

Exploring the Experiences of non-Indigenous Teachers in First Nation Band Schools

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The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

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or

- b. advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University

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Abstract

Non-Indigenous teachers are pivotal in First Nation schools, delivering education while navigating cultural differences and historical contexts (Jardine, 2019). This research project sheds light on the experiences of these teachers, their adaptation processes, the challenges faced, and the implications for educational practices in culturally diverse settings. This research aimed to understand the experience of non-Indigenous teachers currently practicing or learning as pre-service educators in First Nations Band schools to understand better areas to support reconciliation in authentic Indigenous educational practices.

This research examined the dynamics, challenges, and experiences of non-Indigenous teachers working in First Nation Band Schools. Specifically, our quantitative online survey aimed to explore the complexities of cultural adaptation, pedagogical approaches, and the development of culturally responsive teaching practices within these unique educational settings.

Principals shared the survey invitation with their non-Indigenous staff in July 2024. Eight certified non-Indigenous teachers across British Columbia responded and took the survey. Limitations of this study included data collection during summer months when schools were closed and the challenge of locating publicly available contact information of school principals.

The research led to findings in the categories of pre-service education, reasons why non-Indigenous teachers work in band schools, and the onboarding experience. At the same time, recommendations were discovered; they highlighted vital action areas that Accredited Teachers' Colleges could take, the First Nations Education Steering Committee, and First Nation Indian Bands in British Columbia.

Keywords: non-Indigenous teachers, Band schools, Indigenous learners, decolonizing education, culturally responsive teaching

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Introduction

There is an ongoing shortage of Indigenous K-12 educators; therefore, many band school teachers are non-Indigenous. First Nations band schools experience higher turnover rates than mainstream schools as “a recent study indicates that the current turnover in remote Indigenous schools is eight months and that most teachers come from white, middle-class backgrounds” (Parding, 2013, p.250). Between graduating from teachers' college and working in an Indigenous school, there aren't any safe spaces to learn about Indigenous histories and experiences. Parding notes that these non-Indigenous teachers must also come to terms with their own colonized teachings and Western points of view. This may allude to some of the reasons of a high turnover rate.

This study occurs within the context of colonial Canada. The colonization of Indigenous Peoples in Canada is best summed up as the European establishment of control over Indigenous People's land, culture, Language and rights that began when Christopher Columbus landed on the shores of Turtle Island in 1492. Since the first contact between European settlers and Indigenous people, First Nation communities have been fighting with colonization (Matheson, Seymour, Landry, Ventura, Arsenault, & Anisman, 2022). The devastating impacts of colonization on Indigenous Peoples are reflected in areas of social development, addiction and abuse, sustained housing, and settler-focused education (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The generational effects of colonization have left a devastating legacy on the lives of Canada's Indigenous people (Matheson, et al., 2022). Building a greater understanding of the experiences of non-Indigenous teachers working to support Indigenous learners guides future recommendations for policy changes to best support effective Indigenized learning.

Agreements, documents, and memorandums of understanding have surfaced recently, including the Accord on Indigenous Education (Archibald, Williams, Reynolds & Lundy, 2010). The Accord places value on Indigenous ways of understanding and being, emphasizing the value of Indigenous learning that reflects the teacher's knowledge in delivering wisdom to Indigenous learners. It is not about teaching more accurate versions of history; it is about learning through Indigenous-centered and

Indigenous-led immersion so that non-Indigenous teachers can teach more effectively and stay in line with Traditional Indigenous teachings (Burgess, 2017). There needs to be an “*Indigenagogy*” (a term the researchers have coined to illustrate the difference in teaching styles between Indigenous teachers and their non-Indigenous counterparts) in how pedagogy is changed. Doing so will better inform the learners and how it reflects on the educators.

Literature Review

The literature review encompassed studies on decolonizing education, cross-cultural teaching, Indigenous education, cultural competency in education, and the experiences of non-Indigenous teachers in culturally diverse settings (Woolworth & Thirumurthy, 2012). This literature review explored theories, frameworks, and best practices related to cultural adaptation, pedagogical approaches, and developing culturally responsive teaching practices.

Indigenous Education & Epistemology

These articles were chosen because they highlight profound differences in educational philosophies, practices, and outcomes compared to Western teaching styles. Indigenous education is deeply rooted in community, land, and cultural traditions. Indigenous education is taught through intergenerational relationships, oral histories, and storytelling.

T. L. Ormiston (2012) illuminates how education exists within Indigenous communities and is central to their lives. It focuses on the community's social, political, and economic realities. It also can potentially include Indigenous epistemologies applicable within any educational setting.” – (Katic, 2022) (Lp# 2, Red Pedagogy, Slide 14 PPP). As in all things, education is lifelong. Education starts when we are infants and progresses until we are elders. As an infant, everything is new and wondrous and must be taught safely. Even as an elder, there is still the possibility that something new can be learned with an open mind. There is such a difference in the way that Indigenous People learn when compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts.

Angelina Weenie (2020) discusses her experience teaching culture camp courses to Indigenous Education students at First Nations University of Canada. Travelling to Ministikwan Lake Cree Nation on April 7th, 2011, Weenie's Day began with an offering of tobacco and cloth. This was followed by various ceremonies and ended with a session. During a learning circle session, perspectives shared about the culture camps were positive, but one of the Elders also expressed concern about "...how hard it is to relearn our [traditional] ways and that we should have been teaching the children all along" (Weenie, 2020, p. 10). Upon more reflection, Weenie realized her research was professional and personal. She was seeking to learn as much as she could about traditional ways, and she also came to the following conclusion: "I have come to believe that firsthand experience is the best teacher, especially about culture. I feel that I cannot effectively teach my students unless I have experienced these cultural aspects for myself." (Weenie, 2020, p. 10). Through her action research, Weenie realized that she could only bring meaningful knowledge to her students by experiencing culture camps herself.

Relating to Angelina Weenie's statement and growing up as an Indigenous child, I, [John Allison], have experienced firsthand traditional and cultural teachings. When Indigenous children are old enough to comprehend stories (following the proper protocols and time of year), they are told stories about *captikwł*. These stories are old, powerful and contain multi-layered lessons. There is usually a humorous part of the story (an uncomplicated way to remember and differentiate the stories), a lesson to be learned and the consequences of that lesson.

In contrast, Western educational counterparts will give similar lessons to children, but with just the consequences being taught, not the lesson. Do not do that! The child will ask: why? The parent or teacher usually will default their reply to "Because I said so!" The child will not learn the lesson and disregard the consequences. Often, the child will repeat the action and find out the hard way about the lesson that should have been taught in the first place and its consequences.

Indigenous Education & non-Indigenous educators

In the article "Coming Full Circle: White, Euro-Canadian Teachers' Positioning, Understanding, Doing, Honouring, and Knowing in School-Based Indigenous Education",

Madden (2014) explored how white, Euro-Canadian teachers navigated their identities and cultural backgrounds while engaging with Indigenous education initiatives. Over 90% of the participants in Madden's narrative study, the teachers at her local school board, identified as White and of European heritage. This presented some interesting and meaningful insights that she would describe as "the spaces between and among Whiteness and Indigenous education" (Madden, 2014, p. 61).

Jack-Malik, Kuhnke, and O'Rourke's (2014) research was a qualitative approach like Madden's but focused on pre-service teachers' experiences with the Kairos Blanket Exercise. This activity aims to engage participants on emotional and intellectual levels; this exercise walks individuals on "the path of pre-contact, treaty-making, colonization, and resistance" (Kairos Canada, 2014, para.2). Jack-Malik, Kuhnke, and O'Rourke (2021) believed that after completing this activity, "participants enriched by this exercise were more ready and able to deliver related curricular outcomes, engage reflexively, and consider allyship" (p. 171).

Jack-Malik, Kuhnke, and O'Rourke's (2021) paper begs the follow-up inquiry of how more pre-service teacher candidates can access these decolonizing activities, as it alludes to further research that can be enacted. Specifically, their research shows that such professional development opportunities support the change advocated for in the 2015 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (2007), According to the Government of British Columbia (2019).

Jack-Malik, Kuhnke, and O'Rourke (2021) In 2010, under the leadership of Indigenous scholars Jo-Ann Archibald, Lorna Williams, and non-Indigenous Education Deans Cecilia Reynolds and John Lundy, the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE) launched the Accord on Indigenous Education. This collaborative effort emerged from a three-year pan-Canadian consultation, engagement, and feedback process. At that time, many Canadians were just beginning to come face to face with the realities of settler colonialism—a structure that continues that continued to shape economic, political, and social systems by dispossessing and disempowering Indigenous peoples (ACDE,2010).

The Indigenous Education Accord (2010) recognized that the processes of colonization have significantly impacted Indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and cultures. It acknowledged the harm caused by erasure and disruption—how schooling was once designed to harm Indigenous people by erasing their ways of knowing and disrupting family and community systems. The consequences of this historical context are evident in low educational attainment levels and high rates of social issues among Indigenous communities, including suicide, incarceration, and unemployment. The Accord had established some fundamental principles and goals concerning Indigenous Education and the preparation of K-12 educators: create respectful learning environments, develop inclusive curriculum, and facilitate culturally responsive pedagogies and assessment practices. Accords such as this, designed to enact change and progress in reconciliation, may lack the initial ‘teeth’ to ensure they are being as helpful as intended.

Decolonizing Education

While there are many resources on decolonizing education in Canada, both primary and secondary, it is crucial to have a keen eye in selecting which articles can support the subject, which have limitations, and which identify research gaps. In the last 20 years, research on this subject has undoubtedly become more prolific. Focus on selected articles helped us understand decolonizing education, particularly decolonizing one’s teaching practice to work with Indigenous students.

Decolonized education is an approach to learning that focuses on the uncolonized learning methodology Battiste (2017). In her book, *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*, Battiste (2017), Battiste talks about a theory of Ethical Space that was applied by Willie Ermine (2007), that connects Indigenous and Eurocentric knowledge systems. “Ermine’s inspiration came from the space that is created when Indigenous and Western thought are brought together. It is not a merge or clash, but a space that is new, electrifying, and even contentious, but ultimately has the potential for an interchange or dialogue of the assumptions, values and interests each holds.” (Battiste 2017, p. 105).

Understanding the harms is part of understanding how to fix the problem. Identifying areas of need in the training of educators is a priority to decolonized learning.

Ozamiz (2019), a non-Indigenous instructor who is a first-generation Canadian from Manila, Philippines. Ozamiz identifies with the colonial oppression that confronted Indigenous peoples. Ozamiz took an interest in the stories of the Indigenous peoples of Canada and, at the high school level, taught First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) Studies. In May 2018, Ozamiz was admitted to the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP) to deepen his understanding of decolonizing and re-indigenizing education.

His story shares how an educator must create a transformative educational approach that honours Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Educators should foster inclusive education that will create safe and practical spaces for Indigenous learning free of colonial influences. Ozamiz (2019), advocates for authentic learning and working in cohesion with Indigenous Peoples in the classroom. Ozamiz's role as a teacher supports students physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Ozamiz's pedagogy focuses on co-constructing a safe environment for Indigenous students to re-write the narrative of Indigeneity in Canada through a holistic and creative curriculum. His teaching practice reflects a decolonized approach that centres on Indigenous ways of learning.

Also, Marie Battiste (2005) advocates,

Such rethinking of education from the perspective of Indigenous knowledge and learning styles is of crucial value to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators who seek to understand the failures, dilemmas, and contradictions inherent in past and current educational policy and practice for First Nations students. (p.3)

Another guiding resource is by Christopher T. George (2019), who discusses his views on decolonizing education and Indigenous resurgence in Canada. He reflects, "Exploring Indigenous perspectives on reconciliation and decolonization often leaves me wondering if post-secondary institutions in Canada are willing and capable of effectively decolonizing their institutions because it means sacrificing privilege, power, and control" (George, 2019, p.74). Christopher T. George sees a need to decolonize at the educational level in learning institutions, but for all their words, do learning institutions want to decolonize their curriculum? We can tear down statues honouring colonizers and remove their names from buildings, but the power structures they created remain and continue to regenerate intergenerational trauma (George, 2019, p. 89).

Cote-Meek (2019), states that decolonizing education in learning institutions has come a long way, from creating programs to make Indigenous students feel more welcome, adding rooms or meeting places that are styled/decorated in Native fashions, and offering Indigenous tutors and elders on hand to provide support (p. 947). The learning institutions have given these things freely, but have they changed their lesson plans? Are they teaching critical thinking regarding ongoing colonization in Canada? Are the institutions recognizing and teaching about their privilege? One of George's (2019) central questions is: At their core, have the learning institutions accepted decolonization? Are they willing to make fundamental changes regarding teaching about colonization?

Madden (2014), she pointedly refers to a two-pronged process of decolonization, which includes deconstructing and reconstructing. Each is as important as the other; deconstruction involves examining colonization and colonial strategies while reconstructing centres around Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies in working toward localized education.

Cross-Cultural Teaching with Cultural Competency

Cross-cultural teaching with cultural competency is where educators recognize, respect, and incorporate diverse cultural perspectives into their teaching practices. Educators must develop cultural competency, which involves acquiring the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to engage effectively with students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Burgess, 2017). This method acknowledges and integrates diversity into the educational experience, promoting a more equitable and responsive learning environment.

Pardy & Pardy (2020) discussed adding Indigenous perspectives as token gestures rather than genuinely and respectfully integrating Indigenous knowledge and worldviews. Cultural competency moves toward more inclusive teaching and decolonization. This approach requires non-Indigenous educators to face their own cultural biases and privileges to decolonize their Western ways of knowing and doing, to create a safe educational environment, that is culturally inclusive.

Non-Indigenous Teaching Experiences

Emily Root, a non-Indigenous Euro-Canadian, wrote in her 2010 paper, “This Land is Our Land? This Land is Your Land,” in a way that put the Indigenous worldview at the forefront of the discussion. She articulated Indigenous knowledge as processes: living ways of knowing embedded in interconnected relationships rather than discrete facts.

Root (2010) captured the challenges of being a Euro-Settler educator and the complexities involved in understanding Indigenous knowledge and their teachings to be inclusive of Indigenous practices. In her paper, she confronts her own upbringing and education of cultural appropriation, Eurocentrism, and White Privilege. She asked hard questions of herself and how she could move forward in her decolonization journey. She did an admirable job of presenting the dilemma some educators face. She recommended how individuals can overcome their fears or anxieties about making mistakes while learning to decolonize themselves and their pedagogies.

Julie Mooney (2021), who addressed decolonization and indigenizing curricular and teaching practices, offered a more substantial practical approach to decolonizing one’s teaching practice. Though not Indigenous herself, she specifically presented actionable items educators could take to begin their work decolonizing their professional practice and minds. Her approaches were: Settler Starting Points, Epistemic Modesty, Co-Curriculum Making, Authentic Ally, and Place-Based Starting Points. She acknowledges that this journey isn’t straightforward; it involves multiple trailheads, hidden curricula, and unsettling moments.

There are many areas of consideration for non-Indigenous educators in best representing the cultural information they are immersed in. Marie Battiste (2005) forewarns this work and reminds those to be cautious when trying to explain conceptualizations of Indigenous knowledge because they need to fit better into Western frameworks or English translations.

Researcher Positionality and Personal Statements

My name is John Allison, and my traditional name is pəq̓p̓alxq̓n. I identify as First Nations and was born in Penticton, BC. I am a member of the Lower Similkameen Indian

Band, which is part of the Okanagan Nation and is in the southern interior of British Columbia. I am a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Analyst specializing in working with First Nations data management. I am participating in a community-based graduate program focusing on Indigenous Resurgence, partnering with Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) and Simon Fraser University (SFU).

After leaving high school in 1996, I went to work. I worked in labour jobs and operated machinery, and eventually, I became an apprentice carpenter. I completed my second year of schooling when I was involved in a car accident. I severely injured my neck and decided to leave physical labour jobs behind me. I noticed a gap in the workforce in the LSIB administration; there was an opening for a GIS Analyst. It was something that I was always interested in, but I never had the time or opportunity to pursue. Everything had aligned, and there was an Advanced GIS certificate course available. I completed this course and started working for the Lower Similkameen Indian Band in December 2019, and I am still employed there as of August 2024.

I have learned so much while working for my community. The words to describe the learning that I have done since 2019 do not exist. They are far too small. I am learning the culture of my community. I am learning what it truly means to be sməłqmix. The master's program I am participating in has taught me the history of my people: the good and the bad. Working for my community is teaching me what I need to learn for the future of LSIB. I look forward to the future while I prepare for my children. The education from the master's program is transforming me into a cultured, educated sməłqmix scholar. This is something that I never imagined for myself. I have found my life's work and purpose in life. I am preparing for my children; I want them to be greater than I could ever be. That is the legacy that I hope to leave.

My name is Shauntelle Flooren. I am a member of the Dene Tha' First Nation. Culture is so relevant in my life; it is who I am and why I choose to learn more. Growing up, I had limited access to First Nations culture other than what was taught in my childhood mainstream education which was not much.

After graduating high school, I worked in a colonized, Catholic education system for several years. During this time, I went to university, completing four years of a Bachelor of Secondary Education program at the University of Alberta but falling two

classes short when I realized I had no interest in continuing a career within the school setting. After four years, I packed up and left Alberta for home in beautiful British Columbia.

I now live in the culturally rich territory of the Syilx Nation. I have been immersed in nature and the holistic cultural teachings of the Syilx people while working for the Lower Similkameen, Upper Similkameen and Penticton Indian Bands. Entering these bands, I did not know or fully begin to understand the values and teachings of the culture, having not been raised in it. I was open to learning and self-growth, which grew from the cultural immersion of working within these communities.

I am now working to honour what I have learned in these First Nations communities by pairing their teachings with what I am currently learning in the Educational Leadership master's program through Simon Fraser University. I am now developing and fostering a better understanding of Indigenous leadership and why healthy leadership needs to be informed through a focus on Indigenous resurgence that streams through our program's teachings. I now have a better understanding of the First Nations leaders of the past and the culturally led actions they demonstrated while acting as a conduit to bridge gaps for our people. I am honoured to listen and learn.

My name is Stuart Krestell. I am White and Euro-Canadian. I was born and raised in Toronto, Ontario, on the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississauga's of the Credit, the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples. I am the Principal of a First Nations Band School in the southern interior of British Columbia and am participating in graduate studies at Simon Fraser University. Cawston, British Columbia, where I work, is located on Okanagan Land, on the traditional territory of the Lower Similkameen Indian Band and Syilx people.

I am blessed to have the opportunity to experience the magnificence of where I work and live, and I appreciate the people who have given me this chance. As a non-native individual, nothing had prepared me to work in Indigenous communities as much as working in Indigenous communities. Truly little training, knowledge sharing, or courses in pre-service teacher training exist. While studying world religions at the bachelor's level and attending a teacher's college, decolonizing education never arose.

Learning about decolonization meant being concerned about it and being willing to transform one's thinking. Until I started working in First Nation communities and consciously began to unlearn what I thought I knew, my education was designed, delivered, and evaluated by colonial measures. I had to create my program to learn about Indigenous pedagogy, curriculum development, and authentic instruction. After six years of educating in First Nation communities from Northern Saskatchewan to British Columbia, my most excellent teachers have been those I have built relationships with, who have assisted me in seeing a truthful depiction of the social politics of Indigenous lands and culture.

There are distinct differences in how people come to 'know' among Europeans and the Indigenous of Canada. As Europeans attempt to learn within a linear design, the Indigenous favour a cyclical model. Using that as a microcosm for the differences between pedagogies, without the concept of identity and understanding of the interconnectedness of land, Language, and culture, the decolonizing work cannot commence.

Research Question

This research project supports decolonizing school-based education by exploring the central inquiry issue: What are the experiences of non-Indigenous educators as they engage in decolonizing and indigenizing their curriculum and teaching practices in First Nations Band Schools?

Methodology

Context of Research

In the process of gathering data from non-Indigenous teachers working in First Nations Band schools survey participants, the research team discovered that the BC First Nation Education Steering Committee (FNESC) was a reliable source of statistical data in understanding that BC has one hundred and fifty accredited Band schools to draw participants from. Unfortunately, there was no publicly available data on how many of the teachers employed in these schools were Indigenous or non-Indigenous. However, given the number of schools within the province, the research team decided to keep the

study local, limited to BC-certified, non-Indigenous teachers currently employed within First Nations Band Schools in British Columbia.

Data Collection

Regarding the collected primary data, the research group wanted to highlight how much exposure teachers received during their schooling to Indigenous epistemology, and the survey questions mirrored this sentiment.

First, the research group searched online for publicly available information regarding Band schools, principals, and teachers. The research team then sent introduction letters to the Principals of BC First Nations band schools to gain their support and cooperation as third-party recruiters (See Appendix B). The principals then forwarded the letter of invitation, confidentiality details, and a survey link to their non-Indigenous teaching staff for the data-gathering process to begin (See Appendix B). We sent out 79 emails to principals during [July 2024]. The goal was to have 20 to 25 completed responses; however, only eight were received. We discuss the limitations of our study and findings later in this report.

Participants

The inclusion criteria to complete the research survey were developed specifically to survey non-Indigenous, BC-certified teachers currently working in Band schools (See Appendix A). Before beginning the survey, clear confidentiality and anonymity principles were identified to ensure a clear understanding of the ethical process. Respondents qualified for participation based on selection and inclusion criteria. To participate in the study, respondents needed to identify as non-Indigenous, be employed in a Band School, and be certified by the Teacher Regulation Branch in British Columbia. The excluded participants from our research were uncertified teachers, substitute teachers, Indigenous teachers, and non-Indigenous teachers working in public schools.

All eight participants in this study were certified teachers in British Columbia. Respondents also reported that they were all educated in certified Canadian universities. Each of the participants shared they had all been teaching for over five years.

Ethics

Engaging in this study required an ethics review facilitated by the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics. Prior to submitting an ethics approval application, all necessary researchers were required to complete a course on ethical conduct for research involving humans. With these certificates and the Lower Similkameen Indian Bands' letter of endorsement from the Chief and Council, our application was submitted and approved by the SFU Office of Research Ethics.

Survey Design

This section outlines the research approach and techniques used to answer the research question. The survey was hosted on SFU Survey Monkey (See Appendix A) and stored in a secure Simon Fraser University OneDrive and Survey Monkey database exclusively for the research group's use.

The online survey was programmed with logic to automatically exclude respondents who did not meet the qualifying demographic requirements. The survey was an effective method to collect accurate and ethical quantitative data for the research project. By creating custom survey questions, the research team considered lessons learned from the research literature and their own professional experiences to design each question. For example, the research team wanted to understand how much cultural preparation these teachers received during their teacher training/education to understand the Indigenous epistemology better when entering their roles. The intention was to keep survey completion to under 20 minutes, and the average time spent by respondents was 16 minutes. The survey started with a series of dichotomous questions (See Appendix A). These yes-and-no, true-or-false questions assisted in determining inclusion and exclusion from the study. Multiple-choice questions were also presented to survey respondents as they were simple, easy, and subject-friendly. This method of questioning presented answers to participants and allowed them to select which most resonated with them while assisting in identifying particular themes. Most questions were closed-ended to provide quantitative data and allow for statistical analysis. Another type of closed-ended question was a Likert scale question. These questions allowed the researchers to measure opinions, attitudes, and perceptions. In these questions, a statement was presented to respondents with five options to select from.

Finally, a selection of open-ended questions was presented to respondents. By asking open-ended questions, the attempt was made to glean qualitative insights. These questions offered respondents the opportunity to provide answers and thoughts of their own experiences. By using open-ended questions, there was an increased probability of avoiding implicit researcher bias.

Limitations to Research

Despite the valuable insights gained through the research study, limitations were identified and used as a gauge to understand better the data numbers and feedback that informs the quantitative data.

Design, time, and physical limitations prevented finding the appropriate survey mechanism. The research group initially developed the survey in ArcGIS Survey 123 but learned that this survey development platform is American and, thus, not secure for use in Canada. The research group then recreated the data collection questions in Survey Monkey through Simon Fraser University, ensuring the data collected was on a Canadian server. Part of the research process was learning Survey Monkey and its operation. The design became much more fluid once the research team became more familiar with the survey platform.

Another limitation of this study was the time it took the research team to design the survey and then apply for ethics approval. The research group's Ethics Minimal Research Approval Certificate was approved on June 27th, 2024. Following the approval, the research group moved forward with the survey distribution. Ethics approval in June impacted our study as it coincided with the traditional end of the school year, and the teaching staff had begun summer vacation when the survey was ready for distribution. Had the research group been able to do this again, the surveys would have gone out in April 2024 at the latest to gain the best data.

Another limitation of circulating the survey was sourcing accurate, current and updated contact information for initial contact with principals. The research group could not obtain all one hundred and fifty principal emails for the Band schools, as referenced through the BC First Nation Education Steering Committee (FNESC) website. As we sought this information, we learned that many Band Schools in British Columbia do not

have websites and the ones that do have out-of-date contact information. These limitations resulted in fewer responses to the research survey than initially anticipated.

Data Analysis

The research group analyzed the results together as a team. The critical results focused on and highlighted the shortcomings of Indigenous programming in foundational teacher education. To prepare for data analysis, the research team gathered the data figures from Survey Monkey to see the similarities and differences. The survey was designed to have easily quantifiable descriptive statistics and visual data representation. The respondents' answers to these survey questions were transferred easily to bar graphs and pie charts.

Then, the research team discussed the open-ended answers from the survey. Many of the answers were similar, and participants expressing similar viewpoints reached a consensus. The themes were discussed in the reporting of our findings.

The research team could see definitive trends through the visual representation of the survey data. Some respondents had shared experiences, while others stood out as singular experiences. The respondents agreed with the intention of our Research Question in that more Indigenous programming would be welcome in their foundational teaching and onboarding experience. There were a few outlier responses, all of which were documented and discussed within the Findings section.

Validity and Reliability

Regarding validity, the research team created an anonymous custom survey from the start. The research group noted that the survey questions were anonymous. Age, gender, location, and any identifiers were left out of the survey. The research team agreed that some answers were still very guarded, as though they feared employer repercussions.

Most research survey answers followed consensus; those that did not are visually identifiable in the bar graphs and pie charts. Most survey answers were multi-select, meaning multiple answers could be given per question. Most responses came

back as a repetitive grouping; only a few were outliers. In the survey, respondents were given the option to elaborate on their answers. Most did not. The survey was analyzed as a team, and only concise answers and facts were discussed and brought forth; conjecture and bias were left out.

Findings

The research group chose non-Indigenous teachers as participants to collect data on their teaching experiences in Indigenous Education. Who better to ask about their Indigenous education curriculum knowledge than the teachers currently employed at a band school or those in Teacher's College?

The findings section covers four main areas: Pre-service Education, Reasons for Working in First Nations Band Schools, their On-boarding/Work Experiences in these schools, and Future Recommendations. It examines the adequacy of pre-service training for non-Indigenous teachers, their motivations for working at a band school, their initial onboarding experiences and recommendations for improving these areas for future non-Indigenous educators.

Pre-service Education

All certified teachers in Canada must have completed Teachers' College at an accredited institution to qualify for provincial certification. Four of the eight survey respondents reported receiving no pre-service training in cultural sensitivity or, more specifically, working with Indigenous learners.

All survey participants shared that transitioning to teaching at a Band School presented them with challenges. The challenges described ranged from not fitting in with colleagues, having difficulties finding a voice and being heard, and needing to figure out how to teach effectively while teaching simultaneously. One survey participant shared,

In my limited time working in a band school, I have noticed that when there is an off-site celebration, typically the Indigenous staff do not attend. Sometimes I feel some of my questions are taken the wrong way- I mean to try to understand the culture, but perceived to be brushed aside, or that it is a silly question ~ (Participant 4)

Participant 1 reflected on their experience, “Language and culture remain a challenge. Also building enough trust with individuals so that true sharing and collaboration can occur.”

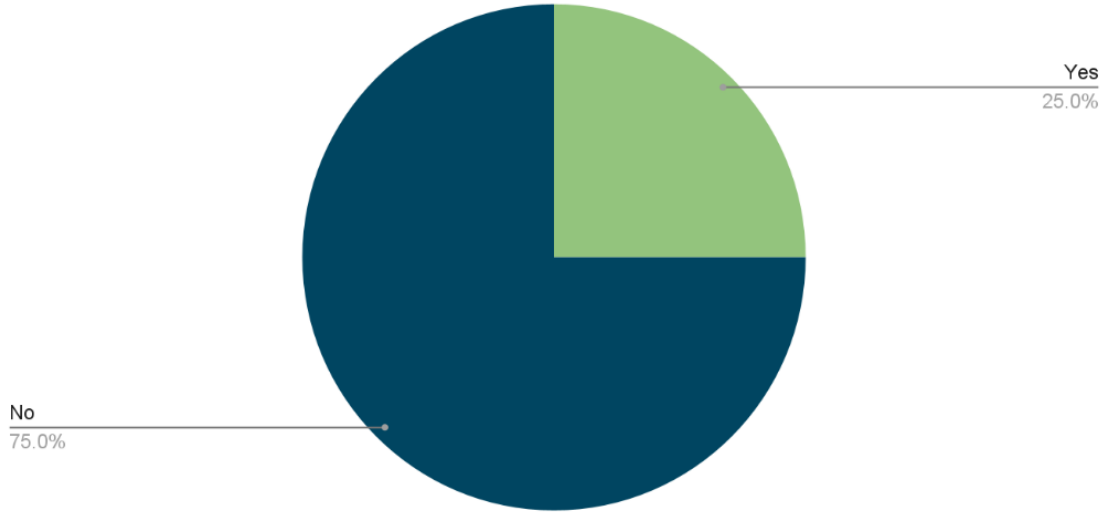
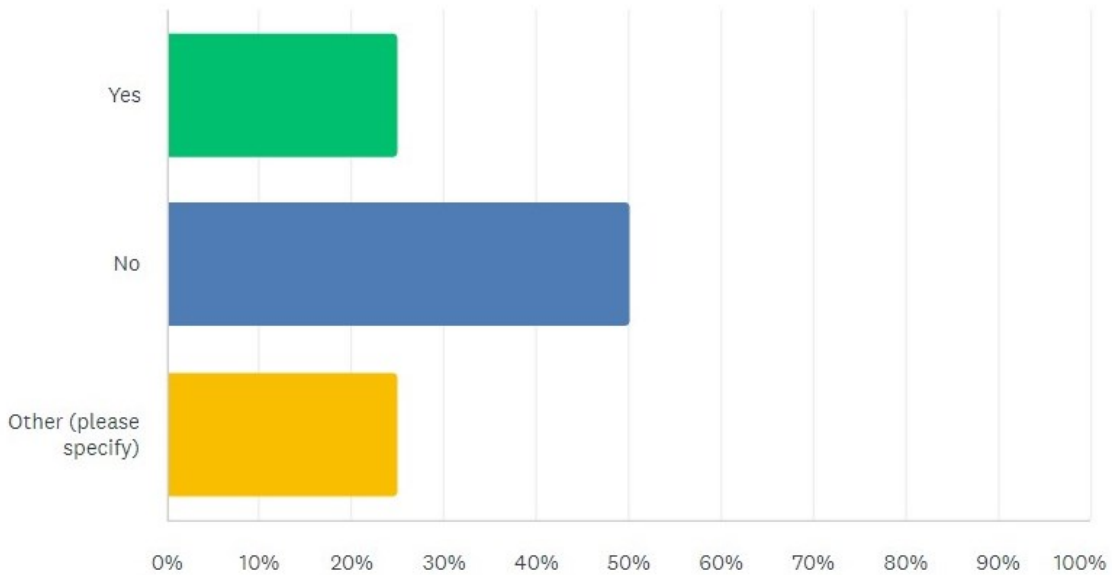


Figure 1. Pre-service Readiness

This chart reflects that only 25% of the non-Indigenous survey participants felt their pre-service education prepared them for teaching in First Nations schools. In contrast, 75% of the 8 participants identified a lack of pre-service educational readiness.

Answered: 4 Skipped: 4



Experiences of Non-Indigenous Teachers Working in Indigenous Schools

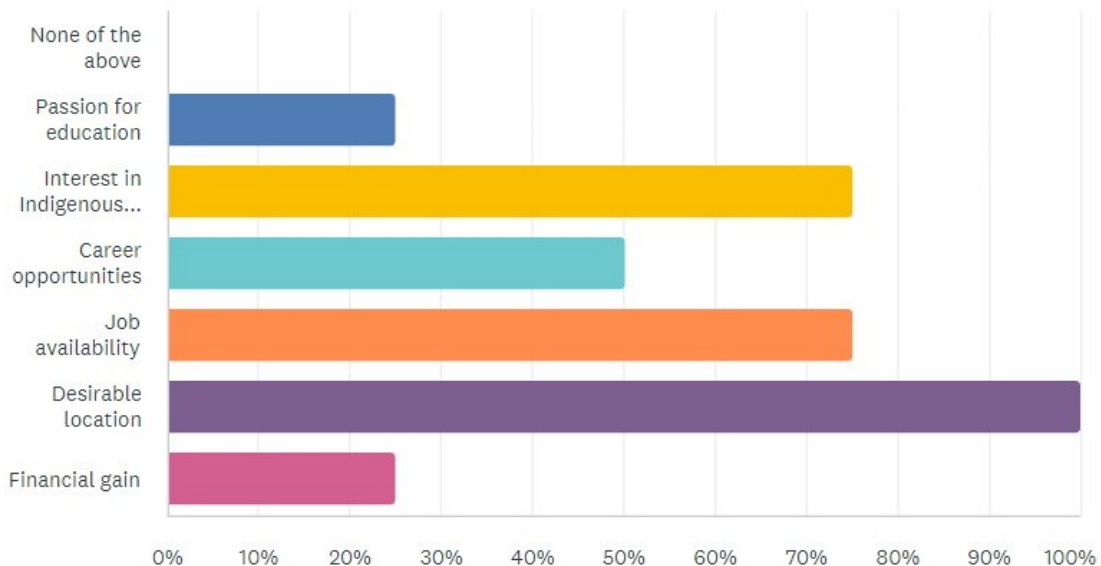
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Figure 2. Adequately Prepared for Teaching

This chart shows the statistics of participant data relating to how prepared they were for teaching Indigenous learners in a Band School. Of those who responded to this question, 50% indicated they were not prepared for teaching First Nations children.

Reasons for Working

Answered: 4 Skipped: 4



Experiences of Non-Indigenous Teachers Working in Indigenous Schools

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Figure 3. What Motivated You to Work at an Indigenous Band School? (2024)

This graph shows various motivating factors influencing participants to work in a band school. The three top motivating factors for working in a Band school were the desirable location (4/4), job availability (75%), and interest in Indigenous [finish statement] (75%).

One of the project researchers, Stuart Krestell, reflected on his experiences looking for teaching jobs after graduating from Teachers College. It would have taken him 6-8 years to become a full-time, practicing teacher in Ontario. By choosing to work in a Band School, Stuart taught directly after leaving Teachers College.

In terms of location, some Band School locations are desirable in BC. There were no clear indicators in the answers of specifically where or why, but it was indicated that certified teachers were drawn to locations through their answers. When the research team was looking for the contact information of principals, there were many open job

listings on BC Band School websites specific to their location; a lack of teachers in classrooms across the province has resulted in a 'teacher's market.' Respondents shared that they could choose their preferred region, sometimes even down to Band Schools they would prefer to work in.

Participants #1, #4, and #7 all indicated job availability was a reason for working in a band school. Participant #4 shared that during their job search, the organization went out of its way to accommodate and keep that person as an employee. The organization offered them an excellent work-life balance and flexible working hours while completing their master's degree. Retaining that individual in the school they are employed in was made to seem crucial to its operation.

Onboarding/Working

While focusing on teacher experiences during the onboarding and working process, all participants mentioned the need for a richer, more informed, welcoming experience. Participant #1 recommended an orientation that would include a tour of the territory, meet and greet with community elders, and ice breakers with school staff, especially those in the Language and Culture departments.

Having uninitiated teachers entering a band school presents many challenges. In Madden's conclusion (Madden, 2014, p. 73), she states that teacher education and development are inadequate regarding Indigenous education. Non-Indigenous teachers typically come from colonized university experiences and are often unaware of their own biases and privileges. Indigenous pedagogy, history, nor experiences were something that they were taught.

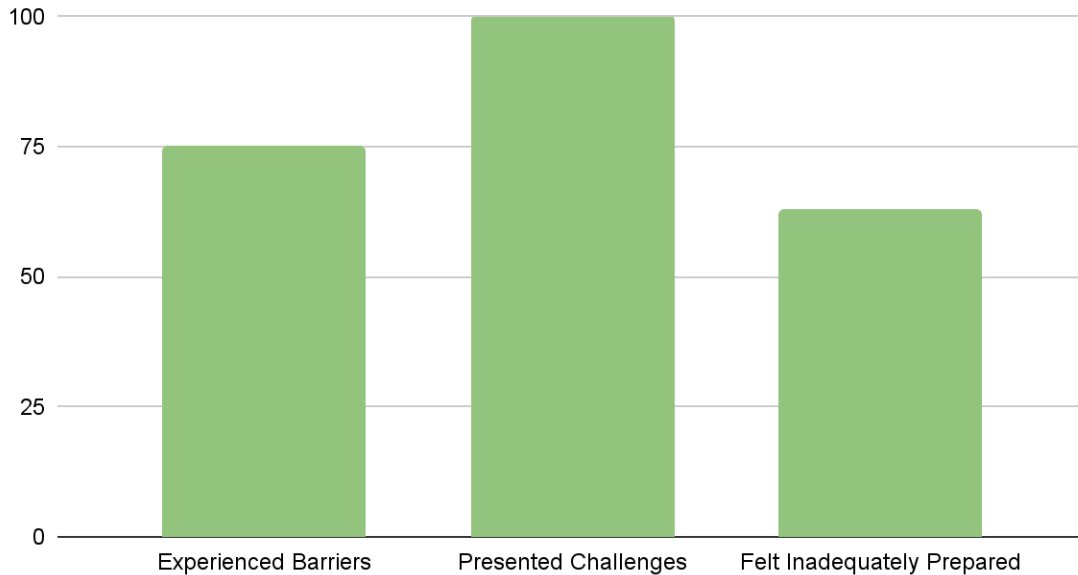
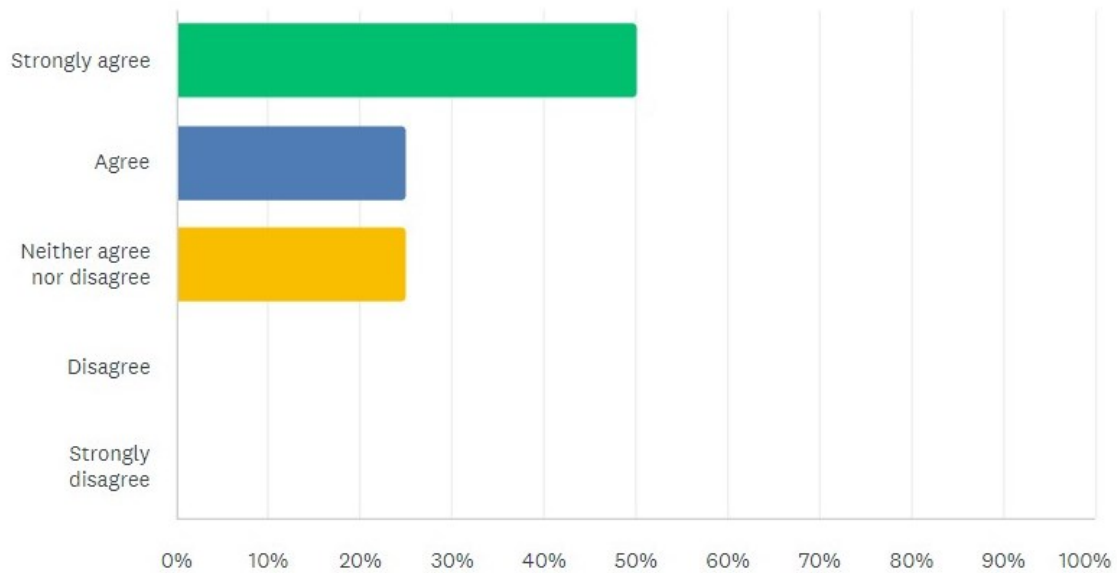


Figure 4. Onboarding and Working Experiences

As participants responded, they felt they were “inadequately prepared” for their Band School teaching experiences (see Figure 4). Figure 4 shows that survey participants experienced barriers and challenges and were unprepared to teach in an Indigenous Band School. They shared that their pre-service education did not address matters of Indigenous studies. The onus then falls on the individual Bands and schools to fill this shortcoming in teacher preparation.

Many of the participants detailed a lack of cultural onboarding. This ‘hot potato’ that gets passed between university and Band moves forward into the teaching experience. Participant 1 shared that their work in the Band School seemed temporary and that establishing connections was difficult. Participant 4 shared that some teachers felt hesitant to contribute for fear of looking uninformed or that their inquiries would be considered silly.

Answered: 4 Skipped: 4



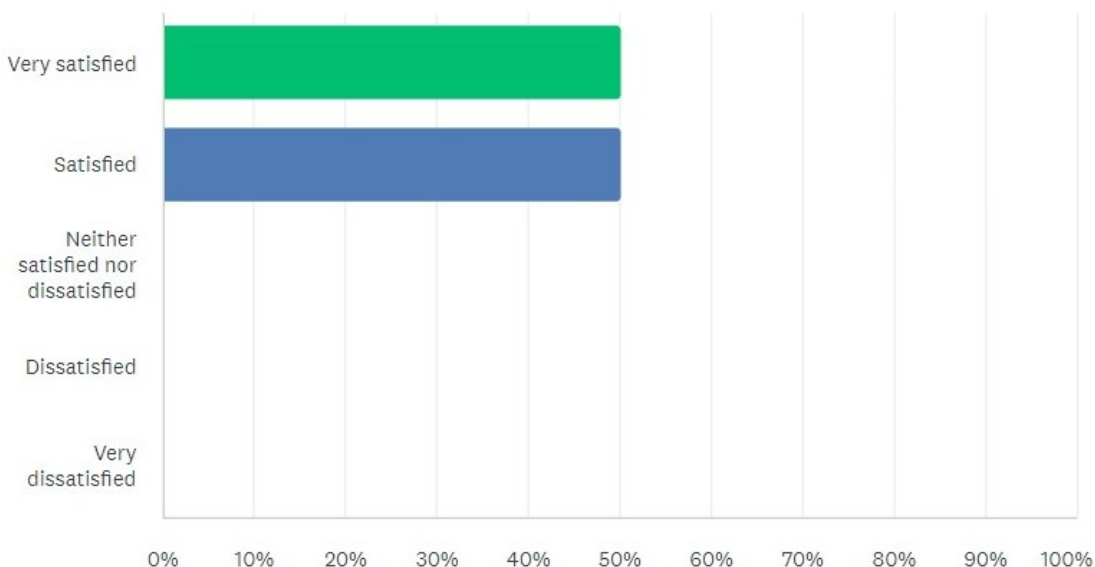
Experiences of Non-Indigenous Teachers Working in Indigenous Schools

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Figure 5. Level of Comfort and Support

This graph reflects the data from the survey of participants' level of comfort and support in their current role in a band school. Many survey participants strongly agreed that they feel comfortable and supported in their careers. This is an interesting finding given they did not feel prepared to teach within First Nations schools and communities.

Answered: 4 Skipped: 4



Experiences of Non-Indigenous Teachers Working in Indigenous Schools



Figure 6. Level of satisfaction in their workplace environment.

This graph represents the responses to one of the survey questions that possibly hint at participants playing it safe and providing politically acceptable answers. As a research group with experience in the band school system, we surmised that there may be some feared repercussions from their employer. Yet, there were no open-ended responses that substantiated this interpretation. However, as a group, we wondered how the respondents felt about their workplace environment. And how could a future study explore this issue more fully?

Future Recommendations

All survey participants had future recommendations to address and improve the First Nations Band School teaching experience for non-Indigenous teachers. Regardless of their current knowledge, each one shared a challenging immersion into Band School education.

The researchers are careful not to assign blame or responsibility. Still, if non-Indigenous teachers are to be successful and their students thrive and meet their

maximum potential, a system must be created to attend to these needs. Opportunities exist at several intersections of a teacher's career to support their practice. The recommendations address this challenge in three ways. Participation in this study identified three key stakeholders in supporting non-Indigenous teacher readiness to teach in First Nation schools: the academy, specifically Teacher College (i.e., pre-service teacher education programs), the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), and the individual First Nations Bands/Band Schools.

Teachers' Colleges

Teachers' Colleges across the country, specifically in British Columbia, need to focus on authentic instruction of Indigenous pedagogy. This means courses taught by Indigenous people about Indigenous people. Real lessons about history, Language, and culture, coupled with the realities of Indigenous life, are reported components of teacher education that are missing.

First Nation Education Steering Committee (FNESC)

In the triad of educating non-Indigenous teachers, the researchers believe that FNESC carries a responsibility. Nearly every province has a program called NTIP, the New Teacher Induction Program. School boards facilitate these NTIP programs, which are one year in duration. These programs discuss the challenges of being a new teacher and monitor achievement. As FNESC is the closest thing to being a school board for Band Schools, the recommendation is that they would be the most appropriate entity to carry this out. Like a professional learning community, these programs pair other teachers with similar experiences and allow them to build their knowledge in a structured format.

First Nation Bands/Band Schools

The third and final recommendation, borne directly from survey responses, is a grassroots, First Nations Band and community-level effort to help ease the immersion process. All responses recommended a tour of the area, cultural orientation with an introduction to the local Chief and Council, along with comprehensive language and culture instruction for all incoming teachers to a Band school.

Discussion

The experiences of our survey participants reflected that foundational teacher education needs to include more teachings about Indigenous peoples, their unique histories, and experiences to decolonize and 'Indigenize' their teaching practices within band schools. Our findings resonate with the research of experiences of non-Indigenous educators Madden (2014); and Jack-Malik, Kuhnke, and O'Rourke (2014). Their research findings and survey respondents' data reflected that Teachers' College should implement Indigenous content into their curriculum for best practices. Survey respondents also reflected in the open-ended questions that a more robust onboarding experience would be appropriate; this recommendation was also evident in our review of the literature Battiste (2017). Our participants noted that a welcome tour and language and culture classes specific to their working community would improve their teaching experience.

With a focus on Indigenous education as found in the Accord on Indigenous Education's (Archibald, Williams, Reynolds & Lundy, 2010) vision is that Indigenous identities, cultural practices, teachings and understandings will all be reflected and grow through implementation in Canadian learning settings. A worry in moving forward regarding the goal of the Accord on Indigenous Education (Archibald, Williams, Reynolds & Lundy, 2010) is that if an educator has made it successfully through Teachers' College without proper preparation and knowledge of these critical teachings, someone has failed that educator. Their re-education will fall to those working in the band schools and the Indigenous community that they are supposed to serve.

Survey respondents shared that they did not receive pre-service education regarding what the Accord (Archibald, Williams, Reynolds & Lundy, 2010) had set out to accomplish. All respondents reported having five or more years in teaching, yet none had formal coursework that reflected that; however, we do not know whether their teacher training aligned with the implementation of the Accord's mandatory training for all pre-service educators (Archibald, Williams, Reynolds & Lundy, 2010). The research in this study can also not equivocally determine where the participants were educated. It is possible that these educators studied in cohorts before the Accord took effect, or during the early stages of implementation. The researchers acknowledge new programs take time to develop and roll out. Still, as time passes, more and more new teachers may

have lost the opportunity to gain foundational knowledge about decolonizing education and refreshing their pedagogies.

As a group, the researchers believe these findings apply beyond our survey study and will apply to future students, instructors, and Indigenous Academia. Hopefully, these findings will answer how or what Indigenous criteria should be added to foundational teacher education.

All parties are in agreement: Indigenous Peoples, Teachers' Colleges, FNEESC, and First Nation Bands when it comes to the need to decolonize Indigenous Education. Teachers' colleges must focus on authentic Indigenous pedagogy and epistemology instruction. FNEESC needs to bolster their NTIP programs and give safe spaces for non-Indigenous educators to learn about Indigenous Peoples, their histories and experiences. Non-Indigenous educators' eagerness to learn more about Indigenous pedagogies and epistemologies must be met with a commitment from First Nation Indian bands to engage in fair and open dialogue. Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators can collaborate to create a more inclusive and effective educational system. This collaborative experience would enrich Indigenous students' education and help non-Indigenous educators feel valued, supported and included while working in their Indigenous community.

Conclusion

This research project aimed to contribute to the discourse on cross-cultural teaching in First Nation educational settings by providing valuable insights into the experiences of non-Indigenous teachers. By understanding their challenges, experiences, and strategies, this study sought to promote cultural sensitivity, effective pedagogy, and meaningful collaboration in education within diverse cultural contexts. It has become apparent to the authors that much work is needed to increase the efficacy level and sense of connection of non-Indigenous teachers in Band Schools.

A closer look needs to be taken to teach non-Indigenous learners at Band Schools and get the most value for teachers' efforts. Who will support the non-Indigenous teachers? Who will be responsible for laying the foundation so non-Indigenous teachers can enter these contracts from a position of knowledge? Finally,

decolonized education takes a different pedagogy, delivery, and content approach. With that realized, preparing teachers to operate in a decolonizing or decolonized environment also requires a different approach than has been taken.

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Appendix A.

Experiences of Non-Indigenous Teachers Working in Indigenous Schools Survey

Introduction and Consent to participate:

Dear Participant,

We are conducting a study to understand your experiences working as a non-Indigenous BC-Certified educator within the Indigenous Band School environment at/in First Nation-accredited institutions. Your participation in this data collection is crucial in understanding the dynamics, challenges, and opportunities within this specific context. Your input will shape our research for our Master's Research Project, while you remain anonymous as a contributor. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and time with us.

Please note that your responses will remain anonymous and confidential. The data collected will be used solely for research purposes. The information gathered will in no way directly reflect your Organization. We are not collecting personal information; all identifying data will be redacted. No direct quotes will be used from the surveys.

* 1. Survey Consent 2024

The Experiences of Non-Indigenous Teachers Working in Indigenous Schools Survey

Consent to Participate

Thank you for considering participating in this survey about Non-Indigenous Teachers Working in Indigenous Schools.

We, Stuart Krestell, Shauntelle Flooren, John Allison, are conducting this survey as part of a research project exploring Non-Indigenous Teachers Working in Indigenous Schools. We are Master's candidates with 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. We will write up the results of this research in the form of a research report, and we will present and share them in the form of a public presentation at SFU during the summer of 2023.

The purpose of this research is to learn more about Non-Indigenous Teachers Working in Indigenous Schools. If you agree to participate, the questionnaire should take approximately 15-20 minutes. The questions explore your experiences working in a Band School.

Your participation is voluntary. Even if you decide to participate, you may withdraw from this research at any point before you submit your completed questionnaire by exiting the survey. Because your answers will be anonymous, it will not be possible to withdraw your participation after submitting them.

Potential Risks and Benefits. There are no anticipated risks or benefits to you by participating in this research.

Confidentiality and Data Storage. The results of the study will be anonymous, meaning that no one, including ourselves, will know who you are from your data. We will store the data online on the encrypted on the SFU SurveyMonkey and the SFU Onedrive..

By proceeding with the online survey, you indicate that:

You consent to participate in this study.

You do not waive any of your legal rights by participating in this survey.

You understand that you are free to stop participating in this research project at any time.

Yes

No

⊕ PAGE TITLE

* 2. Are you a certified teacher in Canada?

Yes

No

* 3. Approximately how long has it been since attaining your teacher certification?

Less than 6 months

1-3 years

3-5 years

5+ years

* 4. Are you a BC-Certified teacher?

Yes

No

⊕ PAGE TITLE

* 5. Are you currently employed at a Band School in British Columbia?

Yes

No

* 6. I identify as Non-Indigenous?

True

False

7. What motivated you to work at an Indigenous Band School?

- Passion for education
- Interest in Indigenous culture and community
- Career opportunities
- Job availability
- Desirable location
- Financial gain
- None of the above

Other (please specify)

8. How would you describe the overall workplace environment in the Band School that you are employed in?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

Other (please specify)

9. Working at the Band School, I feel; respected and valued by my Indigenous colleagues and community members.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Other (please specify)

10. How do you perceive the communication between Non-Indigenous employees and Indigenous staff members?

- Very easy
- Easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Difficult
- Very difficult

Other (please specify)

11. Do you feel adequately included in decision-making processes within the Band School?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Other (please specify)

12. What, if any, are the barriers to collaboration between Non-Indigenous and Indigenous staff?

13. What are the initiatives or strategies that could be implemented to improve cultural understanding and collaboration within the Band School?

14. What are some of the biggest challenges you face as a Non-Indigenous employee working in a Band School?

15. What are the personal or professional growth opportunities you have encountered while working at a Band School?

16. Did you receive any cultural sensitivity training or education specific to working in Indigenous communities before starting your role?

17. Did you feel adequately prepared for your teaching role at a Band School?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

18. Do you feel comfortable and supported at the current point in your career working in a Band School?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

19. Describe, if any, the opportunities to advance your career within the Band School?

20. What recommendations do you have based on your experiences working as a Non-Indigenous educator in a Band School for future recruitment, onboarding, support...

21. Please use this space to share any additional thoughts, experiences, or suggestions that you believe are relevant to this survey.

22. Thank you for your participation. The information gathered in this survey will help us understand the experiences of Non-Indigenous teachers in Band Schools in British Columbia.

The data collected will be useful in future research and help to determine if any gaps or opportunities are present.

We thank you for taking the time to assist in our research and welcome any questions or concerns submitted by email to: ska379@sfu.ca

Appendix B.

Letter of Invitation

Dear non-Indigenous Teacher employed at a Band School,

We hope this message finds you well. We are writing this email as members of our research project group, which is being completed for the Educational Leadership Master's program through Simon Fraser University. We would like to introduce ourselves as members John Allison, Shauntelle Flooren, and Stuart Krestell. As a way of gathering data on the experiences of your BC-certified non-Indigenous teachers working within Indigenous Band school environments within accredited schools within the Province of British Columbia. We are surveying to gather valuable insights into their experiences. The information gathered will in no way directly reflect you or your organization. We are not collecting personal information; all identifying data will be redacted.

We kindly request your assistance in completing this survey (link below) as a non-Indigenous full-time teaching staff in Band Schools. Their input is invaluable in helping identify similarities in experiences, training, challenges, and suggestions.

The survey is designed to be brief, taking an estimated fifteen to twenty minutes. All responses will be kept confidential, and the accumulated data will be solely used to reach a consensus on the research information within our research project.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact project researchers John Allison, Shauntelle Flooren, or Stuart Krestell by email.

You may also contact Dr. Michelle Pidgeon, Faculty of Education by email or by phone.

We offer our kind regards and much appreciation.

John Allison, Shauntelle Flooren, and Stuart Krestell,
MEd Candidates, Educational Leadership
SFU Master's Research Project.

SURVEY LINK: <https://www.surveymonkey.ca/r/8WXVJ68>

Appendix C.

Survey Consent Form

**The Experiences of non-Indigenous Teachers Working in
Indigenous Schools Survey
Consent to Participate**

Thank you for considering participating in this survey about Non-Indigenous Teachers Working in Indigenous Schools.

We, Stuart Krestell, Shauntelle Flooren, John Allison, are conducting this survey as part of a research project exploring Non-Indigenous Teachers Working in Indigenous Schools. We are Master's candidates with 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. We will write up the results of this research in the form of a research report, and we will present and share them in the form of a public presentation at SFU during the summer of 2023.

The purpose of this research is to learn more about Non-Indigenous Teachers Working in Indigenous Schools. If you agree to participate, the questionnaire should take approximately 15-20 minutes. The questions explore your experiences working in a Band School.

Your participation is voluntary. Even if you decide to participate, you may withdraw from this research at any point before you submit your completed questionnaire by exiting the survey. Because your answers will be anonymous, it will not be possible to withdraw your participation after submitting them.

Potential Risks and Benefits. There are no anticipated risks or benefits to you by participating in this research.

Confidentiality and Data Storage. The results of the study will be anonymous, meaning that no one, including ourselves, will know who you are from your data. We will store the data online on the encrypted on the SFU SurveyMonkey and the SFU Onedrive..

Results. In addition to producing the final report and presentation required of our M.Ed. program, We will publish our findings to the SFU Library.

Once we complete all of our MEd degree requirements we will keep the survey data for no more than five years after the completion of the project.

Regardless of your participation, you can contact us for the results of this research project by emailing us.

Contact Information

If you would like to discuss this project or if you would like copy of the research findings we can be reached by email or by phone. If you would like to talk to my faculty supervisor, you can reach Dr. Michelle Pidgeon by email or by phone

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) by email or by phone.

By proceeding with the online survey, you indicate that:

- You consent to participate in this study.
- You do not waive any of your legal rights by participating in this survey.

You understand that you are free to stop participating in this research project at any time.