

CAUCE Research Award Final Report

Title: Imagining Collaborative Research, Teaching and Service through Transformative Scenario Planning

The many strategies for responding to the Call and increasing the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge, in particular, Indigenizing the academy, have been documented in the literature. There is a growing cadre of literature on definitions of and strategies for Indigenization (Gaudry and Lorenz, 2018; Louie, Poitras-Pratt, Hanson and Ottmann, 2017; Pidgeon, 2016), and concerns that activities done in the name of Indigenization - predominantly symbolic - may perpetuate colonial practices and prove to be more polarizing than reconciliatory (Gaudry, 2016; National Post, May 25, 2018) and leave Indigenous scholars and knowledge vulnerable. Pidgeon also notes that it is not the sole responsibility of Indigenous people to Indigenize the academy, but requires collective discussion and reflection by non-Indigenous people on the impact of historically colonial relationships. The question remains, “how do we begin to discuss and reflect with each other in ways that will promote curiosity for collaboration and systemic change?”.

The research was based on the premise that we cannot succeed in addressing the calls to action, beyond symbolic to more systemic inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in continuing education, without first deepening individual and collective understandings of our historical and present relationships and realities as well as taking steps to perpetuate the transmission of Indigenous knowledge. These premises are supported by Indigenous authors Pidgeon, Cortassel and Hardbarger. Pidgeon (2016) writes that “Non-Aboriginals seeking this ‘Indigenization’ of their institutions must understand what Indigenization really means, and that Indigenization cannot be defined or bounded by their expectation of what it should mean” (p. 79). Further to this, Cortassel and Hardbarger (2019) write about the importance of land-based pedagogies as a way to challenge colonial systems and foster education for transformative change.

Purpose

Drawing on transformative scenario planning (TSP), the goal of the research was to explore how individuals teaching and learning across the academy may deepen their understanding and build their capacity to participate in collaborative teaching, research and service.

The project was extremely successful, with more uptake and commitment to ongoing Indigenous knowledge inclusion than I had even hoped for. Each of the objectives has been met and exceeded.

Objective 1: Gather collaborators (a convening team in the language of transformative scenario planning)

Convening teams are “a team of people from across a whole system who want to, and together are able to influence the future of the University and, when gathered, provide a broader understanding and networks and credibility. The following individuals were collaborators on the project:

1. Dr. Geoffrey Rockwell, Director, Kule Institute for Advanced Studies
2. Dr. Roger Epp, Director, UAlberta North
3. Dr. Evelyn Steinhauer, Director, Indigenous Teacher Education Program, Faculty of Education
4. Dr. Lana Whiskeyjack, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Extension
5. James Lamouche, Director, Indigenous Wisdom and Knowledge Centre (external to UofA)

Objective 2: Build a Safe interdisciplinary project container through ceremony and land-based learning

Dr. Lana Whiskeyjack, James Lanmouche and I attended ceremony with Elders Alsen White and Edwin Yellowbird (June 6, 2019) to plan the land based learning days (July 21-23, 2019). The decision to begin with teachings from Elders Edwin Yellowbird and Alsen White, and the focus of the land-based learning were agreed upon. The Elders remained with us throughout the land based learning, closed the learning with a pipe ceremony and have since led a sweat lodge ceremony with participants (August 30, 2019) to discuss next steps.

3) Gather participants (May-July, 2019)

The aim was to bring together diverse knowledge systems and scholars across the university who, between them, represent diverse political, economic, cultural, and relational barriers as well as opportunities.

Faculty of Arts -2

Faculty of Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation - 1 (2 interviewed)

School of Public Health - 2

Faculty of Extension-3

Faculty St. Jean-1

Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre -1

University of Alberta Libraries - 1

Elders -5

Through conversations and interviews, participants were asked about their inclusion of Indigenous knowledge or collaboration to date, their challenges and successes in doing so, and their hopes and fears about Indigenous knowledge collaboration.

Recordings and notes were used to prepare a summary document that was circulated in advance of the experiential learning days.

Three themes emerged: 1) Personal Stories of Indigenous Knowledge Inclusion, 2 Understanding Indigenous knowledge, and 3) What will it take?

4) Observe what is happening (July 21-23, 2019)

Participants gathered with Elders and other Indigenous knowledge keepers to spend time building relationships and building a shared understanding of the current state of Indigenous knowledge inclusion and collaboration at the university. The following represents the activities of the three days.

Participants shared reflections on the final day as well as through journals, art, and stories. These have been collected for sharing with the group as we embark on the next phase of the project which will include a grant application to University of Alberta internal funding to continue the land based learning for faculty and staff development and collaborate on future CPE and credit course programming.

The research led to the successful application of a proposal to expand the research within and beyond the University of Alberta. The Kule Institute for Advanced Studies (KIAS) is providing \$55,000.00 based on the following abstract:

Research Title: Experiential Learning for Indigenous Knowledge Collaboration

As cultural, economic, political, environmental, and health issues grow increasingly complex, interest in the sophisticated knowledge of Indigenous Peoples across the globe is growing. In Canada specifically, researchers and educators who are working to meet the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action are increasingly interested in how Western educators and systems of education might co-exist with Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies.

Research Goal: By exploring and documenting an experiential approach to learning that respects the ontologies, epistemologies, and pedagogies of Indigenous people, this project aims to better understand how Indigenous values and ways of knowing can coexist equally with Western epistemologies in educational institutions.

Research Objectives:

- 1) Explore ways of learning that facilitate synergies for the coexistence of Indigenous and Western **knowledge**
- 2) Facilitate and nourish participants' emerging interests in Indigenous **knowledge collaboration**

- 3) Story map transformative learning resulting from Indigenous pedagogies that build **relationships** with the land, plants, and animals, and with each other
- 4) Reconnect education and research to a sense of place by listening, reflecting, and honouring the importance of Indigenous Peoples' inter-relational **connection to the land**.

References

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Solomon, (2018).