

# Aboriginal Student Guide



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# Territorial Acknowledgement

Mount Saint Vincent University is built on unceded Mi'kmaq territory. We pay respect to the aboriginal custodianship of this land and to elders past and present.





# A message of support

Oki. I'm Patrick Small Legs-Nagge, Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Affairs – a position that shows MSVU's commitment to ensuring a strategic focus at the highest level on programs and policy that support Aboriginal student learners. I accepted this role because I understand the need for higher learning and am dedicated to supporting you, and other Indigenous students, throughout your educational journey.

Learning will continue throughout your life, as it has for me. I started my post-secondary education in the 1980s, obtaining a diploma in social work. Why did I choose social work? It was the injustices that I saw happening to Indigenous people across this country that made me want to create positive social change within Indigenous communities. Social work was one way to challenge structural and systemic norms. I went on to complete undergrad and graduate studies in social work, specializing in community development. I accepted a position within the government, and quickly learned I would need further education to enter senior administrative positions. So, I obtained a diploma in management and became proficient in French. This journey showed me just how important education is, and that there is always an opportunity for further learning.

As a First Nation student over the years, I saw little in the way of Indigenous supports on university and college campuses. Today, institutions like MSVU understand the need to be inclusive. I encourage you to use the many resources available at the University, including the Aboriginal Student Centre (ASC). Whether it be through counselling and/or academic support, assistance with housing needs, or simply just being there to listen, the ASC is a welcoming environment with friendly, helpful and supportive staff.

## **Patrick Small Legs-Nagge, MSW**

*Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Affairs*

*As Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Affairs, Patrick provides leadership to MSVU in meeting the University's commitment to reconciliation. Patrick also helps provide strategic direction on Aboriginal Affairs and develops initiatives, programs and policies that respond to the needs of students, the Aboriginal community, and the institution.*



The Naming Ceremony for MSVU President & Vice-Chancellor Mary Bluechardt held at the ASC. Her spiritual name is Silver White Wolf Woman.



Aboriginal Garden



ASC study space

# Aboriginal Student Centre



## PJILA' SI (WELCOME) TO YOUR HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Located in a cozy house on Melody Drive (lower level - access off of College Road), the Aboriginal Student Centre (ASC) supports students in an educational and culturally engaging space on the MSVU campus. As part of a larger strategy dedicated to creating a welcoming environment for Indigenous students attending the University, the ASC is a space where students can meet and chat and also have access to a resident counsellor who can help them navigate any questions or concerns pertaining to their student life.

## OUR SERVICES

The ASC offers academic advising, counselling, referrals, cultural and traditional activities, social support, and so much more.

## OUR STAFF

At the ASC, you'll find the Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Affairs, the Coordinator of Aboriginal Student Services, and the ASC Assistant. They are all here to support you throughout your MSVU journey.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO AT THE ASC?

At the ASC you'll find computer stations; access to Wi-Fi; a group study area with a large table to seat up to 12 people; a lounge with comfortable seating; a large-screen TV; printing and faxing services; and a growing collection of Aboriginal-based resource materials – many of which are available for loan.

## ABORIGINAL GARDEN

Students, faculty and staff are welcome to tend to our garden, filled with tobacco, sage, sunflowers, kale, and perennials. The ASC also dries the plants, particularly tobacco, to be used for smudging.



The Aboriginal Student Centre is supported by TD Bank Group.  
Learn more at [msvu.ca/ASC](https://msvu.ca/ASC)

# Aboriginal Student Centre events

The ASC hosts a range of events throughout the year, including:

## **ASC OPEN HOUSE AND ORIENTATION**

Held every fall, this special open house gives Aboriginal students the chance to visit the ASC, meet our Aboriginal Student Services Coordinator, connect with other students and find out all that MSVU has to offer.

## **TREATY DAY CELEBRATION & MI'KMAW HISTORY MONTH**

Treaty Day is held annually on October 1 and marks the beginning of Mi'kmaw History Month in Nova Scotia. The ASC hosts special events on campus to mark the occasion.

## **MI'KMAW MID-WINTER FEAST**

The Mi'kmaw Mid-Winter Feast at MSVU is a celebration of the ancient Mi'kmaw Feast that was traditionally celebrated shortly after the first new moon of Punamuiku's (January). Mid-winter was the end of the year and the start of the new ceremonial year for the ancient Mi'kmaq. The purpose of the Mid-Winter Feast was the presentation of thanksgiving to all the spiritual forces, especially to the Great spirit, for the blessings of life, health, and sustenance and the privileges of social life." (source: Potlotek First Nation)

## **MINI MOUNT CAMPS**

These camps allow Aboriginal youth (aged 14-17) from First Nation communities across Atlantic Canada the opportunity to get a sense of what university life is really like.

## **BLANKET EXERCISES**

These powerful workshops guide participants through the Indigenous history of Canada – a history that many have never been taught. Participants are engaged on emotional and intellectual levels, providing a learning experience while increasing empathy.

## **CULTURAL WORKSHOPS**

Our workshops cover a range of topics, including: drum building, talking stick making, languages, medicinal plants, and more.



MSVU Treaty Day Celebration at the Wikuom



MSVU Mi'kmaw Mid-Winter Feast



Drumming at the ASC



# The Wikuom at MSVU

MSVU was the first Nova Scotia university to add a Wikuom to its campus facilities. First raised on June 12, 2017, the Wikuom is a welcoming traditional Mi'kmaw space where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities can gather and learn together. The Wikuom is located at the corner of Seton and College Roads.

# Ways to get involved

## MSVU INDIGENOUS COLLECTIVE

The purpose of the Indigenous Collective is to create a space for students who identify as Indigenous to gather, plan and support each other.

## INDIGENOUS STUDENTS REP

The Students' Representative Council (SRC) is the highest governing body of the Students' Union, and acts as a Board of Directors. The Indigenous Students Rep ensures that the voices of Indigenous students are heard in any Students' Union decision-making.

## VARIOUS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Student Works programs and volunteer opportunities have provided several Aboriginal students with valuable workplace experience.

## MOUNT MENTORS

Mount Mentors are a group of students who help students who are new to the University navigate their transition to MSVU.



“MSVU has given me so many opportunities. I've been able to play on the MSVU Mystics Women's Basketball team, volunteered at the Aboriginal Student Centre, and was part of the Student Athlete Mental Health Initiative (SAMHI). The university community has supported me every step of the way. ”

*Brandi Mills*

*Bachelor of Science (Biology), MSVU Class of 2019*

# Undergraduate courses with an Indigenous focus

## **HIST 1121: CANOES AND COLONIALISM: A HISTORY OF CANADA TO CONFEDERATION**

An introduction to the history of Canada from the pre-contact period until Canadian Confederation in 1867. Special emphasis will be placed upon political, economic, and social factors which have contributed to the growth of the Canadian nation and a national identity. Note: Students who have received credit for HIST 1120 may not take this course for credit.

## **HIST 1122: CONSOLIDATION AND CONFLICT: A HISTORY OF CANADA FROM CONFEDERATION**

An introduction to the history of Canada from the Canadian Confederation in 1867 to the present day. Special emphasis will be placed upon political, economic, and social factors which have contributed to the growth of the Canadian nation and a national identity.

## **HIST 2210: NORTH AMERICAN ABORIGINAL HISTORY**

A survey of North American Aboriginal history from the pre-encounter era to the twentieth century. Key themes include: Aboriginal roles in colonial wars, state policies of assimilation, including Indian Residential Schooling, and Aboriginal resistance.

## **HIST 2222: CANADIAN WOMEN IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

An examination of the participation and contribution of women in Canadian history from the sixteenth century to the modern feminist movement. Topics may include earlier forms of sexual stereotyping, famous Canadian women, women at work in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Nova Scotian women.

## **HIST 2225: CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY**

An introduction to Canadian environmental history. This course surveys the evolving relationship between Canadians and the environment from the time of pre-encounter until the present day. It investigates the ways in which we have shaped our environment and the ways in which our environment has affected our history.

## **HIST 3320: SELECTED TOPICS IN NORTH AMERICAN HISTORY**

A combined lecture-seminar course on a selected topic in North-American history. The course will focus on the history of First Nations of Atlantic Canada.

*Continued on page 14.*



“ I chose to pursue post-secondary education because as a Mi'kmaw woman, I grew up observing a high degree of poverty in my community. I realized there were external influences, like government, affecting my community and I wanted to arm myself with knowledge in the hopes of making positive change. Now as a professor in Women's Studies at the Mount, I remain committed to advancing de-colonial teaching by creating an awareness of issues facing Indigenous people, with a focus on Indigenous women. ”

*Dr. Sherry Pictou*

*Assistant Professor, Women's Studies*

*Former Chief of Bear River First Nation*



“ I’m proud of what I accomplished at MSVU – I graduated with two degrees (Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education) at the top of my class and on the Dean’s List. I have taught a cultural preschool program called “Aboriginal Head Start” and hope to use my degree to its fullest potential. I want to give back to the Indigenous community, while assisting to close the gap that exists between education and the Indigenous population. Wela’liq, Msit No’Kmaq (thank you all, all my relations). ”

*Brittany Sue Pennell*

*Bachelor of Arts, MSVU Class of 2007*

*and Bachelor of Education, MSVU Class of 2010*

# Undergraduate courses with an Indigenous focus (continued)

## **HIST 3323: HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN CANADA**

A survey of the historical experiences of Indigenous women in Canada from the pre-encounter era to the twenty-first century. The course explores how the public and private lives of Indigenous women were shaped by colonial policies and how Indigenous women resisted such policies.

## **CANA 1101/POLS 1101: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CANADIAN SOCIETY**

An introduction to the history, economy, geography, politics, culture and demographics of Canada. This interdisciplinary course examines the ongoing process of constructing the Canadian nation from Canada's past to the contemporary period, and from the local to the global context.

## **SOAN 3651: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN A SETTLER STATE: CANADIAN CONTEXT**

A critical examination of Indigenous Peoples' experiences of European imperialism and colonization in the Canadian context. This course focuses on issues arising from colonization such as genocide, ethnocide, and the territorial displacement of Indigenous Peoples and their effects on indigenous Peoples' lifeways and their struggles for resurgence and self-determination.

## **SOAN 3652: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN A SETTLER STATE: ATLANTIC CANADA**

An exploration of Indigenous Peoples' experiences with imperialism and colonization in Atlantic Canada. Focal areas include imposition of the settler state on Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous cultures and ongoing struggles for self-determination. The impact of court decisions on issues like treaty implementation and resource use will also be discussed.

## **ENGL 3305: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

The study of a particular topic in literature for children and/or adolescents, with an exclusive focus on Indigenous children's literature.

## **CULS 1101: AN INTRODUCTION**

An introduction to the critical study of modern culture. Topics include visual art, film, music, and literature as well as television and other popular media. The course will include material on Louis Riel, as well as Gord Downie's recent book and album, *Secret Path*, based on the story of Chaney Wenjak.

## **EDUC 5602: SPECIAL TOPICS: INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND THE CURRICULUM**

An exploration of how Indigenous knowledge can be integrated into the school curriculum. The course will focus on storywork, telling stories through film and electronic means, and curriculum resources for the classroom.

*Please note: These courses are subject to change. The most up-to-date information can be found in the MSVU Academic Calendar.*

# Financial supports

## **ABORIGINAL STUDENT BURSARY**

Established by the Sisters of Charity – Halifax, the Aboriginal Student Bursary is awarded annually to an Aboriginal student. Preference will be given to a woman returning to studies as a mature student.

## **TD ABORIGINAL STUDENT BURSARIES**

Established by the TD Bank Group to provide the opportunity for Aboriginal learners to pursue post-secondary studies, the TD Aboriginal Student Bursaries are awarded annually to Aboriginal students with demonstrated financial need enrolled in undergraduate or graduate degree programs at MSVU.

## **LILY ON-PING WONG CHAN BURSARY**

Established by Lily On-Ping Wong Chan, a Mount alumnae, as a bursary to be awarded annually to a female third or fourth year International or Aboriginal student pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree. Preference will be given to a student majoring in Sociology or combined major in Gerontology who will pursue a career in social work or teaching. The recipient must demonstrate good academic standing and financial need.

## **BERNICE JACOBSON CHATT ENDOWED MEMORIAL BURSARY**

Established by friends and family in memory of the late Bernice Jacobson Chatt (1947-1987), a Mount alumna, the bursary is awarded annually to a mature woman student who has successfully completed three credits, with a preference given to those students who belong to a visible minority and/or are physically challenged.

## **HOW TO APPLY**

Contact the Financial Aid Office for applications and for submissions of application:

Financial Aid Office  
 Evaristus Hall, Room 207  
 Phone: (902) 457-6351  
 Toll Free: 1-877-733-6788  
 Email: [financial.aid@msvu.ca](mailto:financial.aid@msvu.ca)

MSVU offers a robust scholarship and bursary program. For more information, visit [msvu.ca/scholarships](https://msvu.ca/scholarships)



“ When I arrived on campus in 2010, I saw a willingness and openness on behalf of the University to listen and take action. I believe MSVU has since made significant strides in improving the experience of Indigenous students. During my time at MSVU, I was able to explore the extent of my capacities in academic, cultural and professional areas, which was instrumental in laying the foundation for me to pursue my doctoral studies at McGill University. MSVU was a great support throughout this process. ”

*John R. Sylliboy*

*Master of Education (Educational Foundations), MSVU Class of 2018*



“ As a MSVU grad, I know the challenges that come with being an Indigenous university student. I’ve also gained an increased awareness of Aboriginal issues and use this awareness to create change for MSVU students. I’m a strong believer in the power of positivity, and the importance of listening empathically and building connections with others. If I play even a small role in helping students make it to the end of their degree, then I have succeeded. If you have questions, or just want to talk, please reach out. ”

*Veronica Gore*

*Aboriginal Student Services Coordinator at MSVU*

*Bachelor of Arts, MSVU Class of 2017*

# Community supports

## THE MI'KMAW NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE

The mission of the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre is to provide structured, social-based programming for Urban Aboriginal People while serving as a focal point for the urban Aboriginal community to gather for a variety of community functions and events. [mymnfc.com](http://mymnfc.com)

## MI'KMAW CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

This non-profit resource centre consists of an Aboriginal Head Start Program, a Community Action Program for Children, a provincial child development initiative, and a provincially funded daycare centre. The three complementary resource centre initiatives host a wide variety of programs for children (aged 0- 7) and their families. The mandate of the Centre is to provide quality culturally appropriate programs / resources for First Nation individuals and their families who are residing off-reserve. [mymnfc.com](http://mymnfc.com)

## TAWAAK HOUSING ASSOCIATION

This private, non-profit housing corporation owns, operates and delivers socially assisted rental housing in Nova Scotia. The mandate of the housing corporation is to provide suitable, adequate and affordable housing to Aboriginal peoples of low to moderate income who reside in urban areas of the province, who cannot attain housing through the regular housing market. [tawaakhousing.org](http://tawaakhousing.org)

## ATLANTIC POLICY CONGRESS

The Atlantic Policy Congress is an advocate for speaking with one voice on behalf of First Nations communities. Through research and analysis, they develop and table policy alternatives for matters affecting First Nations communities in Atlantic Canada, Quebec, and Maine, USA. [apcfn.ca](http://apcfn.ca)

## INDSPIRE

Indspire is a national Indigenous-led registered charity that invests in the education of Indigenous people. You can view the various bursaries, scholarships, and awards at [indspire.ca](http://indspire.ca).

## ABORIGINAL ACADEMIC ACCESS POST-SECONDARY (AAAPS) PROGRAM

The Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre and MSVU partnered to create a new university access pilot program designed to support Aboriginal students in achieving their education and career goals. Made possible by funding from the Province of Nova Scotia, the program brings university courses and academic supports to students at the Friendship Centre to provide a solid foundation before students transition to their chosen university programs. During the program, students will have the opportunity to explore and expand their academic interests and abilities. [mymnfc.com](http://mymnfc.com)

# Questions? We're here to help.

Aboriginal Student Centre

[veronica.gore@msvu.ca](mailto:veronica.gore@msvu.ca)

1-902-457-6228

Book a tour of campus

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1-902-457-6651

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