Research Practicum

Information for Students

Student Testimony:

"I learned valuable professional skills...as a Practicum student, which provided me with the absolute privilege of working with the Kwikwetlem First Nation. Since then, my career has taken me many places, always with a focus on working with Indigenous communities."
– Matthew Norris (Cree)

About FNIS 400

The Practicum is intended to give students the opportunity to work on research projects in partnership with Indigenous communities and organizations. Each year FNIS invites more than 100 Indigenous organizations to identify research needs that a student might address. Students meet with organizations and work to negotiate, design, and implement a project that will address the organization's needs.

Why the Research Practicum?

Students routinely identify the Research Practicum as the most meaningful experience of their undergraduate careers, a place where theory and practice coincide, bringing the university and community together to accomplish work of lasting value.

"While Practicum involved a lot of work, the research, the relationships, and the analyses I developed throughout the year made it one of the most meaningful times of learning and growth of my degree."

MELISSA HABERL

Project Types:

1 Archival

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.

2 Interview Projects

Several 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 practicum project of the 1981-82 Constitution Express peaceful Indigenous rights movement established a multi-media historical archive and contributed to the collections at the Union of BC Indian Chiefs Resource Centre.

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.

3 Report Writing

"This year, completing my practicum with such a supportive group of classmates and instructors was the best part of my year. I learned so much from class conversations and interactions with my peers. I am so grateful for this experience and for the community that the CIS program has provided to me."
– Natalie Cappe

It can be challenging for organizations to find the time, space, and resources necessary for research. Many organizations are extremely busy managing day-to-day operations and writing reports demonstrating need or effectiveness to sustain their work. 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.

4 Other

Many projects are designed to involve a combination of the skills listed above.

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.

"I choose to major in FNIS after hearing about the research practicum. I was super excited to have the opportunity to work with an Indigenous organization, on a topic that interested me. The experience was unlike anything other programs offered and I knew then that it was the right choice for me. Additionally, leading up to hearing about the research practicum, I had begun to gain a sense of community within my FNIS classes, they provided me a supportive space to be myself and the expand upon my thoughts and ideas." – Memegwāns Johnson-Owl

For more information about the Practicum, contact us at fnis.practicum@ubc.ca

For more information about how to study with CIS, contact us at cis.program@ubc.ca