



**FIRST NATIONS
& INDIGENOUS STUDIES**
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Fourth-Year Research Practicum
Information for Community Partners

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The Institute for
Critical Indigenous Studies
Faculty of Arts, UBC

ABOUT FNIS

Now entering our seventeenth year, First Nations and Indigenous Studies (FNIS), in the Institute for Critical Indigenous Studies at the University of British Columbia, is built around a set of core courses, but its interdisciplinary approach incorporates coursework from many departments in the Faculty of Arts and across the University. A high percentage of students in FNIS are from Indigenous communities, while other students, including international students, also enroll in our courses. FNIS is designed to provide all students with a solid foundation in First Nations and Indigenous Studies and the skills necessary to work effectively in community-based environments. In the third year, students take courses in theory and research methodology, which provide a foundation for their work in our fourth-year capstone course, the Research Practicum.

ABOUT OUR PRACTICUM CONTACTS

Daniel Heath Justice is the instructor for this year's Research Practicum and holds the Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Literature and Expressive Culture at UBC. He is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and is widely published in Indigenous literary studies. Daniel is strongly committed to a meaningful Research Practicum experience for our students and our community partners alike.

Tanya Bob, Practicum Coordinator and Associate Director of the Institute for Critical Indigenous Studies, is Daniel's colleague in the classroom and is the primary organization contact. Tanya is Tahltan and Tlingit and has been with FNIS since its inception.

Louise Soga, Senior Program Assistant, provides administrative support related to the Research Practicum.

Cecilia Federizon, Program Assistant, supports the daily administration of FNIS and CIS.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH PRACTICUM

The Practicum is intended to give students the opportunity to work on research projects in partnership with Indigenous communities and organizations. While we do have some university requirements that projects must meet, the guiding principle of the Research Practicum is that projects are based on *your* ideas and are designed to meet *your* needs. Students work about 8 hours a week on the projects. Preliminary work generally begins in mid-October with the bulk of work starting in mid-November. The Practicum concludes at the end of February. The total amount of work is about 140 hours.

PROJECT SUPERVISION

Your role in supervising a student will vary considerably depending on the nature of your project. If, for instance, you have a student working to organize an archive, you may need to provide little supervision beyond identifying the materials, your conditions for working with them, and what you hope for as an outcome. If you are directing a research project in which the student plays a very specific role, your supervision is likely to be more extensive.

We will work with you and the student to clarify the details and find the best level of supervision. We will also support the student with help from our end, and we will check in with you routinely to ensure that the Practicum is functioning smoothly. We will also ask students to complete weekly written progress reports. These reports, which will be emailed to you, allow students and organizations to check in with one another on a regular basis.

PROJECT EVALUATION

We ask supervisors to submit a letter of evaluation once the project is complete. Where appropriate, we would like the students to present the results of their work to their host organizations or community. In March, students will deliver a formal presentation of their project to FNIS at **St. John's College (Fairmont Social Lounge)** at UBC. You and other interested people will be invited. FNIS staff will compile a final evaluation based on your evaluation, our knowledge of the project, the student's final presentation, and other minor criteria.

THE PROCESS

The process begins with an annual meeting at the **St. John's College (Fairmont Social Lounge)**. This year, the meeting is:

Tuesday, September 11th at 9:30 AM.

At this meeting, you and representatives from other organizations have an opportunity to meet with students, explain the research projects you have in mind, and answer preliminary questions. Following that meeting, students will investigate the projects in which they are most interested and apply to the organizations of their choice. We encourage students to submit more than one application to ensure that during the interview process both organizations and students have the opportunity to find a good match.

While not every organization receives a student every year, neither are you obligated to accept a student you do not think would fit well with your organization. Once you have accepted a student, we will work with you and the student to finalize a project design, including methodology, timelines, responsibilities, and evaluation criteria.

Any projects conducted by UBC students that involve interviews, focus groups, or other types of human research require a mandatory UBC research ethics review process. We understand that projects in Indigenous communities or organizations may also require additional review processes or adherence with specific protocols before a student may begin working on those portions of projects. We will work with you and the student to complete any necessary ethics applications or paperwork.

Before our meeting in September we are happy to discuss ideas you may have for a research project.

If you are interested in attending the meeting on September 11th, please contact us: (604) 822-2905 or fnis.practicum@ubc.ca.

We would also like a short description of the research project(s) you have in mind to share with the students prior to the meeting.

Please email your description to us at: fnis.practicum@ubc.ca.

POSSIBLE PROJECTS

Research projects for the Practicum vary depending on the needs of the organization. A wide range of projects is possible provided that research is a significant component. Here are some possibilities:

1. ARCHIVAL PROJECTS

Many organizations and communities have archives of materials that have accumulated over the years, but are unsorted and in storage. Sometimes the materials are old and beginning to deteriorate. A project might be for the student to assess what is in the archive, sort the materials, and catalogue what is there.

The student could work with the organization to stabilize the condition of any materials that are deteriorating and determine how to organize them. From there, a research project could develop that takes the student and organization in any number of directions.

Our students have worked at the Union of BC Indian Chiefs Resource Centre since the beginning of the FNIS Research Practicum. Some students have prepared historical documents for online access and written interpretive materials. Another student catalogued audiotapes of an important historical event. That student then conducted additional research on the representation of the event in the press and presented her analysis as part of her year-end presentation.

Many projects contain an interviewing component. Often documentary or archival work leads to new research directions, which requires designing and conducting interviews. Other projects concentrate on interviewing as the primary methodology from the start.

2. INTERVIEW PROJECTS

Many students have worked on oral history projects using audiovisual technologies to document the stories and experiences of people involved in underrepresented histories. Such projects can provide significant material to organizational libraries and archives. For instance, one student's oral history of the 1980 Constitution Express contributed to the collections of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs Resource Centre.

Another student videotaped more than fifteen interviews with early leaders of the Native Courtworker and Counseling Association of BC, forming a valuable historical archive for the Association.

One student interviewed a retired anthropologist for the UBC Museum of Anthropology and the Musqueam Indian Band. This provided an important record of this person's work and career in Coast Salish anthropology.

Each year there are also opportunities for students to work with political organizations. For instance, one student worked with the BC Assembly of First Nations to conduct interviews with community leaders on their attitudes towards self-governance in different communities.

Another student interviewed Stó:lō community members about their knowledge of salmon in the Fraser River. This research aimed to help the Stó:lō Tribal Council develop policies on fish farming.

3. REPORT PROJECTS

It can be challenging for organizations to find the time, space, and resources necessary for research. We understand that many organizations are extremely busy managing day-to-day operations, applying for government or agency funding, and writing reports demonstrating need or effectiveness to sustain their work. Often the work of report writing ends up being done "off the corner" of a staff person's already full desk. A Practicum student can fill this gap, compiling the information, doing the research, and organizing it into an effective and readable report. The organization can benefit from the report, and the student can gain valuable research experience.

Report-writing projects can include preparing needs assessments for existing organizations or proposals for the development of new or extended organizations. Previous Practicum students have delivered literature reviews, analytical reports, and position papers for organizations.

One student's report for the Britannia Community Centre investigated the community's need for an Elders-in-Residence program. The report recommended how the program would best serve community members. Upon completion of the report the community centre carried forward those recommendations and extended the research project.

Another student compiled a report on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and the incarceration of Aboriginal peoples for the Vancouver Métis Community Association. The student performed documentary research and interviews with frontline workers to assist the organization in developing programs for FASD clients.

4. OTHER PROJECTS

Many projects are designed to involve a combination of the skills listed above. We are open to discussing ideas with your organization. We encourage organizations to think about what their research needs are and how students might design projects to address those specific needs.

There are also opportunities for Practicum students to fit into existing research projects under the supervision of experienced researchers, fulfilling a variety of functions as directed. For instance, a previous Practicum student worked as part of a larger project for the National Film Board training young Indigenous filmmakers. The organization can benefit from the timely completion of research, and the student can benefit from a valuable apprenticeship.

SUMMARY

- *Contact us via email in the summer to discuss your ideas for a practicum research project.*
- *RSVP to the **September 11th** meeting by phone: (604) 822-2905 or email: fnis.practicum@ubc.ca.*
- *Submit a short project description by email (fnis.practicum@ubc.ca) before **September 10th**.*
- *Meet the students and talk about your projects at UBC St. John's College on **Tuesday, September 11th at 9:30 AM**.*
- *Following the meeting, students may contact you for more information, and then the interviewing process and drafting of the project specifics will occur.*
- *Project work that does not require research ethics review can begin as early as mid-October. Project work requiring research ethics review can begin as soon as approval from the Ethics Committee is received, usually by the end of December.*
- *Students are expected to devote 7–9 hours a week to their research projects.*
- *Project work should conclude by the end of February.*
- *Practicum project presentations take place in late March.*

CONTACT US

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