the material more available to teachers in the field, as well as our students,” says Burleigh.

Bringing an FNMI perspective to lessons is sometimes seen as something strictly for teachers of FNMI students.

“If we want teachers to include First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives, a way to empower them is to already have the learning outcome linked to the resource,” says Lalonde, who’s also a U of L master’s of education student. “It’s meant to be an integral part of their planning process.”

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