

Decolonizing Education by Implementing Indigenous Curated Place-Based Learning: The Benefits and the Barriers

**by
Shannon Peltier**

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Declaration of Committee

Name: Shannon Peltier

Degree: Master of Education (Indigenous Resurgence)

Title: Decolonizing education by implementing
Indigenous curated place-based learning:
The benefits and the barriers

Committee: **Chair: John Chenoweth**
Adjunct Professor, Education

Michelle Pidgeon
Supervisor
Professor, Education

Rebecca Cox
Committee Member
Associate Professor, Education

Verna Billy Minnabarriet
Examiner
Adjunct Professor, Education

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Abstract

Historically place-based education has not been taught and created by Indigenous people, thus leaving Indigenous students feeling underrepresented in the curriculum in the public education system (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011). In 2022 the Ministry of Education offered First Nations Bands the opportunity to provide an External Credential Credit (ECC) that students can use as credits towards graduation. This study aims to determine the potential benefits of First Nations Bands implementing their own ECC in their community. An Indigenous storytelling approach was utilized in qualitative interviews with three Okanagan-Indigenous Educators to hear about their experiences in education and their recommendations and thoughts on the ECC. This study's findings with themes of connection to culture, land-based learning, and language along with local representation in the school system and decolonization help to show the importance of Indigenous students learning from Indigenous educators and learning about their pedagogy in a culturally safe space. Building a local ECC fastened in local Indigenous pedagogy should be done in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Child Care offering financial aid to First Nations Bands, so they do not carry the burden of funding. By funding the ECC it shows reverence for local Indigenous knowledges in the K-12 system.

Keywords: Place-based education; Locally-based education; Indigenous education; Curriculum development; Indigenous Story work methodology

Dedication

This paper and research are dedicated to my late Grandmother-Flora Piché (Nohkom).
She is the reason I do the work that I do.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my husband, Sean Peltier and my son, Zephyr Peltier for their unwavering support throughout this journey, we did this together. All my heart and gratitude go to the Lower Similkameen Indian Band for welcoming me into this program and supporting me in many ways, I am eternally grateful for this opportunity. I would like to thank my cohort for their strength and inspiration throughout this process, I couldn't have done it without you. A special thank you to Dr. Michelle Pidgeon for your time, words, direction, and guidance. Also, a big thank you to my professors for the knowledge that they shared and their support. I am thankful for my friends and family who have also offered words of encouragement when I needed a reminder. Thank you to all the participants in the study that enabled this research to be possible. I am grateful to live on Syilx territory, to work for The Osoyoos Indian Band and, to be part of the community as a visitor living on Okanagan Territory.

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List of Acronyms

BC	British Columbia
ECC	External Credentials Credit
FNESC	First Nations Education Steering Committee
K-12	The kindergarten to Grade 12 system
MOEACC	Ministry of Education and Child Care
ONA	Okanagan Nation Alliance

Chapter 1.

Introduction

Indigenous identity and ways of knowing are place-based, meaning that Indigenous people connect to who they are through their traditional territory, their relationship to the land and the origin stories “that have emerged from those relationships” (Tuck et al., 2014, p. 8). Under a similar axiology, Armstrong (1996) describes the Okanagan way of thinking or being in terms of language and land, they are not separate from each other, the understanding is that the land has taught the Okanagan people their language and how they have survived is to speak the language of the land, this is how they can know all plants, animals, seasons, and geography, this is who they are (p. 465).

It can then be surmised that concerning place-based education, Indigenous students must have a strong connection to the local knowledge throughout their education journey. Within Indigenous communities, this is the time that young people would learn all the skills necessary not only for survival but to find their purpose in life and thrive in their Indigeneity (Battiste, 2010). It is imperative, during a time when young people are primarily educated in the Western system, that their people educate them in a context that Western Education will recognize along the path to graduating high school. For example, Pidgeon et al., (2017) discuss the 1972 document put forward to the government of Canada on behalf of the National Indian Brotherhood titled Indian Control over Indian Education. This policy saw the importance of the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in education. Since then, in BC many school districts have worked with local First Nations on Aboriginal Enhancement agreements. Although this work encounters challenges and resistance, some continue to advocate for and advance the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, pedagogies, and practices in the K-12 system. In BC, the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) has the “mandate to support First Nations students and advance First Nations education in BC” and is leading the way with Local Education Agreements (LEA), and The Tripartite Agreement both of which have ensured that Indigenous peoples have a seat at the Education table (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2006a, p. 1).

Albeit strides have been made towards reconciliation in Canada, there is still a gap regarding locally created Indigenous courses. “Learning based on Indigenous knowledges [is] an essential criterion for recognizing school success” (Armstrong, 1996, p. 465). With that, in July 2022 the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care (MOECC) and FNEESC created the “First Nations External Credential Credit” program (ECC) where local First Nation Bands have the autonomy to create a locally developed course that the Ministry will recognize as accredited. The MOEACC and FNEESC are honouring the importance of the resurgence of local protocols, food networks, culture, land, and languages by formally acknowledging culture courses as credits toward graduation (Reyes, 2022). However, quite often when it comes to reconciliation or decolonization in western education there are “general or abstract directives” that are given to districts that leave teachers with an overwhelming task of trying to decolonize a colonized system with no blueprints or understanding of how to do so (Louie & Prince, 2023, p. 10). At the time of this study, despite the new credit being available to First Nations in British Columbia, no First Nations Band has implemented an ECC. This research aims to identify the benefits to First Nations Bands implementing such a course, and the potential barriers to having First Nations in control of MOECC-approved courses.

1.1. Researcher positionality

I am committed to this research as a Cree and Métis woman with a mixed heritage of British and French ancestry, who was raised outside of my community and not on the traditional territory of my ancestors. Cultural grounding is important when concerning Indigenous research because it “acknowledges the meaningful role of culture within our inquires” (Kovach, 2010, p. 110). A teaching I have from Nohkom (‘my grandmother’) is that when a person is living on someone else's territory, it is their responsibility to learn about the local protocols, language, and culture. By locating myself I show you where my strength comes from as an Indigenous researcher and “we need to know our own research story to be accountable to self and community” (Kovach, 2010, p. 120). As a youth worker for an Indian Band in the Okanagan Territory and a former Indigenous Advocate for the public education system, I have seen the need for Indigenous students to have purpose and personal motivation in the western education system.

With the knowledge of an ECC being available to First Nation Bands that they can create and implement, I am currently in the process of implementing such a course for The Osoyoos Indian Band as an employee of the Band. This research project builds upon my professional and personal curiosities to explore other Indigenous curriculum developers/leaders' perspectives on the benefits and barriers to First Nations developing their own place-based courses using the MOEACC "First Nations External Credit Course" (*External Credentials Submission Form: First Nations Language and Culture Programs, 2022*).

Chapter 2.

Literature Review

The literature I discuss here is written primarily by Indigenous people, save for the Ministry of Education and Child Care (MOEACC) policies in conjunction with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC). The literature I reviewed examined journal articles and peer-reviewed research papers concerning decolonization, Indigenous methodologies, and Indigenous pedagogies, with references to the policies enacted over the last 3 years concerning Indigenous Education in Canada.

In determining whether having local Indigenous-created courses will bring positive change and possibly increase success for Indigenous students in the public education system, several themes in the literature come into view; The requirement of decolonizing education before Indigenizing it (George, 2019), the need for Indigenous students to have a connection to place in their perspective schools (Louie & Prince, 2023), and the importance of Indigenous knowledge being taught by Indigenous people (Corntassel, 2021).

2.1. Decolonizing before Indigenizing

Although it will not be discussed at length, it is no secret that the Indigenous graduation rates, despite progress being made, remain lower than all other groups in Canada (Burm, 2019). The Western education system has been a central point in the assimilation process of Indigenous peoples and contrary to popular belief, did not end with residential schools but rather the “dehumanization and intentional disconnection of Indigenous peoples from their way life [have been] transferred to public schooling and [sustains] to the present era” (Louie & Prince, 2023, p. 6). Louie and Prince (2023) worked with their local school district and gave a voice to the Indigenous community to implement Indigenous education in the district. The basis for their study was around public education being from the Western viewpoint which is based on the standard that all other cultures should align with the Western ways of being and knowing (Louie & Prince, 2023). To decolonize this is to challenge the Western “perspective that defines and interprets knowledge...[and to disrupt] the belief that Western culture is the

standard” (Louie & Prince, 2023, p. 6). Indigenous researchers are refocusing the scope of their research to focus on “the deficits of the systems in which [Indigenous students] are [being] educated” (Louie & Prince, 2023, p. 4). Moreover, from a Western lens, Indigenous student success in the K-12 system is measured in graduation rates however, Louie and Prince (2023) argue two additional standards indicate student success; Indigenous students feel welcomed and safe in schools, and Indigenous students see themselves in the curriculum.

Subsequently, George (2019) addresses decolonization as being “accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity” (p. 76) instead of forever being liable to settler perspectives. When the state is in control of Indigenous education it is sifted through a methodology that is saturated in cognitive imperialism and so, there is a regeneration of trauma for Indigenous people, not an ending of it (George, 2019, pp. 78–80). In connection to Indigenous people being in control to decolonize education Corntassel (2021) argues the most efficient way for Indigenous peoples to decolonize education could be to turn away from the state by centring Indigenous Nationhood and land-based governance. This does not mean disengaging fully with public education or the government, this would mean Indigenous nations and communities activating resurgence by “engagement and solidarity through their actions and articulations of their relational responsibilities” (Corntassel, 2021, p. 88). This can be achieved by keeping control of defining success with Indigenous educators or knowledge holders instead of settlers imposing their criteria on Indigenous students (Louie & Prince, 2023). Being that Indigenous youth tend to “struggle to find relevance in mainstream curriculum and pedagogies that largely ignore Indigenous histories, worldviews, and perspectives” (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011, p. 94) an important pushback to decolonizing education is for Indigenous students to see themselves in the curriculum and for Indigenous educators to be the ones leading the charge.

With the implementation of the Indigenous-focused graduation requirement that has been implemented in the 2023-2024 school year, the BC MOEACC has stated that “the province also recognizes that First Nations, Metis, and Inuit are distinct, rights-bearing communities, and is committed to a distinctions-based approach to its relationship with each” (*Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement: BAA Course Criteria and Process*, 2023, p. 2). Whether it is intentional or not the government is telling Indigenous peoples that they will now recognize local Indigenous knowledge

systems as legitimate education in their system, and it is written in policy. Additionally, Battiste (2010) argues a tool for decolonizing education is to normalize Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum, so that all peoples recognize Indigenous perspectives as valid, this is two-eyed seeing, and all people must adhere to normalizing Indigenous knowledge as this will ground the relationships between all peoples and build mutual respect. This is in line with Corntassel, George, Louie and Prince, who all address the importance of Indigenous people being heard and recognized as educators, and advocate for Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum.

The word Indigenization is often tossed around in education and quite often the notion is that something is Indigenized if there is an Indigenous person hired or Indigenous art is hung on the walls. However, Indigenizing by definition is to “bring (something) under the control, dominance, or influence of the people native to an area” (“Indigenizing. Retrieved: January, 11, 2024.,” n.d.). Arguably the ECC is giving some of that control back to local First Nations Communities. Before decolonization can take place there, first needs to be reverence for Indigenous pedagogy in the education system (Battiste, 2010). Also, George (2019) and Corntassel (2021) asserts urgency that Indigenous peoples must not look for acceptance within the Western System but more willingly, there must be a withdrawal of efforts to Indigenize education along with an emphasis on the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge systems and a revival of the environment within which the systems are managed.

The grounding of Indigenous nationhood and the re-establishment of Indigenous political systems will result from Indigenizing “because it places people back on the land in a context that is conducive to resurgence and mobilization” (George, 2019, p. 83) Indigenous knowledge grounds Indigenous people in their relationships to the land, their community, and their purpose, it ensures that they do not succumb to the dominant hegemony and keep their connection to place (Battiste, 2010). The authors in this section highlight that it is not enough for non-Indigenous people to show respect for Indigenous pedagogy, Indigenous peoples must also change their focus on Indigenizing first, then decolonize and Indigenous people must be the ones leading this charge as curators and partners in education.

2.2. The role of place-based education in supporting Indigenous student success

There are many factors at play when discussing Indigenous education. The fact is that all Indigenous systems must participate in the Western world in some capacity. One of the ways to implement change in Western society is through education and “land-based pedagogies [to] challenge colonial systems of power at multiple levels, [and be] critical sites of education and transformative change” (Corntassel & Hardbarger, 2019, p. 87). If Indigenous place-based education is to be part of the public school system in any way it needs to be “relevant, meaningful and localized” (Corntassel & Hardbarger, 2019, p. 104). In this section, I discuss the importance of Indigenous Education being connected to place (the territory tied to the First Nation people in which the education is being conducted) and land (the local ecology, culture, and language).

For Indigenous peoples there has been a disconnection to purpose and a lack of nourishment to the spirit caused by the erasure of relationships to land and place, this is described as a ‘Soul Wound’ (Battiste, 2010, p. 15). Indigenous people all have a place-based ecology and were given a purpose by the creator that they would discover through culture, stories, land, and teachings (Battiste, 2010). Armstrong (1996) speaks to an Okanagan teaching that body and land are one, and that “we are our land/place. Not to know and to celebrate this is to be without language and without land. It is to be dis-placed” (Armstrong, 1996, p. 467). In the Okanagan language when someone says ‘without heart’ it is about people who are in disharmony and are alienated from land, they become narrowly focused and do not think of the community’s well-being (Armstrong, 1996, p. 467). How are Indigenous students supposed to learn in an environment where they feel disconnected and without purpose? Bringing local Indigenous culture into public education is how Indigenous students will find their purpose. The word Indigenous means “to be of a place” which is why Indigenous people “represent a culture emergent from a place and they actively draw on the power of that place physically and spiritually” (Tuck & McKenzie, 2014, p. 56).

Additionally, there is no place-based education without Indigenous leadership, Indigenous knowledge has always been passed along to the next generations by Indigenous leaders (Brayboy, et al., 2015). In continuation with this, Corntassel and Hardbarger (2019) believe that for the next generation of leaders to know and

understand Indigenous ways of being there needs to be a perpetuation of knowledge meaning a continuous usage of Indigenous pedagogy. This aligns with Louie and Prince (2023) in having Indigenous leaders, knowledge keepers, community and family members all being a part of Indigenous students education in a very active way. Ultimately, Brayboy, et al., (2015) writes about his family, and his legacy and that legacies exist because of leadership or lack thereof, leadership is a verb and it is to be thought of as doing, it's always in movement. In the absence of Indigenous leadership, there is no Indigenous action, and place-based education is about action. "We maintain a space, serve others, and seek the betterment of the whole knowing that our responsibility is to pass it along to the next generations for safekeeping" (Brayboy, et al., 2015, p. 57).

It is clear, that there is a need for a local Indigenous approach to education, one that lifts Indigenous people's cultural revival and puts to the forefront, Indigenous knowledge systems, and connections to the land, which are crucial to the reconciliation process (George, 2019). Research initiated by Corntassel and Hardbarger (2019) discusses the word perpetuate when thinking about land-based pedagogies it refers to the "transmission of Indigenous knowledge to future generations and how they act on and regenerate it" (p. 87). In addition, the authors study community practices of the Cherokee Nation and look at strategies for "land-centred literacies as pathways to community resurgence and sustainability" (Corntassel & Hardbarger, 2019, p. 87). A large majority of the 26 youth in the study had strong feelings concerning the significance of water and land when they were given a camera to take pictures or create works of art about things that they deemed as being crucial to perpetuating Cherokee cultural practices almost all of the photos submitted included photos of water sources (creeks, rivers), and the practice of gathering traditional foods. According to the participants, this reverence is due to the intimate connection with and the importance for spiritual ceremony and medicinal purposes, and because these life-sustaining elements traditionally provide the context for building family and community relationships as well as for cultural knowledge perpetuation (Corntassel & Hardbarger, 2019, p. 104).

Place-based Indigenous education means learning about the local pedagogies, local history, and local language, it is all interconnected. To empower place-based education is to shift the power or focus from the Western-based education system to the narrative of local First Nations as Indigenous languages, knowledges, and stories all

have power. Therefore, “local empowerment should begin with local knowledge systems and practices, including languages” (Corntassel & Hardbarger, 2019, p. 109). The value of creating purpose and creating safe Indigenous-led spaces for learning local Indigenous place-based pedagogy is made evident in the research provided.

2.3. Indigenous knowledge, Pedagogy and Curriculum

Indigenous knowledge systems which weave local knowledge of local Nations that surround their languages, values, practices, and beliefs “affirm Indigenous identity and are the basis of Indigenous peoples’ cultural integrity...[allowing] for youth to reach within themselves and communities for sources of strength to navigate particular challenges they face in mainstream schooling” (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011, p. 94). Indigenous inquiry is holistic and involves self-reflection and this is done by “building on the work of others...by using Indigenous Knowledge systems” for the next generation to know why they are responsible to the community they want to lead (Brayboy, et al., 2015, p. 55). There is an interconnectedness of all living things and if leaders know and understand that they are “connected/related” then they will have a responsibility to help as a way to “connect to the people...places and spaces they live” (Brayboy, et al., 2015, p. 55).

The new Indigenous Graduation requirement currently has Ministry of Education and Child Care (MOEACC)-approved courses in place in most districts that meet the mandate of giving a “greater breadth and depth of knowledge” on Indigenous histories in Canada. Additionally, there is room for locally created and developed courses in consultation with First Nations bands that will be unique to each territory (*Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement: BAA Course Criteria and Process*, 2023, p. 3). Even so, this is a difficult and slow process and one that each district needs to take on individually. Burm (2019) research focused on leads in the Ontario Education system and shares stories of policy enactment around the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework. Some of the findings were that the framework is left to school boards and the MOEACC does not enforce implementation of locally developed courses and “this is often where momentum can be gained or lost” (Burm, 2019, p. 79).

With the introduction of the External Credentials Credit (ECC), this is where the opportunity lies for Indigenous people and more specifically local Indigenous First

Nations bands to create, maintain, and control the direction of the courses they would like to provide to Indigenous students (*External Credentials Submission Form: First Nations Language and Culture Programs*, 2022). With the ECC, Indigenous knowledge holders are held in the same esteem and credibility as MOECC-recognized teachers. An essential component of reconciliation is to have Indigenous community voices heard (Louie & Prince, 2023).

For Indigenous voices to be heard, Indigenous peoples must be united. Davidson & Davidson (2018) discussed in Potlatch as Pedagogy that Indigenous educators and Indigenous Knowledge holders (ie. Carvers, etc) must work together like a bow and arrow, without one, the other will not realize the end goal of connecting to our past so that the future generations can carry on Indigenous stories and ways of being. “We are all connected to the past by a thin thread. And when we come together as a group, then those threads form quite a tight rope” (Davidson & Davidson, 2018, p. 9).

Potlatch as Pedagogy tells the story of the first totem pole being raised in 100 years in Haida territory in the village of Masset. None of the Elders had ever seen a pole being raised and they did not have the internet to find out how to raise a giant totem pole in 1969. Davidson & Davidson (2018) elaborates “on the significance of the sharing and the reinforcement of knowledge between the Elders who relied on their collective memory to ensure that the protocols were followed...none of them saw a pole raising, but they reassured each other with the stories they heard” (p.48). However, the pole raising in 1969 gave the people of Masset a “reason to sing [their] songs again” (Davidson & Davidson, 2018, p. 52). Building and maintaining strong relationships, allowing the time it takes to learn through observation, and contributing to the community are important lessons when using potlatch as pedagogy, it is “this commitment to community and family as opposed to the individual [as] a way of being that has been carried forward from our past [that] is often misunderstood by educators who have been trained in mainstream educational institutions” (Davidson & Davidson, 2018, p. 71).

An Indigenous metaphor “the new warrior” (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011, p. 93) was used to describe 39 Indigenous Youth who shared their voice in regards to challenges in public schooling on and off reserve. About one-third of the youth in the study decided to “attend alternative schooling options located within their First Nations community...allowing them to resist public high schools that [did] not honour their

cultural identity” (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011, p. 106). In an alternative setting, the youth experienced “culturally relevant pedagogy and programs [that met] their academic needs and flexible scheduling and small classes” (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011, p. 106). Because of this social justice approach to education, the youth in the study were able to draw on their relationships and ties to family and community and the opportunities within it (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011). In addition, Louie and Prince (2023) initiated research to “share the systemic and Individual transformation for Indigenous learners and their families based on the strengths and barriers they perceive in the system” (p. 1). The results of the research after making changes within the school district was an 8% increase in Indigenous graduation rates. By the end of the study, the Indigenous graduation rate for the district where the research was conducted was 73% which was 9% higher than the Indigenous Graduation Rate across British Columbia. Their research shows the importance of Indigenous students being educated in a space that honours their identity and “that locates Indigenous voices and community relationships at the centre of [Indigenous instructors] practice and conceptualization of quality in education” (Louie & Prince, 2023, p. 10). Additionally, the study showed a significant increase in Indigenous graduation rates throughout their research because of the changes they made to their school district however, it is not enough for other districts to just copy their approach, they must develop their own process and the key factor is listening to Indigenous community voices (Louie & Prince, 2023). Both research studies have contributed to the relevance of Indigenous knowledge in curriculum by showing the benefits for both students and communities.

The authors in this section all have connections in their study to Indigenous pedagogy being in control of Indigenous peoples, building relationships, and uplifting Indigenous voices in the Public Education system which indicates that the future of Indigenous education is place-based and is to be created, crafted, and controlled by local Indigenous communities.

Chapter 3.

Guiding the research

3.1. Research purpose and question

The purpose of this study was to learn from the experiences of some of the Okanagan Nations educators and knowledge holders concerning teaching and developing an Indigenous-centred curriculum. Through listening and learning from their experiences, this research is positioned to have a deeper understanding of how Indigenous-centred curriculum and pedagogy can be supported in local First Nations communities to harness and support Indigenous student success. The research question is:

What are the potential benefits of First Nation Bands developing an External Credential Credit course that is fastened in local knowledge?

3.2. Methodology

To answer the research question, I adopted a qualitative exploratory approach using Indigenous research processes through storytelling interviews. Archibald (2008) indicates that in Indigenous research “storytelling honours and respects the individual and the group” and a lot of learning and understanding can come from this methodology as “a story often has many levels of meaning to it” (p. 125). With this in mind, I upheld “cultural principles of respect, responsibility, reciprocity and reverence in relation” to the stories shared (Archibald, 2008, p. 125). I supplied refreshments, and a cultural gift as part of cultural reciprocity and checked in with participants on protocols. “Each [Indigenous community] has particular traditions, protocols and rules concerning stories and the way that stories are to be told for teaching and learning purposes” (Archibald, 2008, p. 83).

3.3. Ethics

A research proposal was sent to the Office of Research Ethics at SFU and was approved. A brief explanation of the study was sent to the Lower Similkameen Indian

Band Chief and Council and a letter of support from The Lower Similkameen Indian Band Chief and Council was included as part of the SFU REB application. This letter of support can be found in Appendix D.

3.4. Research Site/Participants

This research has been conducted in the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia, Canada. The interviews were held in person at a neutral location of the interviewee(s) choice. The consent form was signed at the beginning of each interview and each participant was asked if they consent to be recorded. Indigenous Educators and knowledge Holders in the Okanagan who have professional and/or traditional knowledge related to curriculum development and Okanagan cultural practices were invited to share their perspectives through a story-telling interview.

I sent Invitations utilizing publicly available emails to Indigenous Educators and Knowledge Holders working and living in the Okanagan Valley (Appendix A – letter of invitation). I interviewed three participants. Ryan is a certified teacher within the k-12 system while, Anona works for a school district as a knowledge holder and goes into schools to share Okanagan culture, Kelly (Entrepreneur and educator) prefers to work outside of the k-12 system, working in the community. All three participants are Okanagan Nation members.

3.5. Data Collection

A qualitative exploratory approach was taken in this study. The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and were semi-structured to allow for the storytelling process. All participants were asked if they could be recorded, and they all agreed. Participants signed consent forms (see Appendix C.) and were offered pseudonyms for the interviews. The questions and their nature can be found in Appendix B. Before the interview, two documents were emailed to each participant to read over and review in preparation for the interview. The documents were The External Credentials Credit Form for First Nations, and the Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement: BAA Course Criteria and Process. Also emailed was the complete Implementation Handbook on the Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement, however, these were not required and none of the participants read any of the documents before the interviews.

3.6. Data Analysis

Archibald (2008) storytelling principles of respect and reverence guided data analysis and meaning-making. I thoughtfully looked over the stories collected during the interviews to ensure the participant's words were valued and honoured. Using the principle of responsibility, I listened to the participant's stories multiple times to verify the transcribing was done accurately.

The research is intended for the Okanagan community; therefore, internal and open communication with the community has been and will continue to be followed. For Indigenous peoples "our communities are best positioned to hold us to a standard that is in alignment with community expectations. We can't hide behind anything (language, etc.), they will see right through it" (Windchief & Ryan, 2019, p. 85).

Chapter 4.

Findings

The analysis of the three interviews resulted in four major themes. Section 4.1 discusses how a connection to land, community and family contributed to the participants becoming educators, with a subtheme of how connection builds confidence. Section 4.2 is about the Importance of Indigenous education with subthemes of culture, Land-based learning, and Language. Section 4.3 speaks to the significance of Local Indigenous representation in Indigenous education. Finally, 4.4 Decolonization has subthemes of cultural safety, the value of Indigenous knowledge, hoarding knowledge, and the noteworthiness of funding when it comes to supporting Indigenous education.

4.1. How connection to land, community, and family contributed to the participants becoming educators

All three Okanagan Nation Members expressed that a connection to their family, community, and the land is what brought them to teaching Indigenous content. Ryan became an educator based on conversations with his mother and was offered to create an Indigenous land-based program in the K-12 system. He jumped right in with the willingness to learn as he went. Anona “started teaching really by accident” through teachings given to her by her late Grandma and Grandpa about “what it meant to be good people”, which brought her to learn her language as an adult and become a storyteller. Kelly spoke about the racism she experienced in the K-12 system herself growing up witnessing “the judgement and lack of understanding”. Her work outside of the K-12 system is all about “strengthening community”.

A big part of it is around how I grew up on the land. I got to experience the amazing nourishment of that grounding and knowing who I am... [it created] a sense of belonging. I feel rooted that I had the benefit and the privilege of growing up on the land in my formative years and I think that is something that every child deserves to know, that beautiful connection of it is nourishing -Kelly.

Knowing who you are and where you come from is an important teaching regarding Indigenous Identity.

Connection builds confidence

As an Okanagan Knowledge holder and educator, Anona has a lot of experience going into schools and can see the change happen in the students during and after she shares with them.

...you can see the confidence that they have...when I proceed to share our culture, teachings, customs, protocols, language, stories, and governance... they have this confidence about them where they needed to hear that [and] to know that we mean something... -Anona.

This is an example of connecting the curriculum to the students so that the students get an opportunity to learn about themselves. Thinking about a time when culture had a positive impact Ryan shared a story of a student who typically didn't participate in school but because there were local Elders teaching protocols about traditional gathering practices on the land the student took a leadership role telling other students to pay attention and to stop goofing about which is something the student would normally be the one doing. Ryan says, "seeing how learning about his own culture and being able to share that with his classmates was something [the student] felt pride and respect about". To this day when Ryan sees this now young adult post-graduation, he comments on how the land-based program was the best part of school.

In another story of the power of land-based teaching Kelly spoke about an afterschool program she put on with her local First Nation band (outside of the K-12 system) called Trekking Out Our Land students would come after school and their energy was "combative" or very withdrawn, she noted the activities they did on the land helped the students to become more regulated through connecting with the land. Kelly spoke to it being a noticeable success of "how just simply bringing young people out on the land...helped them not only learn how to be more in tune with their emotions and slow down, it also helped them be more connected with each other". When Kelly thought about seeing the same students who had much confidence by the end of the Trekking Out Our Land session at a later date in the K-12 system, they were back in the classroom where they showed little to no confidence and had no desire to share or speak up in the classroom environment which was the opposite of how they were on the land with her. This connection to land was the confidence-building piece.

Anona shared a story of a student she met who needed to keep headphones on for white noise for comfort and teachers warned her that the student had behavioral issues. As Anona was showing the class different plants and animals and land-based teachings and walking alongside the student to build a relationship, the student took their headphones off and started to engage with Anona. “That student switched from being a problem child that [the teachers] experience so much grief with to the student who became the leader of the class” -Anona. This is a great example of how taking the time to build a relationship with a student and to have them out in nature can foster a deeper connection and allow for a steady flow of knowledge.

All three participants spoke about the importance of knowing who you are in order to build confidence and to have a strong identity. When speaking about her son Anona says “Because he knows our protocols and our governance structure and our stories and how it connects back to the land through language and culture, he has this confidence about him... This is the same grounding that Kelly mentions of how she became an educator, that connection to land/community/family is nourishing and gives roots.

4.2. The Importance of Indigenous Education

Culture

Ryan speaks to a program he created called EPIC (Experiential, Project-Based, Indigenous, Community) which is project-based on the land, and it ties in First Nations peoples’ principles of learning (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2006b). Ryan continues that by teaching in a more unstructured, holistic learning environment “students that typically took the EPIC program were students that didn’t succeed in a traditional classroom environment...seeing how the same things they would have learned elsewhere could be taught in a different format and they found that very empowering.”

All three participants thought that the significance of Indigenous students being able to see themselves in the curriculum is paramount. Kelly says the “impact of cultural practices” can be seen in the pride that radiates out of the young people who “don’t get to see themselves that much in the school system”.

Land-Based Learning

Being stuck in a classroom and the hierarchal structure in the K-12 system was something that all three participants spoke to when thinking about the importance of land-based learning. Anona states that “kids need to be on the land [where] they have an opportunity to engage their senses...I could tell them all day long what this tree smells like... but until [they] smell it [themselves] it's not going to stick like now, [they] know that the ponderosa pine tree smells like vanilla...”. She continued by explaining all “wellness whether it's physical, emotional, or spiritual... It comes from being immersed in nature...” it's too difficult to retain knowledge being “stuck in four walls” in some cases with no windows...no matter the subject in question whether it be “math or science or social studies, English, whatever it is you're going to retain more knowledge by being out there.” Ryan also made the connection of learning and engagement through land-based education:

Some students that I've taught in the past have had limited reading and writing skills who really struggled say like with English and Math and the way I taught EPIC in those classes they were able to find success in. Before the EPIC program, they were not successful in a traditional classroom as some of the students felt they were being put down all the time and not seeing any success then it's just like 'well why am I doing it'.

All three participants are of the opinion that Indigenous students find success in school when they have a connection to place, and when they learn on the land.

Language

The high importance of learning Indigenous language was reiterated by all three participants. Kelly shared “It's just so confusing when you don't know how you're distinct. If you're not learning that then how do you feel or how do you even know what it means to be Indigenous? Culture and language are everything for identity obviously, and a lot of young people haven't had the opportunity [yet], you know”. This quote brings back that theme of connection-building confidence. When thinking about potential benefits of an External Credential Credit (ECC) Ryan felt:

There are less and less people who know the language and are willing to teach the language... Being able to offer a program to people in our community in particular students in our schools to learn more about

their culture and their language and then use that as an extra benefit to get credits for their schooling all the power to you. It's like you're learning about who you are, your people and you're using that to further your education which is a cool thing.

Language, culture, and land-based Indigenous Education bring success to students who do not typically find success in the K-12 system, it shows them that their teachings matter and that they are relevant today. Also, what is relevant is our values and ways of knowing says Kelly and we must teach these things so that we are not trapped in the past. To keep our culture relevant today we can “[look] at some of our language, our words, our concepts and then making meaning of it in today's context is what I think we need to be doing” -Kelly.

Indigenous education and its importance can be seen through the cultures, languages, and land-based knowledges, all three participants affirm this through their stories.

Local Indigenous Representation

A big topic of conversation for all three participants was how Indigenous Education should be taught in the K-12 system. A major theme surrounding this topic was Local Indigenous Representation. Kelly spoke about how a lot of the time in the K-12 system they will bring in someone to teach students how to make dream catchers or something that isn't from the Okanagan territory, or how they will bring someone in to teach basket weaving “which is beautiful and important.” However, it's the Values of the Indigenous worldview that is relevant today.

Kelly discussed Jeanette Armstrong's thoughts about people who live in the Okanagan territory needing to “learn how to live in a way according to values and traditional ways of being and knowing in today's context”. This is in continuation with Kelly's ideas on how to keep Indigenous values and ways of being relevant today. This thought is around all people Indigenous and Ryan reiterates this as well:

...All the land you're on was Indigenous at some point... If you're living in a place you should learn about the place you're living in. So, in this case being in the Okanagan learning about the Okanagan people, its history, and just how it came to be is definitely important.

In continuation, local pedagogy is key, but the question of who should teach it arose from the discussions for all three participants. There is a need for syilx (Okanagan) people to teach syilx culture as two out of three participants voiced that there should be no Indigenous education without local Indigenous peoples in control:

I truly believe that it should always be the local culture taught in the schools and it needs to be a local Indigenous person teaching the culture, especially the language in the schools it cannot be a non-Indigenous person, they can't even be someone from another nation teaching our language and culture... because we have our own experts and they need to be included and taken into consideration -Anona.

However, it is complicated to have only syilx people teach syilx culture as Kel Bell states, there are not enough syilx people who want to go into the schools to share with the K-12 system. Ryan elaborates, that it is best to utilize local Indigenous educators or elders and if schools have access to local people, they should go that route but if they don't have local Indigenous people then Indigenous people from other Nations or non-Indigenous people would be okay "as long as their heart is in the right place, and they ask the right questions."

Another discussion around this theme is students seeing themselves in the curriculum, which builds connection, confidence, and pride. Kelly reminds us that it's not just the curriculum "it's the teachers and images on the walls, it's everything, even who's brought in for school assemblies or you know like what is celebrated." Building on that thought Anona points out that some Indigenous kids have a hard time participating in class because it's a struggle for them to even get to school. If students had the chance to have their cultural practices such as hunting camp, winter dance, a powwow, a language conference or a salmon fry release be valued in the school system and count toward credit that would be beneficial not just for the kids that struggle but for all kids. This shows a major benefit for students and that's seeing the value in Indigenous Education, seeing that their ways of knowing are valued in the K-12 system keeps their knowledge relevant also.

4.3. Decolonization

When discussing what supports are needed to successfully support and implement a local Indigenous place-based course a major barrier is "creating this next

generation of educators who really get how to create new practices...that's the biggest challenge in decolonizing is getting people to change what they're comfortable doing because that creates discomfort" -Kelly.

Decolonizing is all about unsettling which takes effort. Ryan adds to this from his experience in the K-12 system with teachers who have been teaching for 10-30 plus years who have an attitude "like well, this is what I know and this is what is easy so I don't want to do something different." In addition, Ryan states that when it comes to Indigenous education it seems that the school system wants it to be easy, they "just want it now and that's not how it works. It's like a lifetime's worth of knowledge that you want in a day." For example, this occurs during school district professional days (PRO-D days) where they want a ton of Indigenous content in one day to try and educate the school district's teachers on Indigenous pedagogy.

Cultural Safety

For Kelly cultural safety was of utmost importance when thinking about recommendations for supporting a place-based course. She explained,

Some of the teachers didn't sign up to be thinking about children holistically and their well-being. And so yeah, having this new curriculum is one thing, but having the policies and practices to create trauma-informed cultural safety is the foundation that's needed for these new courses to be successful.

What Kelly is referring to is also what Ryan said previously about teachers taking a workshop for a day and thinking that they know and understand what Indigenous people need or want. Cultural safety for Kelly is about Indigenous people being together and learning together but with the understanding that with that comes "multi-generational trauma [and that will require] healing." In continuation, she felt that her main recommendation to change education, so it works for Indigenous students is "cultural safety. When you are culturally safe, you can learn, PERIOD" -Kelly.

Understanding that Indigenous students walk and live with multi-generational trauma every day, is a major step in building cultural safety, having that Indigenous holistic worldview and not expecting instant results.

Value Indigenous Knowledge

There must be a decolonization of pre-conceived notions that Indigenous knowledge is inferior even among First Nation communities “Maybe that is part of this movement is that those credits are legitimately as important and how do we help the students to see that and believe that?” -Kelly.

Anona shares stories about being micro-managed by the “colonial structure” that exists within public schools. Teachers will call Anona “Miss” (which is hierarchal and not holistic) or interrupt her session to instruct the kids on what to do or what not to do. If a local Indigenous Knowledge Holder is invited to share in the classroom, then teachers should trust the guests and that they know what they are doing. This ties in with Kelly and Ryan’s thoughts on decolonization in the previous section. If teachers truly value Indigenous education, then they will show their trust in it by stepping back so Indigenous educators can step forward.

All three participants stated that indigenous knowledge isn’t valued in the same way as Math, Science or English courses, which are considered academic. Indigenous families and academic teachers often feel upset when students miss these classes to partake in lessons or activities on the land that they feel take away from their learning. In Ryan’s mind, on-the-land trips are just as important, it’s what the students remember long after high school. Anona also spoke about how land-based learning “sticks” and Indigenous students retain more knowledge when learning through Indigenous pedagogies.

Hoarding knowledge

It is not just non-Indigenous peoples that need to decolonize. Indigenous peoples have been colonized for hundreds of years. One of the results of this is hoarding knowledge.

We have to share with each other [hoarding knowledge is] the result of colonization... and I really love that [there is a First Nations Band that is] opening up their language classes and the funding came through them but they're opening it all up to the whole nation they're not being like oh only [our] members can take this -Kelly.

Recognizing that all people who live in what is now called Canada need to decolonize is a major way for all people to unite and decolonize the K-12 Education system together. Both Ryan and Anona also believe in sharing knowledge “with not just Indigenous students but with all students” -Anona. Ryan conveys that just because someone created something does not mean that they should hold it for themselves, it should be shared.

There is caution with this, however. Ryan and Anona both state that not everyone can teach. It takes a special skill to think and teach holistically. When speaking about his program EPIC Ryan states that:

I have a very unique perspective [by] growing up on...and being from this community, the Osoyoos Indian Band reserve is essentially my playground. So, ...knowing...and growing up on the land hunting, camping, fishing, exploring I... can tie [these things] into [lessons]... that [is]... very unique to me. [And] to have someone else at the school teach the EPIC program I don't think they'd be able to offer those same kinds of experiences.

Additionally, Kelly has this to say about her decolonizing within her Nation:

How wonderful would it be to have place-based learning happening throughout our nation that we brought in and included all of our nation members like all the schools and all the learning that is happening and inclusive for all nation members that'd be amazing.

Coming together for the common goal of decolonizing education, to show the value, relevance and importance of it in today's context can only be done if we are willing to share. However, as Kelly and Anona say; certain aspects of syilx culture are for syilx people only, but that doesn't mean that people living on this territory can't learn the values of the local Indigenous pedagogy (see section 4.3 -Indigenous representation).

Funding

A major barrier and subsequently biggest recommendation for implementing a local Indigenous place-based course is funding. Anona states:

This government apologizes for residential schools but that's only one part of an apology, the next part is to fix the wrong and if they were serious about their apology [because] they spent a hundred 150 years taking language and culture away then to me they need to put a hundred

150 years of language and culture back. So, I shouldn't have had to pay to learn my language..."

All three participants note that funding is a must and that the government needs to be willing to back this financially so that the burden shouldn't fall on the First Nation Band alone. "Local above everything else and then paid what they're worth, and funding" - Anona. Decolonizing education is about sharing knowledge, valuing Indigenous Education in the same way Western Education is valued and putting the funding needed towards respectfully implementing Indigenous Education into the school system. Whether it be through an ECC, an Indigenous Graduation Requirement or any Indigenous-based course in the K-12 System.

Chapter 5.

Discussion

The findings in this study continue the work done by previous researchers and help to provide insight into the benefits of locally-based Indigenous-curated education. However, the limitation of this study is that only three participants were interviewed. Further research is needed to fully understand all the benefits and recommendations necessary to successfully implement Indigenous Education in relationship with the K-12 System.

Through past research showcased in this study and the findings in this study, the benefits of having First Nations Bands developing an External Credential Credit Course, fastened in local knowledge are clear: Indigenous students become rooted in their identity and find purpose in education through connection to land, language, culture, and community. A common thread among participants was connecting students to land and how that helped them to understand what it means to be Indigenous, and how connection to land and place is nourishing. Battiste (2010) affirms that connection to land, community, and place is the grounding that comes from Indigenous knowledge and that without a relationship to place Indigenous peoples suffer a 'soul wound'. In addition, having place-based courses available is necessary to continue the decolonization of education as it shows reverence for Indigenous Education (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011). Also, it creates cultural safety because Indigenous students see themselves in the curriculum and they feel safe in school (Louie & Prince, 2023). As, when the government is in control of Indigenous education it ends up causing a "regeneration of trauma for Indigenous people, not an ending of it" (George, 2019, pp. 78–80). To avoid this, cultural safety must be a top priority as Anona shared that as an Indigenous person learning your language is very emotional and learning about culture can be a vulnerable journey. To reiterate; cultural safety is about understanding that Indigenous people come with multi-generational trauma in which healing is paramount. "When you are culturally safe, you can learn, PERIOD" -Kelly. Local representation must be at the forefront of cultural safety, and Indigenous students must see themselves in the curriculum, this builds pride. Decolonizing education was seen as a major benefit to having an ECC as it normalizes Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum. "Indigenizing by definition is to "bring

(something) under the control, dominance, or influence of the people native to an area". In continuation, based on interviews, local Indigenous education will empower local Indigenous students as Indigenous peoples have their own experts and they need to be valued as such.

Some barriers that stand in the way of having a locally created Indigenous course that is accredited in the K-12 system are funding and the undervaluing of Indigenous Education. Recommendations are for further research to be done on how the MOECC is honouring their statement that "the province recognizes that First Nations, Metis, and Inuit are distinct, rights-bearing communities, and [they are] committed to a distinctions-based approach to this relationship with each" (*Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement: BAA Course Criteria and Process, 2023*). This can be done by funding Indigenous languages, offering Indigenous place-based courses and paying Indigenous people what they are worth.

This study illustrates the nourishment that comes from Indigenous peoples being in control of Indigenous education. The findings and the literature both show the power of decolonizing education and the resilience of Indigenous ways of knowing in supporting Indigenous students' journey in education that honours their knowledge, languages and cultures.

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Appendix A.

Invitation to Participate in the Research Study

Decolonizing education by implementing Indigenous curated place-based learning: The benefits and the barriers

Principal Investigator: Dr. Michelle Pidgeon, Academic Supervisor, and Professor, SFU

Student Lead: Shannon Peltier, MEd Candidate

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to ask local Indigenous peoples who work in Education what their perspectives are on developing a place-based course in conjunction with the external credentials program through the Ministry of Education (MOE).

You are invited to participate in this study in the form of a semi-structured interview as you are a Syilx person who works in Education in some form here in the Okanagan. As the Youth Worker for the Osoyoos Indian Band, a former Indigenous Education Advocate, a Cree-Metis woman who is a visitor in this territory, and a masters candidate in the Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University, I would like to learn more about whether you know the credential, what potential barriers there are to implementing the credential, and what the potential benefits would be for the youth and the community from the implementation of such a course within your community. Your recommendations and insight will help to inform me about the benefits and barriers to Indigenous-curated courses within the MOE.

I am focused on decolonizing education by giving more autonomy to First Nations Bands, and would eventually like to see all Indigenous Graduation Requirements locally created by each band, this is a long process which I believe starts with First Nations Bands learning all they can about the opportunities that currently exist and how to build on them and take advantage so that their youth and communities thrive and see a true resurgence of their Nation's education (beliefs, way of life, culture, traditions, practices, protocols, food systems, etc.) reflected in the curriculum. This research will help to give local voices to what benefits their communities will receive from the implementation of

such a course by and for their own community as well as the barriers that stand in the way.

The findings of these interviews will be used as part of the completion of my Master of Educational Leadership (Indigenous Resurgence). The final report and results will be presented during the 2024 Summer Institute, other conferences, with the Okanagan Nations, and publication opportunities.

Study Procedures:

You are being invited to participate in this study, involving a one-on-one, semi-structured interview with me in Zoom or in person if this is a possibility. This interview will take approximately 60 minutes of your time.

Before the interview, I will send you two documents to quickly read over and review in preparation for the interview. These are: The External Credentials Credit Form for First Nations, and the Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement: BAA Course Criteria and Process. I will also send the complete Implementation Handbook on the Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement, however, is not required for this interview, I will just send it for your information. I will ask you to talk about any previous knowledge about the External Credentials Course by First Nations Bands, your thoughts about the project, your recommendations and or concerns.

The interview questions are as follows:

1. Tell me a little about your life story and how you became an educator? (probing question) –Share your experiences you have with going into public schools to share knowledge?
2. Please share a story about a student while learning about their culture had a positive influence?
3. In your experience, how have you seen language and culture impact students' lives?
4. What are your thoughts on how Indigenous culture should be taught in public schools?
5. After reviewing the form and policy previously sent to you, what are the potential benefits that you see for Indigenous students and communities with the ECC?

6. What supports do you feel are needed for First Nations Bands to successfully support and implement the course? Any recommendations?
7. What recommendations would you make to support a place-based (locally created) Indigenous-focused Graduation Requirement?

Participation in this project is entirely voluntary, and it will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you. You have the right not to answer any question and to withdraw from the project at any time.

This is a minimal-risk study. The stress involved in participating will be no more than the stress that you encounter in your daily work.

Remuneration/Compensation: A gift of sage and preserved food will be given to show gratitude.

Contact for interest in participating in the study:

If you are interested in participating, please contact Shannon Peltier directly. Shannon Peltier will follow up to discuss this matter with you directly, either by email or phone.

Contact for information about the study:

If you have any questions about this project, please contact me.

You may also contact Dr. Michelle Pidgeon, Faculty of Education.

Contact for concerns about the study:

If you have any concerns about your rights or treatment as a research participant, please contact the SFU Office of Research Ethics.

Many thanks for your assistance,
Shannon Peltier
MEd candidate
Simon Fraser University

Version Date: November 22, 2023.

Appendix B.

Interview Protocol

Decolonizing education by implementing Indigenous curated place-based learning: The benefits and the barriers

Hello, my name is Shannon Peltier. I am a youth worker for the Osoyoos Indian band and a current MEd Candidate at SFU in Educational Leadership (Indigenous Resurgence). Thank you for joining me today for an interview. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes and will consist of questions which deal with Indigenous-curated Education, your experiences with the external credit program, and your thoughts on Indigenous place-based Education. I want to remind you that anything discussed during the interview will be confidential. I will ask you to please provide me with a pseudonym for use during the interview so that the final report will not include any information that can be traced back to you.

Before we start, I just need to confirm a few things:

- Did you read and fully understand the consent form? Do you have any questions about this process? If in person: Please sign the consent form. If on Zoom: Do you consent to participating in this study?
- Do I have your permission to record this interview? Yes – thank you. I will start the recording now, for ease of the process, can I confirm that you have consented to participate in this project?
- What pseudonym (if any) would you like me to use for you?
- A few questions in this interview are about the External Credentials Credit and the Indigenous-focused graduation requirement. For ease of the interview, did you read or look over these two documents?

Are you ready to begin?

I like to think of this as a conversation of storytelling, so the following questions are our guide for this interview and anything that emerges from the questions will be documented.

1. Tell me a little about your life story and how you became an educator? (probing question) –Share your experiences you have with going into public schools to share knowledge?

2. Please share a story about a student while learning about their culture had a positive influence?
3. In your experience, how have you seen language and culture impact students' lives?
4. What are your thoughts on how Indigenous culture should be taught in public schools?
5. After reviewing the form and policy previously sent to you, what are the potential benefits that you see for Indigenous students and communities with the ECC?
6. What supports do you feel are needed for First Nations Bands to successfully support and implement the course? Any recommendations?
7. What recommendations would you make to support a place-based (locally created) Indigenous-focused Graduation Requirement?

Thank you so much for participating in this interview. Your insights are invaluable!

If you are interested, I will be presenting the results of this research in a public session at the 2024 Summer Institute at SFU.

Version Date: November 22, 2023.

Appendix C.

Interview Consent Form

Decolonizing education by implementing Indigenous curated place-based learning: The benefits and the barriers

Thank you for considering participating in an interview about decolonizing education through place-based learning. Before you decide whether to participate, please take time to review the following information. If you have any questions or need additional information, please ask! If, after reviewing this information, you are still interested in participating, then we will go forward with the interview.

I, Shannon Peltier, am conducting this interview as part of a research project exploring [experiences/perspectives of local Indigenous Educators. I am a Youth Worker for the Osoyoos Indian Band (OIB) and a current Graduate Student at Simon Fraser University (SFU) and this project is a requirement for the Masters in Educational Leadership program at SFU. This research is being supervised by Dr. Michelle Pidgeon, Professor at SFU. I will write up the results of this research in the form of a research report, and I will present and share them in the form of a public presentation at SFU during the summer of 2024.

The purpose of this research is to learn more about what are some Indigenous perspectives on developing a land-based course in the context of the external credentials program through the Ministry of Education. If you choose to participate, I will arrange a [60-minute] semi-structured interview to explore your perspective on decolonizing education through place-based learning. We will abide by the latest provincial health guidelines concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, and depending on your preference, we can meet in person at a location that is convenient for you, or by video conference.

During this interview, I will ask you to talk about your knowledge of the External Credentials Program, or any other current program that promotes locally developed Indigenous curated learning, and possible benefits, opportunities as well and barriers from implementing such a course in the community. You may choose not to answer any

of my questions, and you may also end the interview at any point during the scheduled time. Your decision to participate (or not) will not be shared with anyone. There are no negative consequences for withdrawing your participation, and I will erase/destroy any information already collected from you.

There are no anticipated specific risks or benefits to you by participating in this research.

The interview will be recorded with your permission. Any information you share during your interview will remain confidential. I will ask you to choose a pseudonym for use in the research study. I will transcribe the interview myself, under the direction of my supervisor, and using that pseudonym, and the resulting transcript will not include any information that could be traced back to you. Audio recordings, transcripts, and other information related to this research study will be kept on a password-protected personal computer or other device (digital recorder, smartphone). The list matching participant information and pseudonyms will be stored separately on SFU OneDrive.

In reporting on my findings from this project, I will continue to keep your identity and participation confidential. In addition to producing the final report and presentation required for my M.Ed. program, I will share the report with FNEESC and with your permission, the Okanagan Nation Alliance, and Lower Similkameen Indian Band.

Once I complete all my MEd degree requirements, I will destroy the audio recordings, and I will keep the anonymized transcripts for no more than five years after the completion of the project.

I can be reached at by phone or email.

If you would like to talk to my faculty supervisor, you can reach Dr. Michelle Pidgeon by phone or email.

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, please contact the Office of Research Ethics (SFU).

(If you decide to have the interview over Zoom, the consent form will be sent to you ahead of time and you will be asked to verbally consent on camera.)

Signing this consent form indicates that:

- You agree to participate in this research and to have the interview audio recorded.
- You understand that you are free to stop participating in this research project at any time.
- You have not waived any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.
- You also acknowledge that you've received a cultural gift of sage and food for sharing your knowledge, which are yours to keep even if you decide to withdraw from this study.

Signature of Participant

Date (MM/DD/YYYY)

Printed Name of Participant

Version Date: November 22, 2023.

Appendix D.

Letter of Support



Remembering where we came from...

Lower Similkameen Indian Band
Mailing Address: PO Box 100 Keremeos, BC V0X 1N0
Physical Address: 1420 Hwy 3, Cawston BC
Phone: 250-499-5528 Fax: (250) 499-5538

Letter of Support

March 12, 2024

We, Chief and Council of the Lower Similkameen Indian Band are in support of the MEd Educational Leadership (Indigenous Resurgence) cohort conducting research within our territories based on their project proposals presented to council on March 12, 2024. These student research projects will be supportive of the broader work of LSIB in various aspects of education, leadership, and self-determination. The following students are members of this cohort

John Allison
Tiinesha Begaye
Anna Brown
Shauntelle Flooren
Stuart Krestell
Janessa Lambert
Marion Louie
Rachel Parker-Marchand

Rheana Marchand
Shannon Peltier
Danielle Saddleman
Catrina Terbasket
Doddi Terbasket
Karen Terbasket
Kelly Terbasket
Lauren Terbasket

Chief Keith Crow

Councilor Julia Peterson

Councilor Cheryl Terbasket

Councilor Jacqueline Tallio

*Note: Signatures removed for confidentiality purposes.