# Showcase Feature: Professor James Wilkes

**2 minutes, 40 seconds in length**

James Wilkes – Professor, Indigenous Environmental Studies speaking:

My name is James Wilkes. I'm one of the instructors in the Indigenous Environmental Studies and Sciences program.  The course that I teach is called Issues in Indigenous Environmental Studies. The course deals primarily with Indigenous Environmental Studies throughout the country within the borders of Canada – coast, to coast, to coast.  It deals with Indigenous Environmental issues within Canada and beyond Canada.  Indigenous Environmental issues are present throughout the world, but we look at the Canadian context to help understand issues such as land dispossession, environmental contamination, the privatization and commodification of life, democratic issues, as well as the reliance upon unsustainable resource extraction economy, and militarization and war.

I think a lot of students enjoy the course in the sense that it's very interactive.  It provides them a chance to interact with each other, interact with me, to learn from a seminar based experience.   The course is very interactive in the sense that it combines many different knowledge systems and weaves together many different elements of it - Indigenous education - including guest speakers and guest teachings by Indigenous knowledge holders.   It really privileges Indigenous scholarship, emphasizing the role of Indigenous knowledge in looking at some of these environmental issues.

I think students find this course really exciting because it gives them the chance to engage in personal, relevant, and meaningful research.  They have a chance to undertake case studies or autobiographical research. They have a chance to learn more about their personal connections with their environments and with Mother Earth.  And they also have a chance to learn more about their collective responsibilities, either as Canadians or as Indigenous Peoples within the borders of Canada, to restore their connections with the environment, to restore the health of the environment, and that would benefit all Canadians and people around the world.

Before I started teaching here at the university I was actually a student at the Frost Centre. And during my graduate research I had a chance to explore Indigenous Environmental decision making.  The transition from being a student to an instructor, I feel, has been very seamless.  I feel like right now I'm very privileged and very lucky to be learning for a living. I learn from my students, they learn from me.   It's a very interactive environment.   It's a very enjoyable experience all around.