

Sakihtowin For Success

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EXPLORING SAKHITOWEN

KEY TAKEAWAYS



ATEP has 14 guiding values; the two most relevant to this inquiry are depicted above.

This inquiry explores the question: What does sakhitowen (love) mean to Indigenous students in higher education?

We find that for Indigenous students that means having a strong connection to with their peers, colleagues, and instructors. This includes sakihitowin: Loving and caring for one another and all things. This aligns with Gariepy and Bjartviet's (2023, p. 11) stating "love is transformational because it has emotion and affection, not because it lacks them. Rather, love is radical because of these characteristics when they are given freely through relationships that are humble, reciprocal, honest, and ethical." This radicality supports fulsome student success, as evidenced through this inquiry and literature review.

Love is the most powerful medicine we were gifted with. The Elders will remind us to love one another, sahkitok, and just as importantly, to love yourself, sahkisok." **Rocky Morin.**

As an Indigenous university student, I have learned that I must be genuine, share my knowledge and the truth with everyone, and model the concept of love in all that I do. This aligns with Rousell's (2023, p. 145) assertion that "The identity of an Indigenous person is not about coming to terms with a certain self-concept or style of living. Rather, it entails a process of determined and continuous movement towards a deeper awareness of one's "Creeness" by ongoing relationships with the land, other community members, and all living things, both human and non-human." This quote aligns with my journey of embracing my identity of who I am as an Indigenous student, while having a relationship with everything that comes in my path of life. It's my way of telling My Story.

Connectivity and Challenges

PEER SUPPORT

Throughout this body of literature, students described the positive aspects of peer relationships as essential to influencing their success, highlighting the influence that these relationships had on their sense of belonging and engagement with school. As stated by Gallop and Bastien (2016, p. 216), "For most of the students, finding supportive peers was essential to continuing their education. Several students mentioned, for example, that their own drive to attend a postsecondary institution was positively impacted by being around other Aboriginal students who shared many of their experiences. It also gave them a sense of belonging and helped them overcome other challenges like being far from home and fearing they wouldn't fit in."



UNIQUE CHALLENGES

Based on this inquiry into the role of sakhitowen and student success, I recommend greater awareness and understanding of the unique challenges experienced by Indigenous students in postsecondary education. This is essential to support Indigenous student success in alignment with the TRC, UNDRIP, and institutional goals. This is affirmed by MacDonald and Bright (2023, p. 9), who claim that "the need for increased understanding and awareness of specific challenges faced by Indigenous students in higher education [...] may aid in reconciliation [...] by tackling these issues and implementing recommendations for improving their success."

REFERENCES

BELONGING	SUCCESS
HAVING A PLACE; BEING INCLUDED	STUDENTS SUCCESS
As stated throughout the literature reviewed for	"Success is like having a sense of
this study, a common theme of "belonging"	feeling accepted and welcomed for
means having "a strong sense of family and	and what you are and what you be
cultural identity belonging [rooted in]	(Milne & Wotherspoon 2023 n 43

cultural identity...belonging...[rooted in] friendships, learning with and from peers, [and] caring student/teacher relationships" (Toulouse, 2013, p. 19).



nse of belonging, med for who you are you believe in." (Milne & Wotherspoon, 2023, p. 437).



This aligns with Gallop and Bastien (2016, p. 210), who assert that, "creating an ethical space where Indigenous students may engage in social and cultural events like powwows, potlucks, and trips while forming a network with their peers has been demonstrated to have a positive effect on a sense of acceptance, validation, and belonging."

This quote resonates with my journey, particularly in the moment depicted above where I received the The Honourable Lois E. Mitchell Graduating Social Studies Teacher Award. Having my son with me while receiving the award, shows the future generations to come that success expressing who you are and share what you believe in.

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