

Windsor · INDIGENOUS SCHOLARS

## 'I can set an example': Indigenous scholar at UWindsor eager to connect students with their roots



'I [feel] a little bit lost sometimes, or maybe like someone who isn't authentically Indigenous'

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Andrea Sullivan-Clarke is a philosopher, hired about a year ago by the university as part of correcting the "historic under-representation of Indigenous peoples in leadership roles" on campus. (Tom Addison/CBC)

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One of the five new Indigenous Peoples Scholars at the University of Windsor is hoping

being part of the program will help her reconnect with her culture — and that she can help students do the same thing.

Andrea Sullivan-Clarke is a philosopher, hired about a year ago by the university as part of correcting the "historic under-representation of Indigenous peoples in leadership roles" on campus.

Sullivan-Clarke grew up as a self-proclaimed army brat, but her tribe is from Muskogee Nation in Oklahoma.

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"We didn't live in the counties that my tribe resides in in Oklahoma, so I was distanced from the culture," said Sullivan-Clarke about growing up following her father and then her husband's careers, which required a lot of travel.

Sullivan-Clarke said when her father went to school as a child, he was made to cut his hair and forced to assimilate into Western culture.

- [Indigenous students ask Canadian universities to divest from the Thirty Meter Telescope](#)
- [How a Western University student from Six Nations is adding an Indigenous voice to a sociology text](#)

"I only know a little bit of my language, and I know I will never have the culture someone my age should," said Sullivan-Clarke. "I [feel] a little bit lost sometimes, or maybe like someone who isn't authentically Indigenous."

Because of that, Sullivan-Clarke said she can best connect with students who may have experienced something similar.

"I represent an area of people who have lost their culture and are eager to return to it," said Sullivan-Clarke. "I can set an example for these students."

Sullivan-Clarke was a graduate student, raising her family of four children, when she saw the job posting for the University of Windsor — a school she had never heard of before.

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"I figured I had nothing to lose," said Sullivan-Clarke.

## Steps in the right direction

In the last year, Sullivan-Clarke, along with the other Indigenous Scholars program professors, think the university is making steps in the right direction.

"I think [the university] is doing a fairly good job of being aware and there are some actions in positive directions, but it's slow work," said Sullivan-Clarke. "This isn't something we can solve at the snap of a finger."

One problem Sullivan-Clarke said she's come across is that people are worried about not doing something correctly when it comes to interacting with Indigenous culture.

"That can get in the way of this progress."

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One way Sullivan-Clarke said the university has seen progress is in the number of Indigenous students pursuing post-secondary education. According to Sullivan-Clarke, fewer Indigenous students pursue higher education.

"I think there's a worry that you'll lose your culture or that sense of where you came from," said Sullivan-Clarke about those students.

Sullivan-Clarke said the Indigenous new hires are developing courses with the eventual goal of offering an Indigenous studies minor.

***This interview, aired on Windsor Morning, was the first in a series about the five***

## ***Indigenous scholars hired last year by the University of Windsor.***

There are 5 Indigenous Peoples Scholars at the University of Windsor, now into their second year of teaching. We meet Andrea Sullivan-Clarke, a philosopher who was hired under the program, and find out what difference she feels they're making on campus. 9:44

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