Academic Advising and Indigenous Student Success

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References

Introduction

Positionality

My approach to academic advising is rooted in my identity, lived experiences, and relationships. As someone born and raised within Secwepemcúl'ecw, the traditional and unceded territory of the Secwépemc Nation, my connection to place has been central to my identity.

As a first-generation Indigenous student, I struggled to navigate the unfamiliar environment of post-secondary education and often doubted my ability to succeed academically

These experiences have helped shape my thoughts on education and continue to guide my work as an academic advisor.

Significance

- Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action (2015)
- Achievement gap remains
- Advising is often the most accessed service (Cameron et al., 2024)

Theoretical Paradigms and Philosophy

- Archibald's (2008) Storywork principles
- Battiste's (2013) Decolonizing Education
- Constructivism - "there is no one right way" (Little Bear, 2009, p. 19)
- Freire's Critical Pedagogy

Indigenous epistemologies must be central to developing any approach in supporting Indigenous student success (Pidgeon, 2009).

Thesis Statement

By utilizing informed practices, academic advisors can significantly impact success for Indigenous students in their post-secondary journeys. To support these efforts, it is important for advisors to understand the unique experiences of Indigenous students and recognize that for Indigenous students, academic success is about more than simply achieving high grades.

Literature Review

Indigenous Student Experience

While Indigenous students share many common experiences within post-secondary education, they are not a homogenous group; their experiences are shaped by diverse identities, cultures, and circumstances (Gallop & Bastien, 2016; Pidgeon, 2008).

Scholars report that many Indigenous share the following experiences:

- Education as a colonial instrument of assimilation
- Systemic racism
- Loneliness
- Financial constraints
- Familial responsibilities

(Black & Hachowski, 2019, Joncas & Pilote, 2021; Kristoff & Cotrell, 2021; Walton et al, 2020; Prince & Louie, 2023 King & Brigham, 2023; Cameron et al, 2024)

Indigenous Student Success

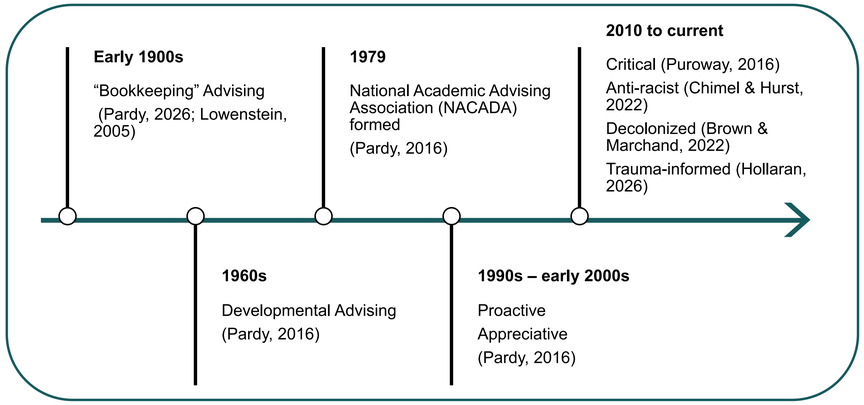
Success for Indigenous students extend beyond credential completion; it "must also maintain their cultural integrity to be successful within and outside their own communities" (Pidgeon, 2008, p. 343).

Access to the following are frequently attributed to success:

- Culturally relevant programming
- Quality relationships
- Wholistic Indigenous Frameworks

(Pidgeon, 2008; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Kristoff & Cottrell, 2021; King & Brigham, 2023; Prince & Louie, 2023)

Evolution of Academic Advising



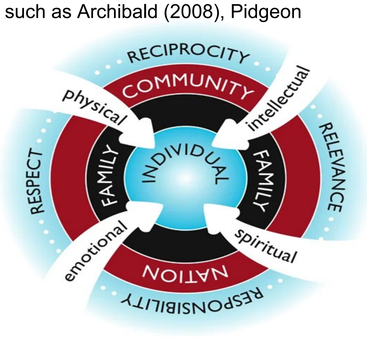
Timeline 1: Evolution of Academic Advising profession

Academic Advising and Student Success

- Students from racial and ethnic minority groups contributed their success to advisors when they adopted proactive and multifaceted practices (Museus & Ravello, 2021).
- Advisors provide a unique service throughout a student's program.

Recommendations

1. Advisors must first engage in personal and professional development to understand the experiences of the Indigenous students they serve.
2. Foster a respectful and reciprocal partnership with the Indigenous Student Centre who are already have a strong foundation in supporting Indigenous students.
3. Adopt a relational approach to advising that is grounded in Indigenous pedagogy as guided by scholars such as Archibald (2008), Pidgeon (2016), and Roberts (2026).



Indigenous Wholistic Framework (Pidgeon, 2016)

Gaps & Future Research

Primary Gap:

- Very little research available.

Questions:

- What steps are Canadian post-secondary institutions taking to ensure that their advising departments are aware of the experiences of Indigenous students and education?
- Are academic advisors across Canada actively contemplating how the TRC (2015) Calls to Action relates to their advising practice and if so, how are they responding?
- At a local level, what are the experiences of Indigenous students and ISC staff with their academic advising teams?

Conclusion

Insights gained from this research will have implications for advisors by showing how informed advising practices can positively contribute to the educational experiences of Indigenous students. Finally, through fostering advising approaches that provide culturally responsive support, academic advisors can contribute to the advancing institutional goals in responding to the TRC (2015) Calls to Action.