

Indigenous University Bridging Program 30th Anniversary!

In January 1993, Mount Royal College welcomed students from the first cohort in what was then known as the Aboriginal Education Project. This milestone was the result of planning and collaboration between MRC staff and education advocates within Treaty 7. There was a shared desire to create a pathway for Aboriginal students to enter postsecondary through a program that was created and designed to meet their academic and cultural needs.

Over time, the program became known as the Aboriginal Education Program before it was renamed in 2019 to what it is today. While the name has changed, what has remained constant is the mission to provide an educational experience that honours and includes Indigenous knowledge, traditions, and values.

Currently, Mount Royal University is home to nearly 1,000 learners who represent First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities. Nearly 100 of these learners are in the bridging program, and we honour and celebrate their contributions and accomplishments. The release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action in 2015 has provided a template to guide reconciliation, and Mount Royal University continues to uphold its reputation as a welcoming and supportive environment for Indigenous learners. This is supported by the knowledge that Indigenous MRU learners are completing their programs at nearly identical rates as their non-Indigenous peers* (66.4% and 68.1%, respectively). This is remarkable given the context that the Indian Act originally forbade Indians from attending university.

In spite of these challenges, we continue to grow and the Elders who created the AEP still check in to guide and support the students. They receive a blessing at orientation and are honoured on stage when they complete their studies, the first step in what will eventually be graduation from an MRU degree or diploma.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Indigenous University Bridging Program, and throughout the year we will be sharing stories from students, alumni, and staff to hear about their experiences and memories. If you would like to share your story, please contact Christy Lowrance at: clowrance@mtroyal.ca for more details.

* MRU 2021-22 Annual Report, page 9.