

Anitopisi Leadership Program

Anitopisi is a co-curricular student leadership program that weaves together Indigenous knowledge and systems thinking. Each year, a student cohort is selected and guided through an assortment of learning experiences that challenge colonial norms, promote community well-being, and increase leadership capacity as an effort to support reconciliation. In December 2021, two MRU students, Sam and Santana, completed the first ever Anitopisi leadership program.



**SANTANA
MANYWOUNDS**



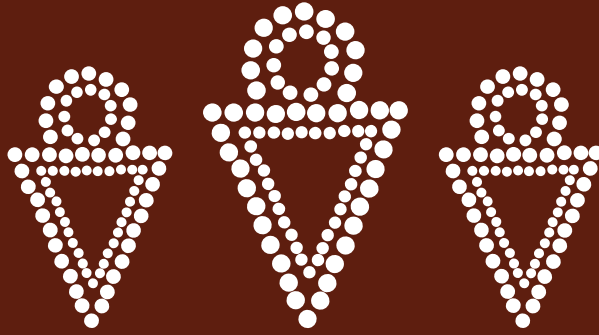
**SAM
POLLOCK**

Reconciliation is hard work that takes time, effort, adaptability, and accountability. This year was full of learning for the cohort and our team. One of our biggest shared learnings was the importance of taking time to build relationships beyond the 'work'. Collectively, we came to discover how essential relationships with one another are. This became even more important with the unexpected departure from the cohort of two students in August 2021.

This was a pinnacle turning point for the program and the students as we had to practice systems leadership in real time. Collectively, the cohort and the Studio were able to create a community of care that allowed for the two remaining students to find connection and meaning in the journey ahead. The two-person cohort completed the program in December 2021 with a Blackfoot face painting ceremony and the creation of mental health kits for Indigenous students on campus.

The program served as affirmation for the two Indigenous students who completed the program feeling more connected to their Indigenous identities and confident in the importance of Indigenous knowledge in changemaking and western spaces. The lasting impact of the 2021 Anitopisi Leadership Program will flourish within Sam and Santana, who undoubtedly will go on to support the advancement of reconciliation and systems change on campus and in the community.

Taking what we learned from our pilot year, the Studio will welcome in the second Anitopisi cohort in September 2022. The program has been adapted to better align with the academic schedule and plans for a more immersive experience in the community.



“Our weekly meetings have opened my eyes to an ever growing array of ideas and perspectives that have allowed me to continue my journey of growth and evolution into the woman I was born to be. This group has given me the confidence to speak my truths, as well as discover my own voice.”

“I am grateful for Anitopisi and for continually forcing me to grow both as an individual and as a member of my Indigenous community.”

“I think the best thing I could do, right at this moment, is to break cycles. As much as I can, to let my brother and sisters, my cousins, my nephews and nieces know that as an Indigenous person who grew up in an environment that was uncomfortable, that we are still worthy, still able to live with happiness, and capable of loving.”

