TRU February 1 and 2 Aboriginal Instructors Workshop, Kamloops

**Classroom Organization Ideas**

Some thoughts from Nora Greenway’s perspective and experience working with Aboriginal adults

1. Make students fully aware of the course expectations

* Go over the Course Outline
* Carefully go over the evaluation (assignments, expectations, timelines, format, etc)
* Review plagiarism criteria
* Invite questions and comments about the syllabus
* Be willing to negotiate the assignment/quiz/midterm/ schedule
* Instructor promotes and supports high academic rigor and reminds students of this

1. Classroom management/methods

* Encourage student leadership is developing class conduct “rules”
* Have the class conduct “rules” in an obvious place in the classroom for at least two weeks
* Instructor recommendations re coffee and eating during class
* Student centred approach of teaching and learning
* Class seating arrangement will change each week to avoid the formation of cliques
* Groupings will change to the extent possible to encourage students to cooperate and collaborate with as many of their classmates as possible
* Stress the importance of individual effort and critical thinking (avoid enabling) and not just working for the right answer-
* What does that mean
* Tell me a bit more about that
* How did you come to that
* Keeping trying, you’re nearly there - give me more information
* Recognize, acknowledge multiple intelligences and incorporate experiential learning and students backgrounds in lesson planning and delivery
* At times it may appear that when asked a question the student(s) may be unable to answer the question. It sometimes will take students a longer time to respond to a question, so be patient.
* Discourage late arrivals to class
* On the first day of class inform the students that regular class will start within five minutes of the specified time for start
* Students will be told that the instructor will not be repeat anything for late students
* In the events of late arrival or absenteeism, on the first day of class, students are asked to identify a partner who will inform the late comer partner or absentee student about what that absentee has missed. This is to be done during the first break so that the rest of the class is not disturbed by the late or absentee student’s query from his/her partner

1. Course delivery

* Be clear about texts and homework expectations
* Have a large inventory of ideas and resources at hand to complement the text- students learn well from a variety of texts (print, audio visual, guest speakers, etc)
* Be clear about use of the computer and online resources
* Mix the instructional delivery to accommodate the various learning styles
* Encourage cooperative and collaborative learning
* Avoid heavy reliance on course text in lesson planning
* Encourage experiential learning, taking into account the background of the learners
* Support provision of opportunities for students to pick from a list of options for assignments (presentation ie develop a 5 minute presentation on a topic that was covered in the first two weeks of the course. Identify your sources. Use any medium for your presentation; term paper – select from a list of ten topics the class has covered over a three week period’; make sure you do webbing, clustering, consider thesis and topic sentences; specify the format, font, etc. so that the students are very clear about the expectations)
* Encourage small and large group activities (think pair and share; jig saw; walk ‘n talk; gallery walk; etc.)
* Invite guest speakers from the neighboring communities to enhance course content
* Ensure that the presenter is clear about the instructor expectations
* Ensure that the presenter has transportation
* Ensure that the honoraria sheet is ready for him/her to sign
* Ensure that the students are prepared for the presenter

Plan for the student to introduce the presenter

Plan for a student to thank the presenter

Have students think about questions to ask the presenter as time allows

* Have celebration events at least once during the course delivery
* Host a class brunch or lunch
* Have a potluck lunch or afternoon break
* Public acknowledgement of achievements
* Plan and arrange for meetings with Elders

1. Get to know the communities

* The people and organizations are a valuable resource
* It is good practice to know what is happening with students at the family and community level
* Events may account for student absences
* Events may account for late assignments
* Financial problems interfere with student attendance and learning
* Communities are receptive to participating in class celebration events