

Outcomes Report for the *Indigenizing the Academy Conference* August 26-28 2012

Introduction

The Indigenizing the Academy Conference (ITA) was held at the Gathering Center at the new Canada Education Park (CEP) at the Chilliwack Campus of the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) August 26 to 28, 2012. The ITA was envisioned as a way of bringing together post-secondary educational institutions across Canada to discuss new and innovative ways to integrate and center Indigenous peoples and their knowledge in those institutions' program, curricula and administrative structures, while simultaneously increasing the recruitment and retention of Indigenous faculty and students. More than that, the ITA was envisioned as 'a place' where a more systematic and ongoing networking between post-secondary institutions could be started, and would continue after the conference itself had ended.

Adopting the principle that the Indigenization of education is critical to the reconciliation of a colonialist Canadian past with a more inclusive, and decolonized future, the ITA's stated objectives were to share best practices for Indigenizing the academy in all aspects of its program delivery and governance; to foster cross-institutional dialogue and generate practical solutions for administrative and curricular shortcomings in the existing post-secondary delivery model; to develop resources that would enable administrators, faculty and Indigenizers to implement strategies and initiatives; and to build the networks that would facilitate the process of Indigenization generally.

The Conference Proceedings

The conference was preceded by an evening sweat. For the two days that followed, conference attendees were organized into a series of workshops according to whether they self-identified as administrators, Indigenizers, faculties or students. Each workshop was led by a group facilitator and organized in circle fashion. Each was posited three general, relatively open ended questions

that variously tried to solicit ideas and conversation less on 'the challenges' of Indigenization of the academy - the idea being that most participating institutions know what they are already - and more on the kinds of practices, initiatives, projects, etc. that would ensure greater success with Indigenization in the future. Everything - from how to recruit and retain Indigenous faculty and students; to how to Indigenize courses and programs; to how to reconcile post-secondary institutional and community cultures; to the reconciliation of Indigenous territoriality with academic governance - was on the table and open for discussion.

Each workshop was attended by a note-taker, who collated the notes for a formal record of what was discussed. Each workshop was attended by an Indigenous witness, who reported back to the full conference their impressions at the end of each of the two days of workshops. Every participant was asked to fill out an evaluation form. On line UFV blogs were established so that participants could send in commentary at a later date.

The conference workshops were wrapped around three keynote speakers, each of whom offered context and to an extent set the tone for the workshops themselves. Dr. Jo-Ann Episkenew, from the Indigenous Peoples Health Research Centre, University of Regina, talked about the track record of Indigenization in the post-secondary system, noting where it had been successful and where it had not. She cautioned that successful Indigenization had to be based at all levels on the principles of respect, reciprocity, relevance and responsibility. Dr. Lynne Davis, Program Director Indigenous Studies at Trent University, talked about the techniques and practices related to governance, partnerships and alliance building that had worked at Trent, and might provide a useful model for other institutions that had not proceeded down that path. Dr. Eber Hampton, former President of the First Nations University of Canada, talked about how to reconcile university and Indigenous community cultures.

All told, there were 243 registered participants, 231 of whom were able to attend. Most were from colleges or universities, but there were representatives from local and provincial governments and non-governmental or advocacy organizations. There was of course, greater representation from institutions and organizations from the western provinces, and especially from British Columbia and the lower Fraser Valley, but coverage was national in scope. The fact

that the conference was full, and many prospective attendees were unable to register, speaks to the demand and interest that the ITA generated. The following list shows the registered attendants, with the numbers in brackets indicative of how many representatives each institution was able to send:

Algoma University (2)
BC Association of Institutes and Universities (2)
Brock University (1)
Camosun College (3)
Capilano University (9)
Chehalis Community (1)
College of New Caledonia (4)
College of the Rockies (5)
Concordia University (3)
Douglas College (3)
Emily Carr University (5)
First Nations University of Canada (1)
Kwantlen Polytechnic University (9)
Langara College (7)
Laurentian University (2)
Maskwacis Cultural College (2)
Memorial University of Newfoundland (2)
Ministry of Advanced Education (3)
Mission School District (1)
MLA for Chilliwack - Hope (1)
Mount Royal University (4)
Native Education College (4)
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (8)
Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science & Technology (1)
Simon Fraser University (10)
Sto:lo Nation (2)

Thompson Rivers University (2)
Trent University (1)
University of Alberta (5)
University of British Columbia (10)
University of Manitoba (10)
University of Ottawa (2)
University of Regina (4)
University of Saskatchewan (7)
University of the Fraser Valley (69)
University of Victoria (6)
Vancouver Community College (5)
Vancouver Island University (4)
Wilfred Laurier University (6)
York University (1)

Conference Themes

Several key themes dominated the conference. For starters, and while Indigenization is in some sense a 'place based' movement, successful Indigenization rests on the willingness of post-secondary institutional leadership to implement it. This starts at the highest level of the presidents and vice-provosts academic, and filters on down through the deans. From the deans, it must be transmitted down to the faculty and the service arms of post-secondary institutions. Program development by select faculty is one thing. Gaining wider purchase throughout the administrative portfolio at committee level is another. Bureaucratic channels need to be cleared. At the same time, administrators must have the ear and voice of Indigenous communities themselves. Whether through advisory councils, partnerships, grassroots teach-back, or by some other means, the 'content' of Indigenization must come from Indigenous peoples themselves.

External to the academy, post-secondary institutional administrations must hold, also, their various provincial and territorial ministries accountable. At some level, it is government that must hear what university administrations tell it, and then make the resources available to make

those initiatives and desires happen. Such support must be continuous, not token and intermittent, and there needs to be a greater willingness to appoint Indigenous peoples to university senates and boards of governance.

In the academy, participatory research with, as opposed to traditional research on, Indigenous peoples and communities needs to be supported. Key areas in desperate need of attention now include Indigenous governance, resource management, education, business training, and, most importantly, health and healing. New kinds of curricula that place less emphasis on writing and 'chalk and talk', and more on community-based kinds of delivery - circle, visual modeling, longhouse, etc. - need to be developed. Student mobility needs to be enhanced - not only in terms of facilitating more fluid transfer between institutions via established accreditation and transfer procedures, but in terms of delivering more programs and courses to students without them having to leave the often distant communities in which they live. Fundamentally, there needs to be a 'cultural shift' in the recruitment of Indigenous faculty. Elders, linguists and other cultural experts need to be hired on the basis of their knowledge, not whether or not they have a terminal degree in any particular discipline.

Outcomes

Short Term Outcomes

Some of the short term anticipated outcomes of the ITA have already been, or are now being realized. First, the ITA was reported in the local press. It was documented by feature length articles in the *Vancouver Sun* and *Chilliwack Times*, and in the on-line forum Academic Group. More recently, the gathering was profiled in the Spring 2013 issue of *Skookum*, UFV External's affairs and news publication circulated in the wider community twice annually. It is always a challenge to measure qualitative outcomes, but public dissemination of the conference's purpose and content helps (and has helped) to broadcast the larger context of the gathering itself while raising the profile of UFV and its partner institutions that promote its objectives.

Second, and flowing from this, the ITA led to guest lectures and fora at UFV by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars who had attended it. In late November, Dr. (Hon.) Madeline McIvor

visited the CEP and gave a talk 'Indigenizing the Academy: Implications for the Health Sciences'. Three days later, Dr. Michael Marker came to the Abbotsford campus and to a standing-room only audience gave a lecture 'Challenges of Indigenous Historiography: Coyote and the River of Time'. In late December, Dr. Paula Palmeter, and Stó:lō Grand Chief Clarence Pennier and former Cheam Chief June Quipp conducted a panel at Stó:lō Nation on the Idle No More movement. In early February, four speakers, including new faculty member Dr. Wenona Victor, UVic's Robyn Heaslip and Chiefs Otis Jasper and Gerard Peters from the Soowhalie and In-SUCK-ch First Nations respectively, made presentations on Indigenous rights and reconciliation at the Renewing the Eighth Fire forum at the CEP. Also at the CEP, this was followed by the National Indigenous Rights Education Day, which featured presentations by Secwepemc activist Arthur Manuel, TRU law professor Dr. Nicole Schabus and Mi'kmaq activist and member of Mi'kmaq Warriors Society Alliance Sakej Ward.

Third, most of the participating institutions at the ITA left with either a renewed commitment to Indigenizing academies that had started down the path of Indigenization but perhaps in a more piecemeal fashion, or a commitment, especially at some smaller institutions, to start the process anew. Delegates pledged they would encourage increased emphasis on the processes of crafting vision statements; increasing the involvement of, or spearheading the creation of Indigenous advisory councils; and developing new Indigenous Studies majors, minors, diplomas and certificates.

Fourth, a few institutions noted that they already had Indigenous representatives on their Senates. Even of the majority who do not, there was a commitment to opening up policy manuals on issues ranging from how to define part time students; to employment equity in hiring, and to program development and accreditation. This process has already begun at UFV as the existing relationship between the UFV and local Indigenous communities through the agency of the Aboriginal Community Council is presently being restructured, the twin objectives being a revitalized and reconstituted Indigenous Studies Advisory Council and a Senate Sub-Committee on Indigenous Affairs. UFV's policies on employment equity and cultural diversity in the workforce are currently being rewritten to be more reflective of the need to encourage greater Indigenous participation in all levels of the institutional fabric.

Fifth, some universities and colleges were already providing Indigenous community and participatory research opportunities for students. An equally important development, and one that has already been started at the Third Annual New Universities Conference at Mount Royal College last September 2012, and was re-visited at the Western Deans Conference in Victoria in March 2013, is an initiative that has the twin objectives of bringing participatory research students and faculty from different universities together to share their research with Indigenous communities and to share best practices in terms of the Indigenization of their administrative structures more generally.

Sixth, it was noted that the University of British Columbia is developing an Aboriginal research chair, and at TRU a chair in Aboriginal maternal and child health. UFV has had a Canada Research Chair (CRC) in Aboriginal Studies for some time now. While not a direct result of the ITA, the conference did bring chairs, faculty and administrators together - the result being a greater awareness of what these chairs actually do and how they might integrate their work more closely.

Seventh, there is much greater awareness amongst the attending institutions of projects like the Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement Program (SAGE), a project that the Vancouver Foundation has supported in the past, and is directed to facilitating a more cross-institutional approach that enhances Indigenous graduate student mobility; provides guidance for guest and sessional teaching opportunities, sponsors writing retreats, and generally provides support for Indigenous graduate students starting to navigate the post-secondary educational system. There was a consensus that institutions more directly commit themselves to participate in cross-institutional projects like SAGE, and in so doing facilitate the process by which institutions might be able to hire Indigenous graduates into paid employment and so offer them real life experience while they complete post-graduate terminal degrees.

Eighth, the ITA also generated greater sensitivity to the need for institutions to break down traditional barriers and develop more innovative ways of creating partnerships with colleges, private universities and technical schools. While again germinated in advance of the ITA, there

is no doubt the momentum of that conference was instrumental in the conclusion at the end of 2012 of a partnership agreement between UFV and the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT). In this partnership, students who had completed 90 credits of an Advanced Chemical Addictions Diploma at NVIT could block transfer to UFV to complete the 30 credits of upper level courses that would have the effect of laddering into completion of a UFV BGS. UFV is most pleased to confirm that in August 2013, eighteen BGS graduands successfully completed the 30 credits and will join UFV's Convocation class in June 2014 .

Also, and while it again predates the ITA, it is important to note that the fourth edition of the Indigenous Maps Films Rights and Land Claims Certificate – co-taught by Dr. Ken Brealey, CRC Chair Hugh Brody, and Stó:lō Nation Research and Resource Management Director and Cultural Historian Drs. David Schaepe and (Hon.) Sonny McHalsie - in June and July 2013 enrolled 22 students, a two thirds increase over the average enrollment of the three previous editions. This certificate was profiled in both the *Chilliwack Times* and *Progress*, and promises to be well enrolled next year.

Finally, and most importantly, the ITA has been instrumental in furthering the process of Indigenization at UFV specifically. UFV's Internet website now hosts, among other features, network listings with other participant institutions; resources; live video links of gathering and related presentations and public or academic forums and panels; summaries of ITA workshops; regularly updated links to upcoming Indigenization gatherings and conferences; and interactive blogs and storytelling links to which members of the academy or interested publics can transmit and share best practices and ideas related to Indigenization.

While not directly a consequence of the ITA, it is also more than coincidental that UFV has hired the aforementioned and Sto:lo Nation member Dr. Wenona Victor its first full time Indigenous Studies instructor, and currently finalizing negotiations the aforementioned and Sto:lo Nation Cultural Reseacher and Historian Dr. (Hon.) Sonny McHalsie, as the first Indigenous adjunct professor (in History). Discussions are now ongoing in the College of Arts on the creation of an Indigenous Studies Department.

Overall, some evidence that UFV has been a leader in Indigenization efforts in the areas of governance, faculty hiring and pedagogy and student involvement – and that these are being acknowledged by the wider community - may be found in its having received the 2013 Reflective Workforce Award at the Abbotsford Community Services' Fraser Valley Cultural Diversity Awards in March 2013

Medium Term Outcomes

Over the medium term, the ITA generated a consensus that there needs to be greater effort on the part of participating institutions to build linkages between themselves and schools in the primary and secondary systems. In November 2012, for example, UFV organized a breakfast social with superintendents from six lower Fraser Valley school districts to discuss ways in which both parties might help each other to educate students in Indigenous history and worldviews and facilitate the transfer of Indigenous primary and secondary students to university.

In terms of curricular development, the ITA generated renewed interest in developing new and innovative kinds of programming. Although such programming is in part tied to increased recruitment of Indigenous faculty, some institutions have already combined existing courses in more innovative ways. Some institutions - for example, UBC, University of Victoria (UVic) and University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) - do have First Nations Studies programs of one kind or another, but generally the curriculum is arranged according to the standard model involving minimum numbers of credits, pre-requisite streams and breadth requirements. Few explicitly specify programs that stress health and healing, or building cultural capacity, competency and spiritual renewal from an Indigenous perspective. In recognition of this, and over and above the Certificate referenced above, UFV is developing an Indigenous Studies major and minor in which course selection and progression are arranged in accordance with the principle of the Medicine wheel. This process does predate the ITA, but it is through the ITA that the university is now taking a second look at the components it previously envisioned in order to develop a more culturally attuned degree.

Also, over the medium term, institutional representatives made a commitment to put out papers on best practices and/or call for papers on best practices in Indigenization. Many indicated that

they would work on incorporating Indigenization objectives into their institutional learning outcomes. As of this writing, UFV has done so. Still others are in the process of developing networks of Indigenous scholars. Three foundational conferences that have helped to strengthen some of the connections first established at the ITA included the Place Belonging and Promise: Indigenizing the International Academy at UBC in early May 2013; the Lloyd Barber Summit on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education at the University of Regina in late May 2013; and the Best Practices in Indigenous Education at the Native American and Indigenous Studies Conference in June 2013. The Challenging the Paradigm conference at Northwest Community College is scheduled for May 2104.

Much of the medium term outlook will necessarily be concerned with networking on the Internet. In this light, the ITA website referred to above is a work in progress, not only in terms of its accessibility on the UFV website, but in terms of its being interconnected with links to other developing websites and portals at participatory institutions.

A far more concrete outcome that was not anticipated in August 2012 but clearly was inspired by the energies generated by the ITA, was UFV's Senate decision in the summer of 2013 to cancel all classes for September 18 and instead offer at all its campuses the Indian Residential School Day of Learning (IRSDL). Timed to coincide with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in Vancouver that week, the ISDRL drew an estimated 1,000 students, faculty, staff and community and Indigenous activists to a series of events including film presentations, readings, teaching workshops and presentations on the residential school experience and its legacy, and why it is so important that we come to terms with the impact these schools continue to have on relations between Indigenous people and settler society in Canada.

Longer Term Outcomes

Longer term outcomes are much harder to gauge and predict because so much depends on resources, attrition and turnover in administrative and faculty ranks, and Indigenous peoples' points of emphasis and preoccupations at different times and in different contexts. Nevertheless, attending institutions are looking seriously at long term infrastructural development in terms of

new gathering centers and centers for Indigenous studies, such as those recently completed at UNBC, UVic and UFV.

In terms of administration, inter-institutional meetings, such as those of the Western Deans and New Universities, will be increasingly devoted to Indigenization initiatives revolving around accreditation, transferability and recruitment and retention. There is now a much greater sense of urgency to develop programs and courses that will allow students from more remote communities to get more universal and distant access to post secondary education. There is a notable trend towards more field based and elder-led, longhouse type educational opportunities for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Changed policies respecting recruitment, retention, and a need to reconfigure tenure systems will likely take longer, but at least the discussion is now ongoing. Representatives indicated their intention to go back to their universities and help their administrations establish the steering committees and advisory boards that will need to dialogue with faculty in order to achieve these kinds of objectives. Whether these initiatives involved greater insistence on Indigenous orientation for senior administrators, workshops for staff and faculty, or minimal course requirements for major and minor degrees, they will, by definition, reconstitute the post-secondary system as we now know it.

Ultimately, however, the most important outcome of the ITA is not anything that can be quantitatively measured. What the ITA really generated was a sense that Indigenization is something institutions can actually achieve. It was the 'mood' or the 'attitude' that came out of the ITA that was perhaps its most striking achievement. Attendees came away from the conference with a renewed sense of spirit, cooperation and 'stick-to-itiveness' that Indigenization over the longer term is going to require.

Conclusion

Clearly, the networking, bridge-building, and sense of purpose that came out of the ITA is about process, not outcome in the hard sense of that term. Indigenization has to be about the process of

academic life in general. As one respondent put it, the ITA was "[a]n important event in the journey to expand our *weltanschauung* and deepen our epistemological understanding." There will have to be (and already are) following editions of the ITA, whether on a one or two year cycle, and other institutions will have to step up to the plate to make the initiative a truly national movement. The important point is that institutions that have already started down this path - in particular the larger universities that have more resources and political clout - have been re-energized. Those that have not - often smaller regional colleges that have little resources or suffer from administrative inertia - have been sparked.

On behalf of the University of the Fraser Valley, this ITA outcomes report submitted by

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'KCBrealey', with a stylized, cursive script.

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