

# University Indigenization & Studying Indigenous Residential Schools



Frances Widdowson (Fired Associate Professor, Mount Royal University)  
Webinar for History Reclaimed, May 5, 2023

# Presentation Overview

- All Eyes on the Arbitration of the #FrancesWiddowsonCase
- MRU's Indigenous Strategic Plan
- The GFC Motion
- Faculty and student responses
- The Kamloops Indian Residential School [KIRS] Case
- Reaction from MRU
- The evidence for “genocide” at KIRS
- “Knowledge Keepers” and evidence
- University of Lethbridge totalitarianism
- “Honour[ing] ways of knowing”





# All Eyes on the Arbitration of the #FrancesWiddowsonCase ([www.wokeacademy.info/episodes](http://www.wokeacademy.info/episodes))

## Related termination letter “counts” (Dec. 20, 2021):

1. Students have raised numerous complaints and concerns regarding your conduct, this includes a media release from SAMRU condemning your social media comments in July of 2021;
2. Mount Royal University has received an abundance of complaints from external parties with respect to your inappropriate conduct on social media;
8. A number of your former colleagues have indicated that they have departed the University as a result of or influenced by you and your actions;
9. An investigator has found that your continued conduct has harmed the reputation of Mount Royal University;



- Goal 1: Indigenizing Mount Royal University

Cultivate **respectful and welcoming environments** that prevail over the legacy of colonization

- Goal 2: Culturally respectful Indigenous research

**Foster respect for Indigenous ways of knowing and knowledge-production** and increase capacity for Indigenous scholarship

- Goal 3: Bridge-building with Indigenous education stakeholders

**Build strong relationships** by forging mutually supportive and productive **partnerships with all stakeholders** in Indigenous education

- Goal 4: Support for Indigenous learners

**Work with our communities** to enhance the academic, personal and cultural experience of Indigenous learners

- Goal 5: Respectful and inclusive curricula and pedagogies

Promote **culturally responsible and respectful curricula** that integrates **Indigenous pedagogies and ways of knowing**

# The GFC Motion (Sept. 11/2020)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE HARM DONE TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES BY COLONIZATION AND BY THE TRAUMA INFLICTED BY THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SYSTEM

"Mount Royal University acknowledges the genocide done to Indigenous peoples by colonization and the trauma inflicted by the residential school system, and supports the ongoing work of reconciliation, including the objectives set out in the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. This acknowledgement brings a responsibility to provide a culturally-safe learning and work environment in accordance with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's findings and MRU's Indigenous Strategic Plan.



# MRU Faculty and Student Responses

In her interview with the Western Standard she said, "What people don't realize is that these Indigenous children were able to get an education that they wouldn't have received", she said the term "genocide" to describe residential schools is incorrect. **How can a professor at MRU not recognize that residential schools were harmful to indigenous people and deny that genocide occurred? By her stating this, she is going against MRU's mission of decolonization and indigenization.**



I support academic freedom, of course, but universities must absolutely fire racists who deny the real harm of residential schools for indigenous peoples, arguing that RS somehow carried benefits. Kowtowing to them undermines everything a university does for decolonization.

Tk'emlups confirms bodies of 215 children buried at former #Kamloops Indian Residential School site | #BREAKING: cfjctoday.com/2021/05/27/tke...



# The KIRS Case



- May 2021 press release stating that “the remains of 215 children who were students of [KIRS]” had been found
- Carefully orchestrated communications by the Kamloops band
- Sarah Beaulieu’s secret GPR report
- Interference from Murray Sinclair in the RCMP investigation
- Gagging Simon Fraser University (SFU) archaeologists
- Assembly of First Nations Motion about “genocide” and a “mass grave” at KIRS

# Reaction From MRU

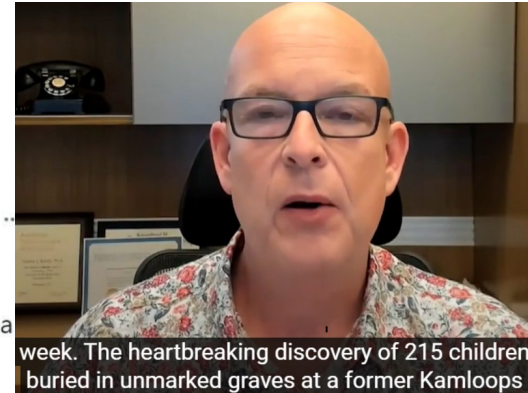
- MRU President
- Allegations of “murder” and sympathies with arson
- Growing accusations of “residential school denialism”



Dr. Gabrielle Lindstrom (Weasel Head)  
@gabbylindstrom

After crying about the 215 little ones who were murdered in that residential school, I called my mom, a residential school survivor, to remind me that love, kindness & compassion cant be killed. the spirits of those who didn't make it inspire me to heal & to always choose love

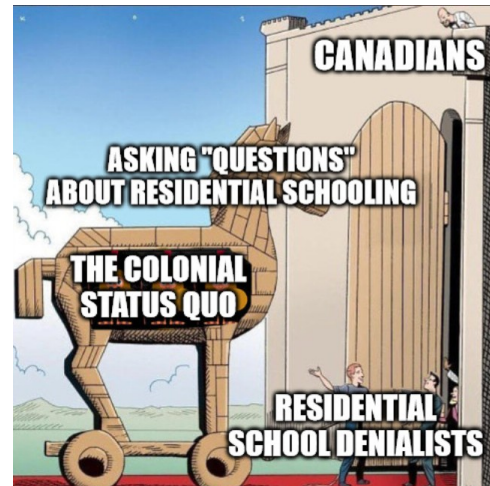
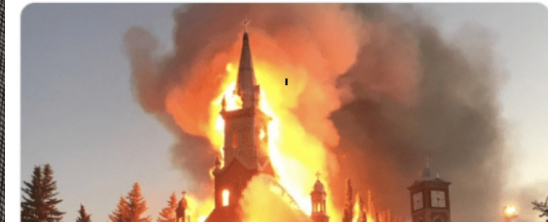
6:31 PM · May 28, 2021 · Twitter Web App



Tim Haney  
@HaneySociology

The Catholic Church isn't making reparations and hasn't apologized for the murders of "\*\*hundreds\*\*" (thousands?) of indigenous children in Canada's catholic residential schools. Yeah, people are p'ssed. I get it and don't blame them.

[vice.com/en/article/y3d...](https://www.vice.com/en/article/y3d...) via @vice





# The Evidence for “Genocide” at KIRS

- Human rib bone and juvenile tooth
  - SFU archaeology refutes tooth as human
  - No one knows where the rib bone is
- Ground Penetrating Radar
  - 215 anomalies downgraded to 200
  - Excavations for over a hundred years
- The claims of “Knowledge Keepers”



# “Knowledge Keepers” and Evidence

- The problem with “oral histories” (“ways of knowing”)
- Only two first hand accounts of burials were documented before 2021 (via Kevin Annett)
- No specific identification of “missing children”
- Neotribal rentierism distorts research



# University of Lethbridge Totalitarianism

**U OF L  
Has no  
ROOM FOR  
Hate.**



On February 1, 2023, the University of Lethbridge is hosting known **Residential School denialist & Black Lives Matter denialist** Frances Widdowson, who was fired from Mount Royal University in 2022 for her "hateful actions against the BIPOC community".

Widdowson's presence on campus is in clear violation of student safety & her use of facilities is paid for by students **without student consent**.

Join us in **peaceful protest** as we object the university's decision to give Widdowson a platform to speak.

**WHERE/WHEN:**  
February 1, 2023

**READ ABOUT WIDDOWSON  
HERE:**



# “Honour[ing]...Ways of Knowing”

The Department of Indigenous Studies vehemently condemns the anti-Indigenous rhetoric routinely disseminated by former MRU professor Frances Widdowson and deplores the fact that she is being given a platform to legitimize that discourse on our campus. Widdowson has left us in no doubt as to her positions; she has regularly espoused these views through published articles, public speaking, broadcast podcasts, and other public forums. She specifically denounces the TRC’s classification of the Residential School system as genocide and disputes the veracity of the unmarked graves of Indigenous children found at the sites of multiple former Residential School sites.

The University of Lethbridge’s land acknowledgement states that,

Our University’s name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University is located in traditional Blackfoot Confederacy territory. We honour the Blackfoot people and their traditional ways of knowing in caring for this land, as well as all Indigenous Peoples who have helped shape and continue to strengthen our University community.

This honoring must include a commitment from all faculty to ensure that Indigenous histories, cultures, memories, and lives, past and present, are represented faithfully, truthfully, and safely, on this campus.