Developing and delivering a culturally relevant international work-integrated learning exchange for Indigenous students

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Students, faculty, and staff in postsecondary institutions around the world are engaging in conversations about decolonization and Indigenization. These conversations are also emerging in the context of work-integrated learning and experiential learning programs. This article presents the key findings of a research project investigating the impacts of an Indigenous international work-integrated learning (WIL) exchange between the University of Victoria (British Columbia, Canada) and three partner institutions in Australia. It introduces key concepts and insights from the literature about decolonizing and Indigenizing postsecondary education and links them to WIL. It describes the specific context at the University of Victoria out of which this programming emerges and the values that guided its creation. It presents the key findings of the research to date related both to Indigenous perspectives and the application of a Cultural Intelligence (Earley & Ang, 2003) framework. Finally, it offers some reflections on the implications of the findings for decolonizing WIL moving forward.

Keywords: Indigenous WIL, decolonization, Indigenization, student mobility, cultural intelligence, culturally relevant WIL

Students, faculty, and staff in postsecondary institutions around the world are engaging in conversations about decolonization and Indigenization (e.g., Bendix et al., 2020; Chantiluke et al., 2018). These conversations are occurring at a number of levels, including institutional, curricular, interpersonal, and individual, and take on different characteristics depending on local and national contexts (e.g., le Grange, 2016).

The concept of decolonization is large, complicated, and multifaceted. However, several common themes have emerged in the works of scholars and researchers who have engaged with it. Māori researcher and scholar Linda Tuwahi Smith has written (2012) that decolonization "is about centering our [i.e., Indigenous] concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes" (p. 41). Writing specifically about research methods in an African context, Chilisa (2012) argues that approaches to decolonization "emphasize how Indigenous knowledges can be used to transform conventional ways of producing knowledge so that colonial and imperial impositions are eliminated, and knowledge production is inclusive of multiple knowledge systems" (pp. 38-39).

In Canada, these conversations about decolonization are also taking place in the context of truth and reconciliation. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its report on the history, impacts, and legacies of the residential school system in Canada. Along with 6 volumes of material, the Commission produced a list of 94 Calls to Action to identify and guide the work to be done to move the country towards reconciliation. Many of the calls refer specifically to education and training for professionals (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

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At the same time, it is important to remember that reconciliation is only one part of the process of repairing and rebuilding relationships between Indigenous peoples and Canadians. As labour market analyst Shauna MacKinnon (2015) argues, while Indigenous people's economic and social outcomes can be improved through their engagement with the labour market, this is not sufficient to achieve success in those areas, however that is defined. As Indigenous populations continue to grow, both in absolute numbers and as a relative proportion of the Canadian labour force, it is necessary "that policy makers, educators, and employers consider how to better respond to the needs of Aboriginal people in general, and those who have been socially and economically marginalized in particular" (p. 6). However, a narrow emphasis on increasing participation rates without accompanying attention to structural factors runs the risk of attempting to reshape participants to fit programs rather than building programs to meet the needs and aspirations of both Indigenous people and their communities, and we think that this is an important reminder in the context of WIL as well.

Education is often presented as a panacea for the challenges faced by Indigenous communities, including but not limited to employment and income. Kovach (2009), stresses that this is "a strategy that certainly matters, but by itself it is insufficient. Welcoming Indigenous students but not allowing for learning, scholarship, and research that is congruent with Indigenous paradigms is simply a nuanced variation of a past strategy" (p. 163), one based on assimilation of Indigenous peoples into mainstream society. For Kovach (2009), a key challenge arose around differing views of the role of education; she writes that:

> [f]rom a government perspective, post-secondary education was largely a policy mechanism, with subsequent educational programming seen as an initiative to bridge the equity gap between status Indians and mainstream (non-Indigenous) society. This differed substantially from the Indigenous community's perspective of education as a foundational right that should simultaneously serve culture and minimize socio-economic disparity. (p. 161)

To be successful and meaningful, an approach to post-secondary education for Indigenous students and communities, including WIL, must move away from a focus (explicit or implicit) on assimilation toward one that respects self-determination at personal and collective levels. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) stress that:

> [w]hile improved job opportunities alone may provide sufficient motivation to keep some students interested, in the case of many First Nations students, these 'jobs' are often linked to aspirations with much broader collective/tribal considerations, such as exercising self-government, or bringing First Nations perspectives to bear in professional and policy-making arenas. (p. 5)

In this sense WIL, like post-secondary education in general, must reflect Indigenous values of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

Our current research seeks to contribute to these processes and projects of decolonization by building on earlier work undertaken to identify factors contributing to successful culturally-relevant Indigenous international WIL exchanges (Ramji et al., 2016), and recognizes the need to work in different ways in order to serve students seeking such experiences. Cultural intelligence (Earley & Ang, 2003, McRae & Ramji, 2017) has played a key role in this endeavour, as staff sought to better understand Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and how this understanding should inform development of the exchange program. Our approach has also been motivated by a recognition that programs need to be designed to meet the needs of students, rather than vice-versa; failing to do so will replicate the very issues that

we are trying to resolve. Writing from the perspective of labor policy, MacKinnon (2015) shares similar concerns:

> While we like to think that we have learned from past mistakes, we continue to repeat them by trying to fit Aboriginal people into Eurocentric development models that ignore the deep and lasting damage caused by our past mistakes. Full social and economic inclusion will first require an acknowledgment of this, followed by meaningful systemic changes that reach far beyond labour market policy. (p. 174)

In undertaking this work, we understand policy expansively — as referring both to governmental policy and institutional policy. At the same time, her call for acknowledgment of the shortcomings of the past approaches and for structural changes resonate with calls for decolonization both generally and in this specific context.

While Kovach's expertise is in Indigenous research rather than experiential learning or WIL, we think that her understanding of the relationship between postsecondary education and improved outcomes for Indigenous students and communities offers an important perspective on the work to be done and the opportunities it brings. In particular, her emphasis on the role that building relationships plays in decolonization of education links both to the insights from Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) and to emerging practice in WIL. For Kovach (2009), this work "begins with decolonizing one's mind and heart" (p. 169) and she argues that undertaking this process

> means exploring one's own beliefs and values about knowledge and how it shapes practices. It is about examining whiteness. It is about examining power. It is ongoing. It is only after carrying out this personal and institutional examination that scholars and disciplines can be in a position to acknowledge Indigenous knowledge and what it means in changing an organizational culture. (p. 169)

At the same time, she offers a caution about focusing on short-terms goals at the expense of Indigenous perspectives on the need to ensure that the work is expansive enough to meet the needs of Indigenous communities, particularly around issues such as "Aboriginal rights, cultural longevity, and the responsibility of educational institutions within that larger discussion" (p. 162). Echoing these concerns, MacKinnon (2015) identifies some of the aspects of this more expansive approach:

> Decolonization of the education system, as part of a process to undo some of the damaging effects of colonial policies, … would include a new curriculum that critically examines the value base of colonialism and its inherent contrast to collectivist versus individualist pursuits generally, and to the values and beliefs of colonized Indigenous peoples more specifically. It will also require fundamentally changing educational institutions at all levels, embracing Indigenous knowledge, and adapting programs and program delivery to more appropriately respond to and engage with Aboriginal students, and all students, in a meaningful way. (p. 70)

While both Kovach (2009, p. 162) and MacKinnon (2015, p. 40) see value in post-secondary education, they each caution that approaches taken by institutions must be responsive to the historical contexts and the current needs and aspirations of Indigenous people and communities. An example of the work of Indigenous educators and allies to provide culturally-relevant relevant job preparation opportunities for Indigenous students is the LE,NO<u>N</u>ET suite of programs at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada.

LE,NONET AT UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

LE,NONET (a SENĆOŦEN word meaning "success after enduring many hardships" or "paddling a canoe in a storm and making it safely to the other side") offers an integrated suite of services and programs with the aim of supporting Indigenous students. These include bursaries (based on identified financial need), a leadership and mentorship program (Campus Cousins), and academic programs including experiential learning opportunities (both on campus and in Indigenous communities). The services and programs offered build upon work done as part of a 4-year research project, funded by the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation (Hunt et al., 2010). The researchers characterize the work undertaken in this way:

> During the consultation process, the central question of success emerged as the main focus of the project: What constitutes success in [Indigenous][2] students and communities, and how can post-secondary institutions support [Indigenous] students to succeed on their own terms? Several key elements were identified as vital to the development of programs to support [Indigenous] student success: affirm the student as a whole person, using a holistic approach; acknowledge and reinforce [Indigenous] identity; foster [Indigenous] community; value [Indigenous] practices and ways of knowing; support students financially; and raise the awareness of university staff and faculty of how to make the learning environment more welcoming. Moreover, participants in the project development process emphasized that, in researching the impact of the program, it would not be enough to tally increases in grade point average (GPA), rates of return, and graduation among LE,NONET program participants as compared to a pre-LE,NONET cohort or some other control group. It would be equally important to explore [Indigenous] students' concepts of success and to document the effects of the programs on the students' sense of self-worth, cultural identity, and belonging within the [Indigenous] and academic worlds. (Hunt et al., 2010, p. 6)

The research identified six key principles and best practices for programs and services supporting Indigenous student success: reciprocal learning, supporting Indigenous identity development, culturally relevant programming, community building, relationship building, and individualized programming (see Appendix A).

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA INDIGENOUS INTERNATIONAL WIL EXCHANGE: THE CASE STUDY

Building on the work being done at UVic and in surrounding Indigenous communities, particularly the LE,NONET experiential learning programming and UVic's Co-operative Education Program and Career Services (Co-op & Career) and drawing on the six values identified in the research project, the LE,NONET team worked with Co-op & Career colleagues to develop an international Indigenous WIL exchange program (IIWIL). With financial support from the Canadian Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Scholarship program, UVic, and partnering institutions, Indigenous students from UVic had the opportunity to complete an Indigenous-focussed WIL term at one of three Australia institutions (Wollotuka Institute at University of Newcastle, Walanga Muru at Macquarie University, or Ngarara Willim Centre at RMIT). Students from partner institutions completed an academic term at UVic followed by a community internship (Ramji et al., 2016). As such, this program involved two of the

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[2] The report of the LE,NONET project uses "Aboriginal," but in the time since its publication UVic has switched to using "Indigenous." The term "Aboriginal" continues to be used in Australia.

nine types of WIL as defined by Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL Canada), namely co-operative education and internships (CEWIL Canada, n.d.).

As with all students who embark on an international WIL term (UVic students completed 325 international WIL placements in 2018/19 (UVic Co-op & Career, 2019)) the outgoing students participated in a pre-departure preparation course. In addition to addressing the logistical and risk management aspects of international travel, this course incudes a component of UVic Co-op & Career's Intercultural Competency Development Curriculum (ICDC) that is based on Earley and Ang's cultural intelligence framework (McRae & Ramji, 2017).

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is one's ability to be effective in intercultural contexts (Earley & Ang, 2003). The motivational, cognitive, meta-cognitive, and behavioural dimensions of CQ are powerful tools that can help students develop capability to be effective in intercultural interactions (Livermore, 2015; McRae & Ramji, 2011; McRae & Ramji, 2017; McRae et al., 2016). The ICDC enables UVic students engaging in international WIL placements to anticipate challenges they may encounter as a result of cultural differences, and to prepare themselves to be effective in these circumstances (McRae & Ramji, 2017). The UVic Indigenous students participating in this exchange completed this course. They also completed the LE,NO̲NET preparation seminar which prepares students to work within Indigenous communities while exploring ethical considerations when undertaking these projects. In preparing the students in this way, the exchange program recognizes the diversity of Indigenous student participants, who come from various levels of understanding and experience with Indigenous ways of knowing and being, dependent on their identity and upbringing. Where possible, a traditional Indigenous farewell ceremony has also been conducted to send them off in a culturally appropriate way with blessings from Elders.

During the WIL term, the students were supported by UVic and partner staff to ensure that they had a meaningful learning experience and met their learning objectives. A competency framework enabled the students to develop their core competencies (such as personal management, research analysis, etc.) and their intercultural competencies.

Upon return to UVic, the students received a traditional Indigenous welcome ceremony with blessings from Elders, engaged in debriefing sessions with UVic staff, and presented their learnings and reflections at a gathering of Indigenous Elders, students, faculty, staff, and members of local Indigenous communities. They also completed co-op work term reports where they reflected on their international experience. Finally, where possible, outgoing students were connected to incoming exchange students and vice versa, to facilitate an effective peer support system for students in their host countries.

THE RESEARCH STUDY

"There is much to be learned from speaking with those who have participated in training programs, and many are willing to share their experiences…. Learning of the positive experiences through conversations with training graduates provides hope. It also provides instructive lessons for policy makers" (MacKinnon, 2015, p. 163).

The UVic IIWIL Program is unique in that it combines current trends in WIL, internationalization, and decolonization and Indigenization. The intersection of these three trends in this program, and the unique characteristics of WIL, international WIL and Indigenous WIL present an opportunity for innovative and valuable programming as well as a challenge that presents great risks if not planned and executed correctly. This research study, for which human ethics approval was obtained (UVic Protocol 17-086), provides insight into critical success factors for UVic's Indigenous International WIL

Exchange Program. Our analysis is based on interviews with eleven participants who either traveled from UVic for a WIL placement in Australia or came to UVic for an academic exchange between 2016 and 2020. Interview questions are included in Appendix B. Some of the interview sections will inform programmatic operational improvements and are not included in this paper.

METHODOLOGY

To date, 15 students have participated in the IIWIL program. All but the first two were invited to participate in the study, with 11 of 13 students consenting to an interview. Applying Indigenous research methodologies that emphasize "wholism" (Absolon, 2011) and the importance of relational and reciprocal approaches and orientations (Kirkness and Barnhardt, 1991; Wilson, 2008), in-depth qualitative research was used to collect and analyze data from participants to gain rich understandings of the value of Indigenous-to-Indigenous WIL experiences and how to build a successful Indigenous International WIL program. Due to the time frame of the experiences being examined, participants were invited to one-on-one interviews following appropriate Indigenous protocol for requests of this kind, including being offered a gift in acknowledgment of the knowledge they shared and the time they took to share it. The study explored how participants benefitted, what was learned, and the impacts on coursework/theory and career goals, as well as the challenges encountered. The study also explored intercultural competencies and the program elements before, during, and after the student experience that helped them prepare for their international WIL experience, the experience itself, and outcomes of Indigenous identity building and Indigenous ways of knowing.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

By using the LE,NONET key principles and best practices as a framework to analyze the data, we were able to explore if we achieved our goals of developing a culturally-relevant WIL program. The key themes that emerged from the interviews are summarized below.

Reciprocal Learning

The students identified reciprocity as a shared cultural value between Indigenous people in both countries, and a strategy to assist them in their future intercultural encounters. They reported that giving back knowledge to those who were sharing with them was very important. Students facilitated workshops and presentations to share their cultural knowledge and spoke with strong sentiments about the cultural knowledge they received. One student shared about an Elder's teaching how the land takes care of you if you take care of the land. The student was welcomed to the land by using a traditional plant, which is now framed and displayed in an office space as a daily reminder of the commitment and responsibility to the land. Through reciprocal learning, students were able to identify similarities in values, such as the importance of place-based learning and of the relationships between people, land, plants, and animals.

Supporting-Indigenous Identity Development

The students' own Indigenous identities were strengthened by reflecting on their rationales for being in another country, the impacts of their presence, their understanding of what it means to be an Indigenous person, and their acknowledgment of their responsibility to enter someone else's territory in a good and respectful way. They felt stronger as an Indigenous person by sharing their own cultural teachings and through the realization of how much cultural knowledge they had to share, particularly of their relationships to the land and how to engage with the land, plants, and animals. One student

said, "I went into the exchange thinking I had very little cultural knowledge, but by sharing with others it reinforced I do know a lot about colonization, cultural practices, and ceremonies." Furthermore, they deepened their own knowledge of the similarities and differences among Indigenous cultures by comparing the Indigenous experiences in Canada to those in Australia. They highlighted Indigenous ways of knowing and the importance of learning protocols and how to be respectful and ask questions in a culturally appropriate manner.

Culturally-Relevant Programming

Students took culturally relevant courses (LE,NO<u>N</u>ET preparation seminar and Indigenous Studies courses), both prior to departure and during their exchange, that explored the colonial history of host countries and prepared students to apply theory and methodologies on how to conduct work and research in Indigenous communities in a respectful manner. Welcoming ceremonies and territory/land acknowledgements were provided to students upon arrival to connect and include them as part of their new community. Elders took the students out onto the land to culturally-significant sites, shared stories, and introduced them to students and community members. This was important because Indigenous relationships between people and the land are an integral part of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Students were able to expand their cultural knowledge by exploring their host country. For example, one partner institution gave students one flex day per week for experiential learning to visit some of the cultural sites and engage in community events.

Community Building

Students reported a variety of community building opportunities, including mentorship and experiences both on and off campus. Having strong mentors during their stay made a positive difference and helped the students grow and learn. Mentors also influenced the students' conduct in future community engagements, and how they will support and mentor others who participate in the future. Students engaged in on-campus community-based experiences, including time with Elders, faculty, colleagues, and peers. Of greater significance were the off-campus community-based opportunities, such as visits to Indigenous communities, Elder-led land-based opportunities, inclusion as peers in social circles, invitations to homes to share meals, weekend trips to other regions, and attendance at sporting events. The community building opportunities enriched and enhanced the exchange by offering opportunities to speak to the local Indigenous people. The students plan to use the experience they gained in their future Indigenous community engagements by being respectful Indigenous travellers, applying their community building skills, and remembering the importance of sharing as much as possible with the community they are working with as well as the community they are coming home to.

Relationship Building

The opportunity for relationship building had a positive effect on the students' experience. Lifelong relationships were built, and students were able to identify similarities between cultures and the histories of colonization. Mental health was improved, and feelings of isolation were decreased by developing friendships, spending time with Elders, and acknowledging the gift of receiving cultural teachings. Sharing Indigenous ways of knowing and being was accomplished by developing relationships and establishing trust. Building relationships with Elders was essential for the students as they shared cultural protocols and provided support. Peer relationships were key to student wellbeing, as they included the students in meetings, events and land-based opportunities. One student stated, "By the time I was leaving I was like family." Building and maintaining a relationship

with the previous international exchange student was identified as another important connection, as students had someone they knew when they arrived at their host institution, resulting in reduced feelings of isolation.

Individualized Programming

The Co-op work term placements and community internships provided opportunities for students to create self-directed WIL placements and empowered them to take initiative and create their own learning outcomes. This helped students develop and communicate goals for their exchanges and choose projects that were relevant to their learning interests. Self-directed work term projects completed by outgoing UVic students included an Environmental Studies student who focused on a pond restoration proposal and an Anthropology student who researched and created Indigenous curriculum for undergraduate classes. Other WIL projects included: first-year experience programming for Indigenous students and development of student engagement and support strategies; student retention programming and development of success strategy workshops for Indigenous students; social media marketing at an urban Indigenous organization; and participation in of a policy and impact team that developed an Indigenous Reconciliation investment framework for the institution. Incoming Australian exchange students completed community-based projects related to support for a homeless shelter, social media at an urban Indigenous organization, work at a community garden, and planning for an urban reconciliation dialogue event.

In addition to their WIL terms, UVic students were required to organize and implement a community engagement activity. These included presenting lectures in Aboriginal Studies classes in several high schools focussed on similarities and differences in Indigenous cultures and issues for Indigenous people in Canada and workshops that shared cultural knowledge (arts, crafts, dance, and storytelling).

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE (CQ)

The intercultural experiences gained by the students through this program were significant for their personal growth and identity development. One Canadian student had the unique opportunity to live with a Māori family while on the exchange. So, while they got the Australian Aboriginal experience during the day while on their WIL term, they spent their evenings enjoying traditional Māori food and language and learning how Māori stood up for their land and their cultural traditions, language, and way of life. These rich experiences lend themselves to development of students' cultural intelligence, which consists of four capabilities: CQ Drive, one's motivation and confidence to succeed in intercultural interactions; CQ Knowledge, one's understanding of similarities and differences between cultures; CQ Strategy, one's ability to plan for multicultural interactions and CQ Action, one's ability to adapt in a diverse cultural context.

Cultural Intelligence Drive

A key motivator for students (CQ Drive) was the cultural relevance of this exchange opportunity. Students' intrinsic interests in meeting new people and understanding new cultures, their passion for culture and history and relevance to their academic program (e.g., Sociology and Indigenous Studies) contributed to their decision to participate in the exchange. For most students, this experience was a first encounter with Indigenous people outside of their home countries, and inspired much reflection, which has "really pushed me to seek that out more, including Indigenous cultures in other parts of the world."

Cultural Intelligence Knowledge

The learning gained by students in the classroom enabled them to better understand the history of Indigenous people in Canada and Australia, and the differences in the governance systems used in each country. They reflected on the relevance of the differences and similarities, and how this understanding helped students when they embarked on their WIL terms, as they arrived well informed and able to engage in meaningful discussions with their colleagues in the workplace.

The realization that although Indigenous people share some values, their expressions are shaped by the geography they are in, was a significant learning outcome. Some students spoke of the common values of reciprocity, respect, and relationality, similar experiences of colonization, similar issues (language revitalization, cultural disparities) as well as resiliency and strength and strong spiritual connection to the land. Others reflected on the actions of non-Indigenous people that revealed the impacts of colonization. All these learnings contributed to enhancing students' CQ knowledge.

Cultural Intelligence Strategy

For one student, the experience was a realization that despite their collective struggles and common values, Indigenous peoples have diverse cultures and may have differing needs, wants and aspirations. As they put it, they are, as a result, now "coming from a place of seeking to understand, not to make judgement, and not trying to compartmentalize people just to understand." This level of CQ strategy development was evident in multiple students, who expressed that they learned "not to be opinionated and express thoughts on someone else's culture without being well educated on it or understanding the culture first." One student acknowledged their discomfort and lack of expertise when presenting their work on Coast Salish economic systems in their LENONET class, and reflected as follows: "Am I presenting on their knowledge or am I presenting on ways I can support that knowledge going forward?" Another student recognized that they carry the influences of their Australian history and culture and this may influence their ability to communicate with other Indigenous people in a different context. This student engaged their CQ Strategy by constantly being self aware, checking their assumptions, and re-engaging in conversations through trial and error. Students were able to recognize differences in how people engage with each other and developed strategies to interact and communicate with them. Respecting the fact that students were visitors on their hosts' lands guided students' behaviours as they were mindful of the protocols they needed to follow and asking questions to learn in a good way.

Cultural Intelligence Action

In order to adapt effectively to their new environments, students learned to be respectful to ensure they did not offend others, intentionally strengthened their relationships, remained kind, open, honest, and engaged, and adapted body language where needed. Some observed that they engaged differently and in a more open way than they would in a classroom, being respectfully aware of "appropriate ways to speak and share and when to take a step back and listen". One student received feedback that regardless of whether they were speaking with an administrative officer or the president of the university, they were treating them the same, while adapting to the situation. However, they reflected that they treated Aunty (an Aboriginal Elder) with more respect than they would have treated the president of the university. This student indicated their preference for less authoritative structures in an academic context, but respected the status that Aunty held as an Aboriginal Elder. Another student was challenged to learn how to effectively communicate their identity and culture outside of a Canadian context – "how we are seen in a colonial context, how our government has seen us, or how

we have been impacted from colonialism, and also explaining from an Indigenous perspective of who we are and what are cultures are."

The above findings, while shedding light on what makes the IIWIL successful, also provided insights into the impact of this program and the work that is yet to come.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING: IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS

Students left their exchange terms with strong relationships that bind them all through their Indigenous roots and experiences. They also gained meaningful work experience, achieved greater clarity on their career trajectory, and expanded their professional networks. These students have been empowered and inspired to share their experiences and inspire their families and communities to go to school and embark on experiences such as theirs. They have learned the value of engaging non-Indigenous people in the work of decolonization. They learned how to educate in a way that moves everyone forward, and work toward developing better relationships between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples. These learnings were consistent with the six principles (Hunt et al., 2010) that guide the LE,NO_NET program which in turn underpin this IIWIL program. As such, this learning will serve the students well as they embark on their careers and endeavour to serve their communities upon graduation.

Changing Assumptions and Expectations

In many ways, the work of decolonization challenges practitioners to put their cultural intelligence into action as they think through the development of programming for Indigenous participants and how this can be done with due respect given to Indigenous cultural values and teachings, or in Kovach's words, "decolonising our minds and hearts" (Kovach, 2009, p. 169). The extent to which we are motivated to decolonize our programs (CQ Drive) will determine the effort we will make to understand Indigenous cultures and their values and teachings, a key component of developing one's CQ Knowledge. This will in turn determine how we plan Indigenous programming (CQ Strategy), including checking our assumptions and adjusting our understanding when actual experiences differ from expectations. While much of our research speaks to the assumptions that are often made when thinking about Indigenous peoples, a direct outcome of this research project has already highlighted the need to make more explicit the applicability of the cultural intelligence model to this Indigenous exchange in the Co-op course (CQ Action).

Changing Language

In order to change the language of WIL we must move away from referencing Indigenous peoples' education and economic circumstances from a deficit model approach and shift to strength-based approaches that value Indigenous knowledge and paradigms, specifically Indigenous cultural competency.

The results of this research spoke to the effectiveness of the LE,NO_NET principles and best practices in providing a meaningful experience for the students. Reflecting back on the initial conversations during the conceptualization stage of the IIWIL, and what has been achieved to date, the value of reframing challenges as opportunities cannot be underestimated. What seemed like challenges in the early days worked out as we addressed issues that came up with the new program. These challenges provided opportunities for improvements, and has resulted in all staff, particularly the non-Indigenous staff involved in this project, with great learning about the Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The

focus on the spiritual experience exhibited by students' connection to the land and ancestors has inspired us to think about how we can make all our programming spiritually rewarding — an example of strength-based Indigenous knowledge and a good first step toward decolonizing WIL. Furthermore, one of the expected outcomes from WIL programs relate to employability (McRae et al., 2018). However, as Mackinnon (2015) and Kovach (2009) reminds us, programming for Indigenous students must relate to more than assimilation within the labor market but be calibrated to better respond to desires for self-determination and community building.

Changing Work-Integrated learning

WIL programs have certain key aspects and programmatic components (Khampirat & McRae, 2016), (McRae & Johnston, 2016) that can be examined with the intention to decolonize, including considerations of pedagogy, the experience, assessment, and reflective practises (McRae, et al., 2018). This project demonstrated the importance of including Indigenous content in the preparatory pedagogy that typically focusses on preparing students for a WIL experience. Including Indigenous content also involves supporting Indigenous knowledge development throughout the experience and opportunities to share knowledge gained in the spirit of reciprocal learning. The WIL experience needs to provide meaningful opportunities for the application of disciplinary knowledge and the development of skills and attributes and in addition provide opportunities for Indigenous students to engage with the land, Elders, and Indigenous community in order to strengthen the Indigenous student's identity development, self-determination, and Indigenous networks. Assessment opportunities should be culturally safe, relevant to all aspects of the experience, and conducted by someone who has a respectful relationship with the student in addition to an understanding of the context of the WIL experience. WIL reflection requirements might include engagement with a broader community than the student and their WIL coordinator. The learning gained from the WIL experience might be shared with fellow students, Elders, and Indigenous community members.

Programmatic components of WIL programs include considerations made by the institution, the employer host organization, and the student before, during, and after each experience (Khampirat & McRae, 2016; McRae et al, 2018). In addition to these components, institutional staff and non-Indigenous employers and students would benefit from Indigenous cultural safety training, such as offered at the University of Victoria. This training helps non-Indigenous people consider their own beliefs and practices and work towards the challenging task of decolonizing one's mind and heart.

To ensure WIL experience success, support structures to ensure cultural safety such as mentors, Elders, and peers, and additional financial resources should be put in place.

It was evident from the research and student experiences that financial challenges make it difficult for students to participate in exchange programs such as this one. As well, additional support is required for students with families. Considerations include accommodations, schooling for the children during the exchange term, financial costs, and the ability for study spaces to welcome children. It is also clear that students could benefit from a more formalized buddy or peer mentor program.

Extra efforts should be made to build and maintain mutually respectful relationships with students that are based on an understanding of Indigenous cultural practices and colonial history and that acknowledge the prevalence of racism and the long term effects of intergenerational poverty (Kovach, 2009; MacKinnon, 2015). Finally, the institution must ensure that Indigenous students have WIL experiences that re-inforce, not undermine, their Indigenous identity. Employers might provide welcoming events and connect students with Indigenous community members and Elders in addition

to providing relevant experiences. Employers might offer students opportunities to engage with the land and participate in community-engagement initiatives in addition to their work responsibilities.

CONCLUSION: A DECOLONIZED WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

In a decolonized WIL program Indigenous students and communities would experience a welcoming, respectful, relevant and mutually beneficial program. Such a program would provide expected positive outcomes from WIL such as the strengthened understanding of disciplinary knowledge, or the development of skills and abilities as well as the additional outcome of Indigenous students who have a deepened their sense of identity, strengthened their agency, and expanded their Indigenous network. Indigenous students with these capabilities will have increased capacity to contribute to the wellbeing of their communities, to the knowledge in the academy and to the further dismantling of the damaging legacy of colonialism.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Given the unique nature of this program, the number of students participating is limited. While we were able to gather data from 11 participants, continuing our research into the future with greater participation will strengthen our findings. In addition, we did not interview community members or practitioners whose efforts are critical to the success of this work. Adding their voices would strengthen research of this kind.

In addition to broadening the range of perspectives in future research, an additional examination of the institutional structures that Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) identified as key to decolonizing education would be valuable to explore. Further exploration on how institutions could build appropriate resource infrastructures to develop and sustain programs such as the International Indigenous WIL exchange program would be valuable to those interested in decolonizing WIL in response to the calls to action provided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015).

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APPENDIX A: LE,NONET Key Principles and Best Practices

Reciprocal Learning	Students have opportunities to share their thoughts, knowledge, and experiences, as well as to learn from the skills and knowledge of professors, staff, mentors, and other students. Students have as much to offer as they have to gain and to know that their perspective is valued.
Supporting Indigenous Identity Development	Students feel seen and respected as Indigenous people. Students from diverse backgrounds and identity perspectives (rural, urban, culturally grounded, displaced, Métis, First Nations, Inuit, and other) are valued and supported. Indigenous identity is multifaceted and complex, and this diversity is given room to grow.
Culturally Relevant Programming	Cultural activities and knowledge are integrated into programs for students. This includes the use of local traditional practices, involvement of local elders, and the incorporation of students' own cultural teachings into the program activities.
Community Building	Indigenous students are provided with a space in which a sense of community is facilitated, encouraged, and supported. Students have opportunities to build ongoing connections with Indigenous faculty, staff, and other students on campus, as well as with the broader Indigenous communities off campus. Community is developed out of a sense of being cared for, nurtured, valued, and embraced as a whole person; extended family is also welcome, including children and partners.
Relationship Building	Students develop lasting relationships with Indigenous faculty, UVic staff, community members, and other students. Relationship building is seen as a central part of program delivery, including continuation of staff in key positions. Staff and faculty develop meaningful connections with students that are nurtured from year to year.
Individualized Programming	An intersectional understanding of individual students' lives includes taking cultural practices, community needs, academic area of study, personal learning needs, and other factors into account. Programs include opportunities for students to develop their own strengths and interests and allow enough flexibility for students to succeed on their own terms.

Note. From *Supporting Aboriginal student success: Report of the LE,NONET research project* (p. 106), by S. Hunt, C. E. Lalonde and Y. Rondeau, 2010, University of Victoria.

APPENDIX B: Interview Questions

The purpose of the interviews was to gain insight on the critical success factors of UVic's Indigenous International Work Integration Learning (WIL) Exchange program. The students were asked the following questions:

Tell us about your experience with the international Indigenous WIL exchange program.

How did you benefit from the experience?

What were some challenges you faced?

What did you learn?

What impact did this experience have on your understanding of:

- Coursework / theory (how theory relates to workplace, etc.)
- Academic program goals
- Career goals

How did this experience help you understand:

- Your own motivations with respect to intercultural interactions
- Your own knowledge of similarities and differences between cultures
- Your ability to develop strategies that would help you be successful in intercultural encounters
- behaviors that will make you effective in intercultural encounters

How did this experience help you deepen your understanding of:

- your own indigenous identity
- Indigenous ways of knowing

How are you going to use the learning you gained in your future indigenous community engagements?

What program elements helped you get the most out of your international WIL experience before, during and after your international exchange?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

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About the Journal

The International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning (IJWIL) publishes double-blind peer-reviewed original research and topical issues dealing with Work-Integrated Learning (WIL). IJWIL first published in 2000 under the name of Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education (APJCE). Since then the readership and authorship has become more international and terminology usage in the literature has favored the broader term of WIL, in 2018 the journal name was changed to the International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning.

In this Journal, WIL is defined as "*an educational approach that uses relevant work-based experiences to allow students to integrate theory with the meaningful practice of work as an intentional component of the curriculum. Defining elements of this educational approach requires that students engage in authentic and meaningful work-related task, and must involve three stakeholders; the student, the university, and the workplace*". Examples of practice include off-campus, workplace immersion activities such as work placements, internships, practicum, service learning, and cooperative education (Co-op), and on-campus activities such as work-related projects/competitions, entrepreneurships, student-led enterprise, etc. WIL is related to, but not the same as, the fields of experiential learning, work-based learning, and vocational education and training.

The Journal's main aim is to enable specialists working in WIL to disseminate research findings and share knowledge to the benefit of institutions, students, co-op/WIL practitioners, and researchers. The Journal desires to encourage quality research and explorative critical discussion that leads to the advancement of effective practices, development of further understanding of WIL, and promote further research.

The Journal is ongoing financially supported by the Work-Integrated Learning New Zealand (WILNZ), www.nzace.ac.nz and the University of Waikato, New Zealand, and received periodic sponsorship from the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) and the World Association of Cooperative Education (WACE).

Types of Manuscripts Sought by the Journal

Types of manuscripts sought by IJWIL is primarily of two forms; 1) *research publications* describing research into aspects of work-integrated learning and, 2) *topical discussion* articles that review relevant literature and provide critical explorative discussion around a topical issue. The journal will, on occasions, consider best practice submissions.

Research publications should contain; an introduction that describes relevant literature and sets the context of the inquiry. A detailed description and justification for the methodology employed. A description of the research findings - tabulated as appropriate, a discussion of the importance of the findings including their significance to current established literature, implications for practitioners and researchers, whilst remaining mindful of the limitations of the data, and a conclusion preferably including suggestions for further research.

Topical discussion articles should contain a clear statement of the topic or issue under discussion, reference to relevant literature, critical and scholarly discussion on the importance of the issues, critical insights to how to advance the issue further, and implications for other researchers and practitioners.

Best practice and program description papers. On occasions, the Journal also seeks manuscripts describing a practice of WIL as an example of best practice, however, only if it presents a particularly unique or innovative practice or was situated in an unusual context. There must be a clear contribution of new knowledge to the established literature. Manuscripts describing what is essentially 'typical', 'common' or 'known' practices will be encouraged to rewrite the focus of the manuscript to a significant educational issue or will be encouraged to publish their work via another avenue that seeks such content.

By negotiation with the Editor-in-Chief, the Journal also accepts a small number of *Book Reviews* of relevant and recently published books.