

***What I Learned in Class Today:* Environmental scan of educational experiences and institutional responses to Indigenous engagement in curriculum, pedagogy, and classroom climate at the University of British Columbia (UBC)**

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Table of Contents

Background	4
Synthesis	5
History of <i>What I Learned in Class Today</i>: acknowledgement of past, present and current initiatives and relationships at UBC	6
Understanding place and it's impact on campus and classroom climate	7
Land and Territory Acknowledgements	8
When will we be ready? Supporting non-Indigenous and non-expert faculty to shift practices	10
A different approach to curriculum design: integrating Indigenous perspectives into course design	11
Attending to non-Indigenous learners and their process of learning	13
Institutional support, strategic plans and calls to action: Indigenous initiatives external to UBC	14
Building policies and practices outside of the institutional box: Responsive approaches to supporting Indigenous student experiences	15
Colonized classrooms and other shared experiences connected to the TRC	17
Indigenous student spaces	17
Good intentions? Critiques and ongoing work	18
A critique of the call to "always Indigenize!"	20
Mandatory Indigenous courses	21
Moving the work forward	23
Deepening classroom climate in teaching and learning	24
Approaches to fostering a productive classroom climate	25

Supporting student success within the classroom and beyond.....	27
Conclusion.....	30
References.....	31

What I Learned in Class Today: Environmental scan of educational experiences and institutional responses to Indigenous engagement in curriculum, pedagogy, and classroom climate at the University of British Columbia (UBC)

Background

What I Learned in Class Today: Aboriginal Issues in the Classroom began as a student project led by Karmen Crey and Amy Perreault in 2007. The original project explored difficult discussions of Indigenous issues that took place in classrooms at UBC during this time. The project examined how the challenges around talking about race work as an educational barrier within the classroom for students, particularly Indigenous students. Students who participated in the project, and others who did not, frequently reported troubling and traumatic discussions of cultural issues in the class, where these situations often affected their ability to function as learners, return to the class, and complete their coursework. The impetus for the original project was to create a space for dialogue around these troubling issues in the classroom and also to create an archive of student experiences in classrooms at UBC in order to better inform teaching practices and institutional policies.

Since then, the project has informed various initiatives at UBC such as the 2009 Indigenous Strategic Plan,¹ the increased focus on classroom climate, and the creation of a new role within UBC's Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology focusing on Indigenous curriculum, instructional support, resource design, and delivery. A number of events and initiatives occurred alongside these changes that shifted the conversation about Indigenous histories and contemporary realities and broadened the general public's knowledge; these include the Idle No More movement, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) proceedings in Vancouver, and the opening of the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre at UBC.²

Although the areas involving Indigenous engagement have gained more momentum within Canadian post-secondary institutions since these events, the experiences represented in the educational resource, *What I Learned in Class Today: Aboriginal Issues in the Classroom*, remain a reality within classrooms today. It is for this reason that Amy Perreault and her colleagues Erin Yun and Adina Williams from Indigenous Initiatives at the University of British Columbia (UBC) have reopened the project for further research. Indigenous Initiatives at the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLT) is a unit that develops and offers programming, resources, and educational services focused on Indigenous engagement in curriculum, pedagogy, classroom climate, and professional development. CTLT Indigenous Initiatives will be examining how the areas within Indigenous engagement; educational experiences; and institutional responses to Indigenous engagement in curriculum, pedagogy, and classroom climate have shifted at UBC Point Grey Campus since 2007. In addition, this research project will compare and analyze the student experiences articulated in the original

¹ The UBC Plan | Strategic Plan. (n.d.). Retrieved March 17, 2015, from <http://strategicplan.ubc.ca/the-plan>

² Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre | Aboriginal Portal. (n.d.). Retrieved November 13, 2018, from <http://aboriginal.ubc.ca/indian-residential-school-centre>

project, *What I Learned in Class Today: Aboriginal Issues in the Classroom*, to see how these discourses have changed at UBC.

What I Learned in Class Today: Educational Experiences and Institutional Responses to Indigenous Engagement in Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Classroom Climate at the University of British Columbia (UBC) explores the campus climate at UBC as well as pedagogical tools to help better support student learning, motivation, engagement, and success. This literature review aims to explore how the policies, practices, uptake, and support for Indigenous engagement has shifted at UBC and more broadly across Canadian universities, while comparing and analyzing the stories shared in the original *What I Learned in Class Today* project. At the heart of this project, we would like to hold space for Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and administrators to share their experiences, and we would like to draw on the stories that are shared and use them to inform the future development of teaching, learning, and classroom and campus climate at UBC.

Synthesis

In this environmental and historical review, we have organized our findings into thematic headings that came out of our research as well as the identification of key people, spaces, relations, and practices that inform our past and future work on this project. As part of this review, we will identify and analyze how the discourses represented in student interviews, literature, and other pertinent sources have changed the context of Indigenous engagement in teaching and learning at UBC. Moreover, this document identifies how relationships, policies, strategic plans, the creation of Indigenous spaces, and international and local movements have changed and shaped the campus and classroom environments at UBC. This project also analyses how this is similar to and different from what is happening at post-secondary institutions across Canada. Have practices changed over the years at UBC with Indigenous engagement? Have the themes identified in *What I Learned in Class Today* shifted or do they still remain a reality in classrooms today?

We locate our research on campus and classroom climate in the historical and present contexts that inform our contemporary relations and experiences here at UBC on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territories of the Musqueam peoples³. This act of acknowledging past and present relations as a way to inform future work is a practice that has been shared with us as authors, but it serves an additional role of assisting us in understanding the experiences of Indigenous students at UBC well before the creation of the *What I Learned in Class Today* project.

In order to fully understand what has changed on our campus prior to and after the creation of the original project, we need to identify the work that has come before us and the reason for its

³ To learn more about Musqueam: x^wməθk^wəyəm A Living Culture: Who We Are - Musqueam. Retrieved November 23, 2018, from <https://www.musqueam.bc.ca/our-story/who-we-are/>

success or the direction for its further work. By doing so, we can determine the past patterns and whether these patterns still exist today. In contrast to literature reviews predominantly represented in academia, we are shifting the focus away from solely acknowledging and validating scholarly publications. Recognizing that this scholarly work is important and done so by those who continue to resist and assert agency for Indigenous initiatives from within the academy, these spaces remain largely limiting for those who may have something to contribute but do not have the capacity to meet the demands of what is categorized as “scholarly publication.”

In our preliminary research we have identified aspects of this work that are student-authored and often reside in spaces that are more accessible to students such as blogs and other digital spheres. As part of our process undertaken for this preliminary scan, it became abundantly clear that the seminal work that is clearly at the pulse of our research question lies within multiple spaces, some of them physical spaces and others in relationships that have been built as a result of navigating this work on the ground; and so we have made the editorial decision to acknowledge all of this in our review for the project. We also fully acknowledge that like the original project, much of the future work and direction in the area of Indigenous engagement in curriculum, pedagogy, and classroom climate will be built off the stories and experiences that those who participate in this project will courageously share with us.

History of *What I Learned in Class Today*: acknowledgement of past, present and current initiatives and relationships at UBC

Alongside the documented perspectives of students, faculty, and staff who were part of the original *WILICT* project, we would like to acknowledge past leaders and trailblazers who have informed and influenced our research as well as classroom and campus climate. Such on-campus innovators include Kwakwaka'wakw Artist Ellen Neel who carved the *Victory Through Honour* pole located outside of Brock Hall and Dr. Alfred Scow from the Kwicksutaineuk-ah-kwa-mish First Nation who was the first Indigenous person from British Columbia to earn a Bachelors of Laws, to practice law, and to receive a judicial appointment. Scow was instrumental in educating non-Indigenous people about the legal, cultural, social, and historical issues facing Indigenous peoples.⁴ The ground work performed by both of these leaders is a representation of strength, cultural knowledge, and history that continues to provide visibility and assert recognition of Indigeneity as having a valuable place on our campus today.

This type of visible representation of Indigenous knowledges, histories, and contemporary contexts is embodied within many other Indigenous spaces, programs, and initiatives that exist on our campus today. We acknowledge the value of such spaces in supporting a good climate for Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and researchers. Some of these areas include the First

⁴ To learn more about Ellen Neel and Dr. Scow see: The Power of a Name: The Thunderbird and UBC | The Power of a Name. (n.d.). Retrieved November 22, 2018, from <http://powerofaname.ubc.ca/2017/05/01/thethunderbird/>

Nations House of Learning (FNHL), Xwi7xwa Library, the First Nations and Indigenous Studies Program (FNIS), the First Nations and Endangered Languages Program (FNEL), NITEP (the Indigenous Teacher Education Program), the Indigenous Legal Studies Program, and the Indigenous classroom and lounge in Allard Hall. We also want to highlight the value of more recent contributions made by Indigenous artists such as the sʔi:ʔəy̓ qeqən (Double Headed Serpent Housepost) carved by Musqueam artist Brent Sparrow (2016) and the Reconciliation pole carved by Haida master carver, 7idansuu (Edenshaw) James Hart (2017).⁵ These physical and curricular spaces continue to create a climate where Indigenous students can see themselves represented both in the classroom and the campus environments where they are learning.

Equally important as Indigenous engagement, representation, curriculum, and pedagogy are the dedicated and ongoing efforts to shift UBC policies through strategic and relational work. It is this work, often unrecognized and at times incremental in the pace that it moves, that continues to guide, shape, and inform classroom and campus experiences for Indigenous faculty, students, and staff. In reflecting on the history of the *What I Learned in Class Today* project, there needs to be an acknowledgement that the momentum that followed the creation of this project would not have been possible without this strategic and fundamental groundwork being laid, tended to, and fought for.

Understanding place and it's impact on campus and classroom climate

As researchers, we recognize that our present capacity to re-open this project would not have been possible without these legacies of resistance and resurgence on our campus. We acknowledge the efforts of leaders such as Leona Sparrow, Musqueam community member and advisor to UBC, and Larry Grant, Musqueam Elder in Residence and Adjunct professor in the First Nations Endangered Languages program, that have shaped the current relations between our campus and Musqueam. These relationships with members of the Musqueam community are integral to our work and have guided the university policies to acknowledge this history, past and present relationships, and future work in this area. Both Sparrow and Grant have worked on and led campus projects that raise the visibility of Musqueam's language, history, and governance at UBC. These efforts are represented in the ongoing work that has informed the creation of high-level documents and policies such as the Memorandum of Affiliation that prompted visibility for the expansion and creation of programs that encourage Aboriginal youth to pursue post-secondary education while enhancing the relationship between UBC and Musqueam communities.⁶

Alongside this development, there was foundational work being undertaken by members of the Musqueam community and other UBC units where strategic- and policy-related work to support

⁵Reconciliation Pole installed at UBC | Aboriginal Portal. (n.d.). Retrieved November 13, 2018, from <http://aboriginal.ubc.ca/2017/04/07/reconciliation-pole-installed-at-ubc>

⁶ UBC, Musqueam Sign Memorandum of Affiliation. (n.d.). Retrieved November 7, 2018, from <https://news.ubc.ca/2006/12/21/archive-media-releases-2006-mr-06-132/>

Indigenous engagement is situated. One of the units where foundational work in teaching, learning, and faculty professional development began to take shape and have an impact was through the creation of CTLT Indigenous Initiatives. The development of this unit created venues for dialogue and a climate that was receptive to changes that would later inform institutional policies for working appropriately and respectfully with Indigenous perspectives in the classroom, and which would inform broader curriculum shifts. CTLT Indigenous Initiatives supports educational research and projects that are in partnership with students and other Indigenous communities that guides and informs the broader climate at UBC. A example of this is the creation of the *Power of a Name Project* that was originally started by two UBC students, Spencer Lindsay and Sarah Ling.⁷ This project was guided by Musqueam through naming policies and acknowledgment practices that continue to create pathways for students at UBC to have a more in-depth understanding of where they are living and studying.⁸

The culmination of these efforts and leadership continue to create policies, practices, and visibility of Musqueam history and languages on the UBC Vancouver campus which has greatly supported further efforts to create better campus and classroom climate for all students at UBC.

Land and Territory Acknowledgements

As discussed in the previous section, the historic and ongoing contributions made by Musqueam community members continue to inform and guide our campus and classroom climate practices at UBC. The practice or act of acknowledging territory is not an institutional convention but rather the assertion of Indigenous laws that have always been practiced by Indigenous communities when entering a territory that is not your own. These laws continue to be asserted by Indigenous communities and it is more often than not that the institutional interference or ignorance of these laws is the cause of tensions between communities that set up problematic institutional processes and ways of understanding for non-Indigenous people.

The history of land acknowledgements by non-Indigenous people who teach, work, and study at UBC is a relatively new practice, comparatively speaking. In fact, the process of integrating this practice of acknowledging the campus's location on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Musqueam peoples, was initially met with resistance and it was through the ongoing efforts of Musqueam community representatives that this shifted over time.

Through leadership and administrative changes new relationships with Musqueam were strengthened. In early 2000, there was a noticeable shift in the climate around conversations

⁷ The Power of a Name. (n.d.). Retrieved January 25, 2019, from <http://powerofaname.ubc.ca>

⁸ UBC and the Musqueam First Nation unveil street signs in hə́ŋqəmiñə́m language. (n.d.). Retrieved November 22, 2018, from <https://www.ubyssey.ca/news/ubc-musqueam-first-nation-unveil-new-street-signs/>

about Indigenous perspectives in the classroom, and support for Indigenous students began to acknowledge the gaps in methods of engagement which prompted further attention to broader Indigenous initiatives across the university. We would like to acknowledge the foundational work of Dr. Linc Kesler, both as an instructor in the First Nations Studies program who supported the original inception and creation of the *What I Learned in Class Today* project, as well as his leadership work as the Senior Advisor to the President on Indigenous Affairs (2009-2018). Dr. Kesler, along with other faculty at UBC, has continued to push for more representation of Indigenous initiatives in classrooms and within broader institutional policies such as the 2009 Indigenous Strategic Plan that acknowledges the presence and assertion of Indigenous rights, territories, histories, and contemporary issues.

As part of his ongoing scholarly work at UBC related to Indigenous engagement and institutional practices, Dr. Kesler recently contributed to a research article titled, *Canadian University Acknowledgment of Indigenous Lands, Treaties, and Peoples* (2017). This article is an environmental scan and body of research that provides a look into acknowledgement practices at postsecondary institutions and synthesizes why there may be differences in practices from one university to the other. The research presented in this article affirms some of the shifts to our campus and classroom climate at UBC, as documented in the previous section and hereafter. Since the initiatives mentioned above have been recognized and implemented at UBC we have seen a noticeable shift in institutional support for pedagogies that acknowledge the history and contemporary relationships that UBC and individuals have with Musqueam and other Indigenous communities where our campuses are located. Additionally, we have seen an improvement in the classroom climate where instructors have adopted the practice of acknowledging Indigenous land, and the historical and contemporary relationships associated with teaching and learning on this territory. Recognizing that land acknowledgements serve a valuable role in creating a supportive climate for conversations about Indigenous histories and contemporary realities, we also acknowledge that this work must extend into other areas of the university; and there needs to be resources and support to accompany this growth.

In recent years, several scholars have published critiques of and calls for further work and actions by individuals and institutions to accompany territory acknowledgments (Vowell, 2016; Khelsilem 2015, Wiebe, 2015). In her article, "*Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements*," Chelsea Vowell (2015) reiterates that acknowledgements alone are not enough and need to be developed by individuals in a continuous way that aligns with an ongoing process of learning. She concludes by outlining that the *beyond* of engagement with territory acknowledgements could ensure that these practices are accompanied by actions, relational responsibilities, and work outside the walls of post-secondary and other formal institutions. Vowell (2015) argues that beyond territorial acknowledgements is learning how to ask challenging questions on what it means to be 'aware of Indigenous presence' where it requires being uncomfortable and the actions of making concrete and disruptive change.

While more in-depth work on the critical examination of territorial acknowledgements exists (Asher, Curnow, & Davis, 2018), it falls outside of the scope of this environmental scan. Our work on this project is intended to support the discourses on the ground, and in our research

design and processes direction is taken from Indigenous community members through individual conversations with various elders, as well as recommendations and actions suggested from Indigenous advisories and committees. Through these relationships, we find ourselves grounded in and turning to the work that is informing classrooms and environments at our institution. Throughout the ongoing development of educational resources and messages that inform our campus, there is a consistent effort by Indigenous units and individuals supporting Indigenous initiatives to push beyond the formulaic acknowledgement that Vowell (2015) and others identify in their writing. We will continue to be open to critical dialogues about territorial acknowledgement practices; however, we see these acknowledgements as a useful practice-based process to offer those who are new to this work versus a less than ideal process that is void of value. By acknowledging the critiques and suggestions to move *beyond* territory acknowledgements, we defer to the recommendations and work conducted by members of the Musqueam community both through in-person conversations and relations and through the development of documents such as the *Musqueam and UBC Memorandum of Affiliation* (2006), the *Connecting Communities: Principles for Musqueam, UBC Collaboration* (Lau, 2015), and many others.

When will we be ready? Supporting non-Indigenous and non-expert faculty to shift practices

“Universities cannot simply expect that Indigenous peoples will bring about systemic change on their own. Non-Indigenous people also need space and time to learn about Indigenous history and culture, and about how to build more reconciliatory relations with Indigenous peoples.”
Sheila Cote-Meeks (2017)

The environmental shift to the UBC campus culture regarding Indigenous engagement was the result of extensive work both on the ground and in various levels of policy within the institution. The campus culture could not have shifted without the support from multiple levels of administration, the generosity and guidance from Indigenous community partnerships, and buy-in and motivation from those who operate in teaching and learning spaces. The unique feature of this environmental shift at UBC was that it was sustained through multiple changes in leadership, and was agile and responsive to external shifts provincially and nationally as well. The fluid nature of the first Aboriginal Strategic Plan in 2009 allowed for iterative shifts to take place without losing any of the groundwork that had been laid for future initiatives to take shape. The unique approach to this strategic plan pushed against the practice of setting static benchmarks that would limit future institutional shifts, rather than leaving space for new and unknown changes that would be driven by provincial and national policies yet come.

The sentiment expressed by Indigenous scholars who ask educators and administrators to go beyond the comfort zone, aligns with the scope of ongoing work at UBC and the future work that needs to be done as part of this project. In 2018, UBC Campus and Classroom Climate Educational Consultant, Erin Yun, and colleagues at the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLT) developed a resource for faculty that built upon learning to integrate land acknowledgements in their teaching practices. In this resource, the concerns expressed by

Vowell (2015) and others are foundational to Yun's recommendations of ways in which faculty can expand upon and go further in their learning, and how they can acknowledge the territory and land they are teaching upon.

Building accessible resources that meet instructors where they are has been a staple practice in both professional development programming and resource development at CTLT. The creation of resources that are accessible and can be used in a variety of disciplinary contexts has provided an encouraging set of inroads for faculty who may still worry about not being the expert but who have dedicated their time to learning ways to improve and shift their existing practices. The visible transformation in faculty attitudes since the creation of the first UBC Aboriginal Strategic Plan (2009) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission West Coast Event (2013) has been two-folds: faculty no longer question whether or not they *should* be bringing Indigenous perspectives into the classroom; rather, faculty are asking when will they be ready and what resources are available to get them started.

A different approach to curriculum design: integrating Indigenous perspectives into course design

The confidence to integrate and center Indigenous perspectives, contemporary issues, and epistemologies into the classroom is a process that takes time, draws on thoughtfully-designed resources and materials that privilege Indigenous viewpoints and experiences, requires multiple iterations and ongoing feedback, and needs a strong foundation that is built on relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities. This approach has been considered at UBC and resulted in the creation of a series of professional development workshops called the *Indigenous Initiatives (II)-Design Series*.

The creation of this uniquely designed series draws on the expertise of Dr. Janey Lew, Comparative Ethnic Studies scholar and Educational Consultant, in CTLT Indigenous Initiatives. Beginning in 2016, Lew and her colleagues have delivered this workshop series that was developed in response to questions from colleagues and the UBC teaching and learning community who were seeking practical guidance on how to respond to Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and who wanted to learn how to "Indigenize" course design. Through an iterative process, the workshop facilitation team has developed a series of exploratory workshops focused on introducing various existing learning resources, surfacing key questions around place and positionality, and opening space for mutual feedback and support.

In this series, Lew and her co-facilitators work with faculty who have an interest in integrating Indigenous perspectives, epistemologies, and contemporary issues into their courses. This experience is designed to have instructors engage with materials over the academic term. The 3-month cohort-based experience challenges faculty to identify their motivation and context for wanting to shift their practice while attending to their positionalities and identities as non-Indigenous scholars as well as the location in which their teaching takes place. This allows instructors to engage in a relatively safe peer-environment where they are situated among other

non-experts while being supported to think critically, take risks, and model humble approaches to learning.

As a result of this series being offered since 2016, a number of faculty have completed the series and formed their own community for further learning and support called the II-Learning Community. CTLT Indigenous Initiatives provides support for the II-Learning Community, but this Community is self-directed, self-sustained, and self-facilitated by its own members. This model, by design, draws on fewer resources from Indigenous units of the university like CTLT Indigenous Initiatives who is providing institution-wide teaching and learning support in this area; the II-Learning Community reciprocates to the broader teaching and learning community by sharing their processes as well as their newly developed approaches and contributions to building a better climate at UBC. This model, although new in its formation and still developing, could serve as guideline for existing support models or previous recommendations that are developed and delivered solely external to those they support, such as mandatory courses, competency models, or professional development. Additionally, this model responds to the increased need for non-Indigenous faculty and individuals to step forward and attend to their learning in ways that do not deplete existing resources; it also contributes to disciplinary teaching practices that have diverse methods of approaching Indigenous initiatives.

The future engagement of non-Indigenous and non-expert faculty at UBC is beginning to shape up in unique and positive ways where disciplines are taking some ownership of the question, *when will we be ready?* This exact question has been identified by Peterson, Lew & Perreault (2018) as the title of their co-authored article, *Should I be doing this? Will I ever be 'ready'? Exploring the ethics and need for integrating Indigenous content as non-specialists and from 'settler' positions*, which was written for the 2018 International Studies Association Convention and is currently pending publication. Building off this work that situates pedagogy and teaching within Political Science and International Relations, Dr. Glen Coulthard, Associate Professor in the First Nations and Indigenous Studies Program and the Department of Political Science at the University of British Columbia, and colleagues who represent the Canadian Political Science Association Reconciliation Committee, have created the teaching practices resource, *Indigenous Content Syllabus Materials: A Resource for Political Science Instructors in Canada* (2018). This resource draws on the expertise, pedagogical knowledge, and teaching praxis of Indigenous scholars and those who are already integrating and situating Indigenous concepts into their classes; it also offers a discipline-specific pathway for others who may want to transform their syllabus and course design. This approach models ways for non-Indigenous faculty to support moving forward issues that many of their Indigenous colleagues are already engaging in their classrooms. This approach responds directly to the question, *when will we be ready?*, posed by Peterson et al (2018) by accounting for the broader responsibility to integrate Indigenous content into the courses of *all* scholars and faculty in the discipline, rather than the work solely occurring in the spaces of the few who have existing engagements.

The momentum of faculty engagement with Indigenous perspectives at UBC is mirrored at teaching and learning centres across Canada where the increased demand for faculty development has resulted in the creation of new positions in faculty support related to this area.

In the article, *Faculty Developers as Allies (not experts) in Supporting Indigenous Perspectives* (2018), Kathleen Bortolin reflects on her position as a non-Indigenous faculty developer whose role is to support faculty in a teaching and learning centre at Vancouver Island University (VIU). In her work, Bortolin (2018) reflects on the process of re-learning and tending to the gaps in her education about Indigenous peoples and colonialism in Canada. She shares that this learning process required her not only to re-learn, but to model ways for other non-Indigenous faculty to step into this process alongside her. Many of the key points that Bortolin (2018) shares in her article—such as re-learning, building, and sustaining relationships with Indigenous people within and outside of her institution, slowing down, and holding more than one epistemology in tandem—are all applicable skills to move this work forward.

There are many non-Indigenous people that hold positions within post-secondary institutions that are vital to sustaining and creating the momentum initiated by Indigenous communities and individuals who continue to lead curriculum, pedagogy, and classroom climate work. The collective work of non-Indigenous scholars, staff, and individuals within post-secondary institutions has the potential to support existing initiatives as well as create new pathways for those who may not yet see themselves as being part of this work but who have a willingness to learn. In addition to Indigenous experiences, universities could benefit from drawing on the expertise of these professionals from their various roles in the classroom and within teaching and learning centres and other educational spaces.

The efforts of scholars discussed in this section, as well as the multiple approaches being taken at universities across Canada and beyond, all serve a valuable purpose in shifting the collective response on how to create more productive classroom climates for discussions of Indigenous perspectives. The approaches documented in the original *What I Learned in Class Today* project and the upcoming reboot aim to highlight the dedicated work of instructors, students, and staff that can inform new directions and levels of support moving forward. This approach holds unique value because it is informed by those the project aims to support, therefore resulting in an accurate reflection of the current climate while offering avenues for improvement.

Attending to non-Indigenous learners and their process of learning

Equally as salient as faculty development and support, is the need for resources and support for non-Indigenous students, faculty, and staff through capacity building efforts and professional development to create learning environments and climates where learning about Indigenous perspectives can be thoughtfully undertaken in a professional and productive way.

From consultations with faculty and documentation from the original *What I Learned in Class Today project*, students that are navigating knowledge gaps in their classrooms can be detrimental to their learning. Students, staff and faculty arrive at UBC with varying levels of knowledge on Indigenous histories and contemporary contexts in Canada. Working with different groups across campus that take on the responsibility of their (un)learning and being

more aware of these knowledge gaps, it is evident that with small efforts and subtle shifts can have a deeper impact in improving the classroom climate while encouraging further conversations about Indigenous perspectives.

The creation of a web-based educational resource, *Indigenous Foundations*,⁹ by faculty in the First Nations and Indigenous Studies program at UBC responded to this knowledge gap, and has resulted in better classroom discussions and an increased motivation for instructors to integrate Indigenous content into their classrooms. The impact of this resource now extends beyond UBC and has been cited in various research and professional literature where Indigenous topics are discussed. The substantial reach of this resource and the accessibility of the language used within it, suggests a broader educational need for information in this area. It also reflects the nuanced understanding that the knowledge gaps that once existed need more attention, and that this is slowly being attended to through access to information in the area.

Since the creation of the original *What I Learned in Class Today* project in tandem with other institutional and societal momentums addressed earlier in this document, there has been an increased awareness of where knowledge gaps might exist in staff-training programs. In particular, there is an increased demand for support in areas of curriculum support for international student education programs. In these programs, some students arrive at UBC with their own experiences of colonialism from their motherland country; some have not had the opportunity to reflect on the present-day existence of colonialism in Canada and its historical and contemporary impacts on Indigenous peoples.

Currently at UBC there are grants committed to teaching, learning and curriculum projects that explores way to support international student learning about Indigenous histories and contemporary realities in Canada. Although this environmental scan does not address this topic, it is worth noting that attention to the area of international student engagement is underway and will work towards creating a better classroom and campus climate for Indigenous students and faculty teaching about Indigenous histories, cultures, and contemporary realities at UBC.

Institutional support, strategic plans and calls to action: Indigenous initiatives external to UBC

As noted in the above sections, the momentum that has guided the development of this project and Indigenous engagement at UBC more broadly, has been informed by ongoing Indigenous leadership; the generosity of Indigenous students, faculty, and staff sharing their classroom experiences; two Indigenous Strategic Plans (2009 & 2018); and external momentum from Indigenous movements within BC and across Canada.

⁹ Indigenous Foundations (<https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/>) is an information resource on key topics relating to the histories, politics, and cultures of the Indigenous peoples of Canada. This website was developed to support students in their studies, and to provide instructors, researchers and the broader public with a place to begin exploring topics that relate to Indigenous peoples, cultures, and histories.

In 2015, a literature review titled *Policies and Changes to Support Post-Secondary Indigenous Education* was conducted by Rebecca Doughty, a research practicum student working with CTLT Indigenous Initiatives as part of her senior course work in the First Nations and Indigenous Studies program. Doughty (2015) outlines the educational policy changes in Indigenous education over the last decade that have informed and shaped the experiences of Indigenous students at post-secondary institutions in Canada. Doughty (2015) connects her intentions for conducting this review, in part, to the original intention of the *What I Learned in Class Today* project, where the focus situates Indigenous students and the improvement of their experiences in the classroom. As an Indigenous student studying at UBC, Doughty's (2015) intention was also personally motivated—she hoped that raising awareness on the successes of these approaches might create changes that will be carried forward into the future.

Some of the key findings in Doughty's (2015) review include calls to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners. Doughty (2015) also urges for a recognition of the historical relationship that Indigenous communities have had with educational systems and policies that have impacted and controlled their experiences, often resulting in poverty, overlapping jurisdictions, a lack of funding, and intergenerational trauma (Ibid). Doughty (2015) recommends that it is about setting up a framework that empowers Indigenous peoples to create a space for themselves within the university. It is about affirming contemporary Indigenous identities through education that is grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems (Doughty, 2015).

Since the literature review conducted by Doughty in 2015, the terrain of Indigenous engagement within post-secondary institutions across Canada has shifted, largely as a result of the TRC Calls to Action. Nevertheless, there still remains a need to identify methods for these institutions to create the infrastructures and systems to better support Indigenous students, faculty, and staff. Drawing on some of the recommendations put forward by Doughty in her 2015 review, we have identified the following questions to guide our research into institutional and policy shifts outside of UBC. The questions include: What have universities done to better equip faculty members in supporting Indigenous students? How are Indigenous students currently being supported both in the classroom and on the campus they attend? What infrastructures are currently set in place within the university that help faculty and staff understand and honour Indigenous knowledges and curricular approaches in the classroom to better support students?

In the following section we have used these questions to guide our search for stories, information, and experiences shared about other post-secondary institutions where similar Indigenous initiatives have been undertaken.

Building policies and practices outside of the institutional box: Responsive approaches to supporting Indigenous student experiences

In a 2016 policy paper titled, *Post-Secondary Education in Canada: A Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: The efforts being made in response to the TRC recommendations and what still needs to be done*, authors Vianne Timmons, President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Regina, and Peter Stoicheff, President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Saskatchewan, synthesize historical and current work in the area of Indigenous initiatives for education.

The analysis that Timmons and Stoicheff provide documents several recommendations or considerations for future work that institutions can do to better support Indigenous initiatives and the experiences of Indigenous students at post-secondary institutions. These recommendations include eliminating barriers to Aboriginal education by forming partnerships with Indigenous communities as a way to do the work “with” and not “for” while grounding the support in culturally- and community-specific ways. In order to do this and to be guided by the extensive body of work from advisors and experts in this area, institutions can turn to various documents created by Indigenous leaders and educational policy makers such as the *Accord on Indigenous Education* (Archibald et al., 2010). The specific recommendations within this Accord acknowledge the importance of Indigenous curricula in the institution as a way to support Indigenous learners in a holistic way (Ibid).

Indigenous scholars, representatives, and advisories from Indigenous communities have long been pushing for more systematic changes within post-secondary institutions in Canada. Some of the suggested changes include more Indigenous-focused representation within the university through physical spaces, community-informed research practices, Indigenous curriculum offerings and an increase in the number of Indigenous students, faculty, and staff. Over the past 11 years, universities have responded to these recommendations with more Indigenous hires, more programs to support the recruitment and retention of Indigenous students, and newly formed partnerships with Indigenous communities that will guide and inform new relationships with the institutions moving forward. Additionally, universities have responded to these recommendations and further Calls to Action in the TRC by adopting a variety of practices associated with the delivery of Indigenous curriculum and requirements.

The momentum that has been created and documented through various initiatives, reports, and policies identify a need for changes to be made to existing practices, however, these shifts require further research, representation of scholarship, and resources and accountability measures in order to be successful. The high-level priorities further outlined by the authors of the above mentioned policy brief call for ongoing and new funding to support curricular changes proposed by the TRC Calls to Action, ongoing financial resources to sustain Indigenous support initiatives, and a commitment at the highest level of administration to taking action (Ibid). The authors further state that one of the aspects of undertaking work in this way is to build new processes and ways of offering support that work with the experiences that Indigenous students are encountering both in the classroom and on campuses. In line with Doughty’s 2015 review, Timmons and Stoicheff concur that new policies, curriculum, and teaching practices need to support these experiences rather than try to make the experiences of Indigenous students fit

into an existing institutional framework that was not built with Indigenous students in mind and can therefore do more harm by failing to meet the needs that students express.

Colonized classrooms and other shared experiences connected to the TRC

Dr. Sheila Cote-Meek, Associate Vice-President of Academic and Indigenous Programs at Laurentian University, continues to play a lead role in advocating for Indigenous Students and their experiences in the classroom. Dr. Cote-Meek has published numerous online articles responding to key issues associated with Indigenous education, policies, and institutional roles and responsibilities resulting from and connected to the TRC and TRC Calls to Action. During her doctoral work she authored the book, *Colonized Classrooms: Racism, Trauma and Resistance in Post-Secondary Education* (2014). The key features of this book touch upon themes that were present in the original *What I Learned in Class Today* Project, such as racism against Indigenous students; broad gaps in understanding of Indigenous histories and contemporary effects of colonialism; stereotypes and assumptions made by ill-equipped faculty members; and a lack of Indigenous centered spaces where ceremony is welcomed and built into the curriculum.

In a recent article published in *Policy Options* magazine on February 16, 2017, Cote-Meek reflected on the leadership roles that post-secondary institutions are being called to take on as a result of the TRC Calls to Action. The article aptly named *Postsecondary Education and Reconciliation* speaks to the need for more Indigenous faculty within spaces of learning because these institutions will be leaders in shaping future curriculum that centers Indigenous perspectives in multiple disciplinary contexts. In her concluding thoughts, Cote-Meek identifies one of the major, institutional, systemic gaps that needs to be amended for reconciliation to begin: the creation of educational spaces for non-Indigenous people to correct and expand upon their previous education that lacked a basic understanding of Indigenous histories and cultures. She explains that it is through this initial process of re-learning that better relations can be built, resulting in better educational experiences for Indigenous students.

Indigenous student spaces

The need for Indigenous student spaces and ongoing funding to create and sustain them has been well documented in a variety of sources mentioned throughout this article (Crey & Perreault, 2007, Cote-Meek, 2014, 2017, 2018). As part of *The Queen's Journal*, Ashley Maracle, a current Indigenous student, published an article in 2014 titled, "Barriers to Education Remain for Indigenous Students." In this article, she reflects on her overall impressions and experiences at this institution during her undergraduate degree. Maracle noted that she experienced difficulties throughout her time at Queen's but that she has seen some overall improvements in terms of institutional support for Indigenous students. One of the key points in Maracle's article is the need for a dedicated Indigenous space where students can feel grounded and represented, such as the Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre at Queen's.

In a recent search of the Queen's University journal it was noted that the Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre has received funding and support for an expansion in 2018. This story identifies the continued need for this type of space on campus and also the growth of the overall Indigenous student population at Queens.

A brief search of other post-secondary institutions in Canada revealed that a dedicated Indigenous student space is a source of support for students where they can feel represented and visible. The creation and funding for many of these spaces has come as a result of institutional recognition that Indigenous initiatives need representation on campus. What remains unclear and warrants a deeper investigation that extends beyond the scope of this literature review, is whether this support and visibility extends into the classrooms, curriculum, and other spaces on campus or if it is limited to these spaces alone.

Good intentions? Critiques and ongoing work

Indigenous education, and more recently Indigenization, continue to surface in the language of strategic plans and post-secondary responses to the TRC Calls to Action, however, these conversations and the groundwork and legacies surrounding them have been occurring in Indigenous spaces since the 1970's (Indian Control of Indian Education, 1972). In a reunion message delivered in 2003 titled, *Indian Control of Indian Education: Three Decades Later*, Dr. Verna Kirkness addressed the graduates of the Hamilton Native Teachers Education/Training Program 1974-75. In Kirkness's (2003) remarks, she acknowledges the long history of Indigenous voices and work that continues today. Kirkness (2003) addresses the visibility, representation, and presence of Indigenous voices have changed, albeit slowly, and that there are more of Indigenous people within various institutions who can impact these systems and make the necessary changes. Kirkness (2003) emphasizes that it is the presence of Indigenous voices within these systems that will provide the answers necessary for moving Indigenous education forward. She concludes,

"...our numbers of Aboriginal teachers and counselors continue to increase. Aboriginal graduates can be found in universities and colleges working as professors and instructors. Aboriginal expertise can be found in departments/ministries of education where they can affect policy development and curriculum. We have scholars who have produced studies based on sound research. We have written books. There is no doubt that we have proven that "the answers are within us". (Kirkness, 2003)

The participation of Indigenous people within systems that were not necessarily created "for" them is an ongoing process that continues in 2019. In the article, *Moving Beyond Good Intentions: Indigenizing Higher Education in British Columbia Universities through Institutional Responsibility and Accountability* (2013) educational scholar, Dr. Michelle Pidgeon documents and discusses the history of Indigenous participation within post-secondary education. In this article, Pidgeon questions the outcomes of this type of participation and asks whether the good intentions made by educational policies that claim to support Indigenization and other

Indigenous-focused priorities are indeed working for Indigenous people within these systems. Through interviews conducted as part of the research for her project informing this article, Pidgeon asserts that institutions need to listen more and use what Indigenous communities (students, faculty, staff, and those outside of the institution) have already shared with them. It is through this process that the experiences of Indigenous people within post-secondary institutions can begin to shift “good intentions” into actionable outcomes that recognize the specificity of the experiences encountered and the necessity of changes that need to be made.

In May 2018, Lori Campbell, Director of Indigenous Initiatives at the University of Waterloo presented her research on Indigenization as part of a conference on Teaching and Learning Today. In her presentation, she defines Indigenization as a practice that identifies institutional patterns and processes that contribute to the exclusion and erasure of Indigenous peoples knowledges, worldviews, and perspectives. She further states that Indigenization requires being responsive and responsible for the educational experience of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, staff, and faculty by recognizing the validity of Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. Campbell concluded her presentation by stating that Indigenization recognizes the opportunity to establish an educational framework that supports and promotes the unique plurality of rich and diverse knowledge systems and pedagogies to arrive at new and innovative solutions to problems (University of Saskatchewan, Teaching and Learning Today Conference, 2018).

As universities undergo and refer to Indigenization as a method to respond to the recent TRC Calls to Action (TRC Calls to Action, 2015) and to implement more ways to integrate Indigenous content and knowledges into curriculum, the mainstream Eurocentric academe often does not represent the ways in which Indigenous communities have been doing the work of what is now called “indigenizing” long before the term was coined in higher education. As mentioned at the beginning of this environmental scan, there is a long history of Indigenous leaders who have paved the way and, specific to the context of where our work at UBC is situated, on the unceded traditional lands of the Musqueam people leaders have been dismantling systemic and institutional structures long before inclusion, diversity, and Indigenization practices and subsequent educational reform policies were implemented.

In an article titled “*Reconciliation on campus: what’s the next step beyond inclusion?*” Lenny Carpenter (2018) argues that universities that are Indigenizing the academe are instead going in the opposite direction. The article references claims made by Gaudry & Lorenz (2018) that universities must move past and beyond notions of equity and inclusion. The authors further state that attempts must be made to alter the university’s structure before establishments such as indigenization, reconciliation, and decolonization can be considered. Furthermore, the article draws on the perspective of Dennis McPherson, a faculty member teaching at Lakehead University where he states, “there’s a lot of lip service to the programming but no substance to what they’re saying” and in reality, the university still holds its’ values from when it was first designed—Eurocentric frameworks, ideologies, and fundamental Christian views that are not compatible with Indigenous ways of knowing, approaches, and perspectives (as cited in Carpenter, 2018). Moreover, Justice (2018) speaks to the ways in which there is no “one size fits all” framework and suggests that the right approach really depends on where the university

is located, the knowledges and approaches to the specific Indigenous land, and the guidance from relationships with local communities (as cited in Carpenter, 2018).

A critique of the call to "always Indigenize!"

In her article, *A Critique of the Call to "Always Indigenize!"* Elina Hill (2012) identifies some of the paradoxical challenges encountered when post-secondary institutions turn to Indigenization, or misconceptions of it, as a quick solution to years of misguided and absent educational policies, relations, and representations of Indigenous peoples and perspectives within the academy. Some of the outcomes resulting from this institutional trend include Indigenous people being tasked with the emotional labour of engaging with and supporting these efforts that are often underfunded and understaffed. This scenario is well stated in the original *What I Learned in Class Today* project, where many of the students and staff interviewed identified the additional burden of taking on the work to educate their classmates, course instructors, co-workers, and in some cases upper administrators.

Another aspect of this issue that Hill (2012) identifies draws on the work of Andrea Bear-Nicholas who states, "When Indigenous people participate in efforts to make Indigenous thought coherent for university scholars, and consequently the colonial state, they spend less time engaged with institutions of knowledge in their communities." This is salient point when considering any form of institutional relationship with Indigenous communities. One consideration or question that institutions need to ask when drafting policies or writing strategic plans that call for Indigenization and other forms of Indigenous engagement is, will this relationship be beneficial to the communities and does this align with their present priorities, values, and visions? Other considerations include the impact that these policies will have on students and recognizing that bums in seats is no longer an acceptable approach without the consideration of classroom and campus climate first. In one-on-one conversations and informal sharing circles outside of the *What I Learned in Class Today* project students shared that the reason for them leaving the university is that they struggled to "fit" their experiences and the values of their communities into the confined borders of the curriculum and programs that they were part of, and that being closer to their communities would allow them more agency to do meaningful work. In research associated with student retention this is often a missing part of the quantitative data sets that administrators pine over in their quest to get more Indigenous students in certain disciplines where they are underrepresented.

While Hill (2012) and others who have contributed to her article are critical of the concept of Indigenizing within the academy, they also identify a clear need to do something to make the experiences of Indigenous students, faculty, and staff better. Hill (2012) concludes by offering the following recommendation:

"Rather than heeding the call to "Always Indigenize!" at universities, we must work harder to always decolonize. In aiming to decolonize, the thoughts and interests of Indigenous people must certainly be attended to, in their already coherent forms. Much Indigenous knowledge has

already been offered in order to help settlers understand the histories of this land, and of colonization.” (Ibid)

In our research that focuses on the long-term impacts of institutional, legal, and federally recognized policies in support of Indigenous initiatives, we can see that long-term engagement at several levels has had the most impact. In this analysis we have determined that further research is required both in the classroom and in on the ground experiences where these conversations are held in less than optimal circumstances. In the following sections we offer some approaches that have been developed to support classroom climate and the creation of supportive environments for Indigenous students with the recognition that these suggestions are not enough on their own but provide a grounded place to start to make a difference.

Mandatory Indigenous courses

In the original *What I Learned in Class Today* project (2007) Crey and Perreault summarize some of the participants’ recommendations through a discussion topic brief titled “Thinking Strategies.” (“Topic 4: Thinking Strategies | *What I Learned in Class Today*,” n.d.) In this brief, they summarize some of the recommendations made when participants were asked how the classroom environment could be improved when Indigenous issues were raised. In summary, Crey and Perreault suggested that the creation of a foundations course consisting of key terms, concepts, and issues related to Aboriginal histories would assist to broaden students’ general knowledge of these topics and their ability to engage in discussions of Aboriginal content in classes but that the issue is not in the content alone. They further state that mandatory or top down institutionally enforced curriculum would not be beneficial, particularly for Indigenous students in the space where the healing is taking place but also for the Indigenous instructors tasked with teaching these courses or the junior instructor who may or may not be prepared for the climate that such a course entails. Crey and Perreault express their concerns regarding the limited effectiveness of a mandatory course, stating:

“A mandatory foundations course in Aboriginal issues and history is an opportunity for students to increase their familiarity with these issues, potentially reducing the frequency of certain problematic questions or comments. The authors further note that, “providing more information through the implementation of foundations course does not necessarily destabilize the “information” about Aboriginal people and issues that generate difficult and traumatic situations – the assumptions about Aboriginal people that underpin insensitive comments and generate problematic situations.”

The authors further conclude that “...implementing mandatory curriculum would not increase an instructor’s ability to deal with classroom incidents or issues around discussions of Aboriginal content; in fact, under these circumstances, the burden on instructors would be exponential...There is no point in creating mandatory foundations courses to be taught by instructors who don’t have the necessary capacity. These courses would require instructors who are highly skilled in teaching sensitive subject matter and who have the patience and dedication

to handle a significant course enrolment – a considerable challenge. They consume an instructor's time and energy and are frequently thankless. Faculty who have this skill set get worn out after only a few years because of the demands of such courses. For this kind of implementation to work, there needs to be enough instructors with the requisite skills to cycle through the course". (Ibid)

In the decade since Crey and Perreault authored this brief there continues to be recommendations for, and critiques of, mandatory Indigenous-focused curriculum (Guadry 2016, Justice 2015, Wildcat et. al, 2017). In the article, *Paved with Good Intentions: Simply Requiring Indigenous Content is Not Enough* (2016) Guadry discusses the impacts that mandatory courses can have on the various environments and people who are involved and situated within them. In some cases, Gaudy states that these requirements have been around for decades. For example, at the University of Saskatchewan, departments such as Indigenous Studies, Education, Nursing, Aboriginal Public Administration, and Social Work continue to offer these requirements as part of their degree programs. Guadry (2016) outlines some of the considerations that institutions should surface prior to implementing mandatory courses, including : "a clear and well-articulated rationale for pursuing this course of action that is communicated to the university community and general public; a critical mass of Indigenous content experts working as course instructors with enough job security and support to weather a potentially challenging classroom environment and most importantly the support for existing Indigenous content programs who are already doing this work (and ensuring that these courses are relevant for Indigenous students too)." (Ibid)

In his closing remarks, Gaudry (2016) recalls a statement that his PhD supervisor shared at the end of every class that they taught. The statement was, "Now you know enough to be dangerous" (Ibid). This sentiment situates and affirms the limitations of a singular mandatory course in relation to one's overall depth and capacity for learning. The idea that knowledge is power, in this circumstance, is not a superficial statement but rather a true reflection of the outcomes that exist from these singular educational encounters. In the article, "*Not That Kind of Indian:*" *The Problem with Generalizing Indigenous Peoples in Contemporary Scholarship and Pedagogy*, Daniel Sims (2016) outlines several layers for consideration when mandatory courses are presented as a solution to better classroom climates at post-secondary institutions. Sims (2016) notes that one of the limitations of a generalized course on Indigenous issues is that it is perpetuated as an assumed knowledge set that, if left unchecked, leaves those who have completed such a course with the assumption that they have the necessary skills required to speak to these issues with authority in the future.

Although the critiques and concerns around mandatory curriculum from Indigenous people have been identified in multiple spaces, there remains a need for further dialogue on the issue. The topic of mandatory Indigenous courses has sparked the interest of students at the University of Alberta and has informed the course-based website, *Indigenous Content Requirements in Canada: A Resource Centre*. The creation of this website was initiated by Dr. Matthew Wildcat as part of an assignment in his senior level Indigenous Governance course. Based on the various materials presented within the pages of this web resource that detail arguments made

by several Indigenous faculty and others this curriculum would impact, it is clear that this is a complex and layered discussion that has the potential to influence as well as impact many. The extension of this discussion is a necessary one and we encourage it to continue. Such discussions, however, cannot and should not happen in administrative silos and definitely not without the voices of all those who would be affected at the table.

Moving the work forward

In an Ottawa gathering hosted in 2017 by Universities Canada titled *Converge 2017*, students came together with policy makers, university administrators, and community organizers for two days to discuss and strategize the following questions: “*what role can and should universities play in reconciliation efforts between Canadian institutions and Indigenous communities? What’s working well and what needs to change?*” In the article, “*Reconciliation Requires ‘Actionable Deeds’ by Universities, Not Just Talk,*” Natalie Samson documents the proceedings of this gathering and reports that it became clear that a lot of work, research, and recommendations have been put forward as approaches to better relations and support for Indigenous initiatives on various campuses. In conversations that followed, the panel of speakers also identified that a lot of this work has been and continues to be done by Indigenous people within the institutions they are part of. The article concludes by identifying that the institutions fall short of their reconciliation goals by not following through on these recommendations with resources after they are brought forward.

Sheila Cote-Meek’s (2018) article, “*Making a long-term commitment to Indigenous Education*” she writes about her ongoing work in the area of Indigenous education at Laurentian University. In her role as an Indigenous scholar and associate vice-president in academic and Indigenous programs, Cote-Meek (2018) discusses the tenuous nature of change and implementation of Indigenous strategic work. The commitments and recommendations that Cote-Meek (2018) presents in her article require institutions and leaders within them to surface the following questions: “how will Indigenous education strategies outlast changes in leadership? Are policies in place to support the changes over time? Have structural changes been made to the system? How will retention of new faculty hires be sustained?” (Ibid)

The ways to move forward and the creation of actionable deeds by universities will need to be thoughtfully created and will take time. Indigenous scholars continue to call for a shift away from some of the simplified ways that these processes have been actioned to date or summed up through buzz words such as Indigenousization. In a recent twitter post by scholar Eve Tuck (2018), reiterates the problematic ways that universities and institutions continue to use verbs like “Indigenize” as a catch-all for work that needs to be done and relationships that need to be tended to. Tuck (2018) states:

“Universities need to engage in extensive, specific, layered, and humble acts of repair, and even it is hard to predict what the word for the effect of those acts will be. Some Indigenous colleagues at U of Toronto and I have been talking about Indigenous presencing.” [Tweet].

The actions of institutions superficially contained in verbs like Indigenization do little to acknowledge the presence, ongoing work, and contribution of Indigenous people. A better step forward and a necessary action that Tuck (2018) and her Indigenous colleagues at the University of Toronto offer is the term “Indigenous Presencing” as an alternative to Indigenizing. In furthering the work of Indigenous scholars in this area we recommend listening to these voices and the approaches they suggest.

In the blog article, “*Indigenizing Canadian academia and the insidious problem of white possessiveness*”, Todd (2018) analyzes the term white possessiveness and its’ relationship to Indigenizing. In this article she argues that institutions are still filtered through whiteness, and that white bodies are still predominantly operating, determining, and controlling what forms of change may look like to a campus. Based on the sources we have assessed as part of this review we have determined that the process of Indigenization is complicated and is unique to the contexts of where the university is located. We have also determined that the history of the momentum that surrounds Indigenization as the verb has been predominantly operated by non-Indigenous people, thus reinforcing and reproducing the same colonial and Eurocentric narratives that have always existed in post-secondary institutions.

Deepening classroom climate in teaching and learning

In the sections above we note that institutional shifts may miss the specificity of the classroom with recommendations to jump to inclusion of Indigenous curriculum without thinking about ways to do this that attend to classroom climate. As part of the discourse on Indigenous engagement, educational experiences, and institutional responses to Indigenous engagement in curriculum and pedagogy, classroom climate is a critical piece that informs and guides supporting students as well as teaching and learning. The original *What I Learned in Class Today* project situates the classroom as a site for further investigation. As documented in the original interviews, both students and instructors reference their classroom experiences as sites of tension, pain, and a reminder of ongoing trauma. In our research around classroom climate and as a way to synthesize and make sense of the experiences documented in the original project, we have located research that centers the classroom as a cross-sectional and multi-layered environment that is affected by a number of factors. Since the classroom operates within complex layers of the institution, these broader systems impact what happens within the walls of the classroom and how learning and knowledge is produced. Ambrose et al. (2010) define classroom climate as “the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical environments in which our students learn” (p. 170). In addition, Ambrose et. al (2010) classify classroom climate in a simpler way through binary terms: “climate is either good (inclusive, productive) or bad (chilly, marginalizing). Ambrose and colleagues conclude that, “it may be more accurate to think of climate as a continuum” (p. 171).

Tsukada and Perreault’s (2016) article, *Complicating How Classroom Climate Works: Advancing the Framework*, further complicates Ambrose et. al’s (2010) framework by identifying

contextual layers of the classroom climate that operate within institutional and societal factors. Tsukada and Perreault (2016) elude to the relationship between classroom climate and student voices in the classroom. An example of a counter-productive classroom climate is shown through the individual interviews where problematic student experiences are represented in the classroom. An interview with Dara Kelly¹⁰ discussed how a classmate's prior understanding about First Nations issues created an unproductive learning environment for Dara. In the beginning of the video, Dara talks about a classmate's assumption that First Nations people did not exist as well as another incident where one of her classmates out right asked, "why are Aboriginal people so screwed up?" She mentions in the video that this question, or rather the prior knowledge the student had coming into the classroom, created an unproductive and hurtful learning environment for Dara. The critical piece to this learning speaks to Tsukada and Perreault's (2016) framework on the instructor's role and identity in the classroom. In Dara's example, the instructor was unable to provide a productive and effective classroom climate for Dara as a student.

In Dara's¹¹ interview, the interviewer asks, "*what kinds of experiences have you had in the classroom that stick in your mind?*". Dara responds by stating "*Most, well...it's been a combination of professors and fellow student that have...contributed to a lot of experiences in the classroom where as an Aboriginal student you are left with feelings and emotions that all the other students aren't walking out of the classroom with, and, and they've been happening as recently as last week and that's, that's been since being back in university since 2004, so it's really ongoing...*".

Hirschy and Braxton's (2004) article, "*Effects of student classroom incivilities on students*", describe the ways in which the classroom climate can be harmful and unproductive when subtle micro-inequities are not picked up on or navigated well by the instructor. They further explain that when there are undealt-with tensions and incivilities that have not been addressed properly, it not only causes a negative impact on a student's learning experiences, but can also negatively impact their success at an institution (as cited in Cornell University's Centre for Teaching Innovation, 2018). The first-hand accounts shared as part of the original *What I Learned in Class Today* project articulate these classroom challenges and the resulting impacts in a very nuanced way. The impact that these experiences have on Indigenous students as well as others in the classroom needs further attention as scholars call attention to the lasting impacts that these classroom situations have on a students' overall experience at university.

Approaches to fostering a productive classroom climate

¹⁰ Dara Kelly, 22 February 2007, *Oral Narratives of What I Learned in Class Today*. Karrmen Crey & Amy Perreault, First Nations Studies Program, University of British Columbia, 2007, 10 October 2018, <<http://www.whatilearnedinclasstoday.com>>

¹¹ Dara Kelly, 22 February 2007, *Oral Narratives of What I Learned in Class Today*. Karrmen Crey & Amy Perreault, First Nations Studies Program, University of British Columbia, 2007, 10 October 2018, <<https://ivt.arts.ubc.ca/IVTWIL/IVT.html>>2.9.

In the article, *What Students Say Is Good Teaching*, students expressed their experiences of good or bad teaching they have encountered within the classroom. One student from political sciences and communications described a positive experience they had in the classroom when the professor made explicit connections between a topic discussed in class with issues outside the classroom and within their personal life. The student also mentioned that assessment and evaluation made a significant impact on her experience with the course. The professor did not mark assignments based on a rigid rubric, but rather marked assignments based on how students were making meaningful connections between course material and the world outside the classroom (Brighouse, 2018). Argall states,

“For my professor, the benefit was learning more about us as “whole people” rather than just students in her class. It gave her a more holistic view of us students, as well as forced us to actively process what we were learning. The requirement made us learn more, and the sense that the professor knew who we were made us want to learn more.” (as cited in Brighouse, 2018).

Another student mentioned a positive experience they had in the classroom when the professor facilitated students to introduce themselves at the start of each class. The student said that knowing who their classmates are creates a more welcoming environment that is conducive to relationship-building. Students initiated more conversations with one another before class and were more willing to offer comments and questions, and to disagree with one another (Brighouse, 2018)

These examples represent that making connections with what is learned within the classroom and applying it to outside of the classroom, and setting the tone on the first day of class are some ways to foster productive classroom climates and learning environments. Evans et al (2009) further explores this through previous studies that have been done to describe a positive classroom climate which has been found to be connected to educational outcomes such as enhanced academic achievement, constructive learning processes, and a decrease of emotional problems (Walberg 1976; Haertel et al. 1981; Fraser & Fisher 1982; Fraser 1986, 1989, 1994; Goh et al 1995; Kuperminc et. al 2001; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network 2003). In addition, Evans et al (2009) concludes through his research that feelings of belonging in a class have resulted in higher student engagement and motivation.

In the article, *“Demanding Kinder Classrooms Doesn’t Make You a Snowflake”*, Justice (2017) states there is a need for instructors to be kinder and more compassionate towards students. He points out that instructors have a call to be more generous, patient, and compassionate in teaching, and suggests that these acts can make a significant difference to students. Justice (2017) explains that the responsibility as teachers and educators is to model reciprocity, vulnerability, and humbleness. He quotes,

“What always seems to come through in so many of these critical commentaries about the supposed “snowflakes” is fear. Fear of being vulnerable. Fear of looking like anything less than

authoritative, of being asked to learn something new, of maybe not always knowing the answer, of perhaps even being wrong, of seeing the world through the eyes of those you've sought to distance yourself from—and finding something worthwhile there. To be open in this way can be scary for a teacher, especially for those who go through life with the privilege of assumed authority, but it makes for more honest teaching, and certainly better learning.” (Ibid).

Furthering Justice's (2017) call to teachers, Tsukada and Perreault's (2016) framework on complicating the classroom climate explores the close connection between reciprocity in learning and witnessing. The concept of witnessing suggests that learners are accountable for the knowledge they consume and that they are invited to give back to the land and communities through their newly-acquired knowledge. As Justice (2017) concludes, as an instructor providing a supportive and productive classroom climate, their responsibility to enable and set students up for success and to create factors that contribute to a productive learning environment comes at the necessary cost of being vulnerable.

Supporting student success within the classroom and beyond

At the core of this work are the experiences of Indigenous post-secondary students. There are a wide variety of issues that many Indigenous students continue to speak out about, particularly within the space of a university classroom. In our research, we found that many of the challenges that students articulated in the original version of *What I Learned in Class Today* are challenges that students still face today.

One of those challenges is that Indigenous students often continue to feel pressured to become an authority within classroom discussions that focus on Indigenous issues and histories. For example, some students have noted that when class discussions on Indigenous topics are inaccurate or become oversimplified, students are often “placed in a position of having to address the misinformation and course content presented by non-Indigenous staff (Indspire, 2018).” While the opportunity to speak to these topics is often welcome, frequently being relied upon to address the gaps or misinformation can often leave students feeling anxious, frustrated, or exhausted.

Furthermore, racism can enter discussions that are focused on Indigenous topics, and sometimes Indigenous students are left having to confront uninformed or racist comments alone, especially when classmates and instructors are not confident enough to step in themselves. For example, Riley Yesno, an Anishinaabe student at the University of Toronto, described a situation where a non-Indigenous student argued strongly for the benefits of the residential school system while also arguing that had Indigenous peoples only complied with the system, residential schools would not have been so bad (Yesno, 2018). Yesno stated that “no other student had either the courage or the knowledge to challenge this narrative, and the teaching assistant legitimized his stance as a radical but valid difference of opinion. I sat there, a status Indian and the granddaughter of two residential school survivors, with fists clenched and tears stuck in my throat (Yesno, 2018).”

When students do speak up, they are sometimes confronted with backlash or a strong sense of annoyance from those who do not want to listen. For example, when Erica Violet Lee, a nēhiyaw graduate student at the University of Toronto, was an undergraduate teaching assistant, “non-Indigenous students would roll their eyes or not take her seriously when she would be at the front of the classroom, indicating not only their disinterest in the course content but also their disrespect towards the Indigenous instructor who is sharing their own insights with them (Piapot 2018).”

While there are many Indigenous students who feel that their voices or perspectives are dismissed or rejected in the classroom, there are also students who can, at times, feel an expectation to know certain facts, speak certain truths, and control certain conversations, especially in this time of truth and reconciliation (Indspire, 2018).

Fortunately, many Indigenous students have recommended some of what they have identified as important parts of their post-secondary education that they believe should be further developed and expanded upon as a way to increase the success and retention of Indigenous students. While students acknowledge that it will take some time for results to be noticeable within classroom spaces and institutions, students also recognize that it is important that change does happen so that future Indigenous students do not have to experience what many Indigenous students in Canada have been facing for decades. Here are some of their suggestions:

Indigenous gathering places on campus, such as the First Nations Longhouse at UBC, are places that help “Indigenous students navigate the culturally specific challenges of university life (Yesno, 2018),” especially for those students who are attending university away from their home communities. It is important to have places on campus where Indigenous students not only feel a sense of a community, but where their practices, cultures, and identities are also respected. Students want to “know their culture, speak their language and have access to elders, cultural practices and knowledge specific to their people (Indspire, 2018).” Indigenous gathering places are ideal spaces for students to participate in those activities and they are also comfortable places for students, staff, elders, and members of the greater community to come together.

Many Indigenous students have highlighted how important Indigenous faculty are for students throughout their studies. Indigenous faculty not only provide helpful guidance, support, and mentorship to students, but many also bring similar lived experiences to the university and understand a lot of the challenges that Indigenous students continue to face throughout their studies. One student also emphasized how important Indigenous faculty are as role models for Indigenous students, stating that Indigenous students “are not being set up for success if we don’t see ourselves being reflected in these positions of success and respect (Indspire, 2018).” Indigenous faculty at post-secondary institutions often play an instrumental role in the success of many Indigenous students.

Students also stress that it is very important for non-Indigenous faculty to be able to understand and articulate foundational but highly important information that relate to Indigenous topics, particularly within a classroom space. Many Indigenous students understand that there needs to be “more education for educators” so that more instructors are able to address and navigate certain issues that come up both within and beyond the classroom (Indspire, 2018). This is especially important as post-secondary institutions continue to focus on integrating Indigenous topics into their learning spaces.

Additionally, Indigenous staff are also of high importance for Indigenous students, particularly those who are involved with Indigenous student services. Indigenous staff often have a better understanding of how to support Indigenous students. Many Indigenous students emphasize the importance of both mental and spiritual health and wellbeing and how having access to those supports while in university is important. Indigenous staff who have a good understanding of Indigenous student concerns are key to making sure that these services are delivered in a safe and culturally appropriate way (Indspire, 2018).

Lastly, many Indigenous students deeply stress that there needs to be more opportunities for them to learn their own Indigenous languages, engage in land-based learning, and involve specific Indigenous knowledges into their work while in their post-secondary studies. Many students have noted that most of the instruction received and work done throughout their programs are through a Western lens, even though there are many Indigenous approaches to doing the work effectively (Indspire, 2018). It is important to understand that progressing through a post-secondary program and earning a post-secondary degree should not require students to fully conform to traditional Western perspectives and ways of knowing.

The above summarizes only some of the challenges and recommendations that have been offered by some Indigenous students across Canada, but they are common, and they require serious attention by all post-secondary institutions.

It is encouraging that many of the recommendations that were made in this section are well in development or are already implemented at UBC. For example, Indigenous language learning is available for credit through the First Nations and Endangered Languages program, which is within the Institute for Critical Indigenous Studies (CIS). Also within the CIS is First Nations and Indigenous Studies, an interdisciplinary undergraduate program which, at its core, focuses on ethical and respectful community-based research with Indigenous communities. Through FNIS, students also have the opportunity to study at Dechinta University, an Indigenous land-based learning school based in the Northwest Territories. The recent development and opening of the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre as well as the raising of Reconciliation Pole at the university provide opportunities for all people at UBC to learn about the histories and legacies of the residential school system and how to move forward together. Additionally, the 2018 Indigenous Strategic Plan also outlines a lot of what has been written in this section and throughout this literature review. These are only a few of the larger developments, initiatives, and spaces with an Indigenous focus that are emerging at UBC.

The impact of strategic work on UBC campus is visible, however, many Indigenous students continue to face several challenges both within the classroom and in the broader academic community, which means that there is still a lot of work to do.

The reboot of *What I Learned in Class Today* aims to highlight those challenges by directly centering the voices of Indigenous students, faculty, staff, and alumni at UBC, with the hope that such a resource can be used as a tool to move beyond those challenges and create a better place for Indigenous students at UBC to work and learn. It is with this hope and with these recommendations that we continue to do this work.

Conclusion

We would like to acknowledge the many Indigenous faculty, staff, students, and non-Indigenous colleagues who continue to create spaces for these critical and thoughtful discussions that take place on our campus and in all of the other communities in which they are a part of. As researchers we would like to acknowledge all of those people who have helped through their courage, wisdom, and determination, to create the path that we continue to walk today as we move forward in this work. While we continue to navigate new issues, we are now better equipped with the power of our own stories and many different emerging initiatives and spaces within post-secondary institutions that work, in part, to honour those stories and perspectives that come from Indigenous students, staff, and faculty on campus.

By expanding the already large and useful record of Indigenous students experiences at UBC, which is documented in the original version of *What I Learned in Class Today: Aboriginal Issues in the Classroom*, its reboot, *What I Learned in Class Today: Educational Experiences and Institutional Responses to Indigenous Engagement in Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Classroom Climate at the University of British Columbia (UBC)*, will contribute to the ongoing work that is taking place at UBC and at post-secondary institutions across Canada. These institutions are actively working to implement the many important changes that are needed in order to meaningfully address and resolve some of the current challenges and issues that have been presented throughout this literature review.

As we move forward with the work of this reboot, we hope that the issues that continue to take place in classroom discussions and in institutional dialogues begin to shift as the voices and perspectives of Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and alumni continue to be highlighted and centered in this work. Only when Indigenous post-secondary students are able to enter a classroom, university, or post-secondary program without having to encounter the challenges that have been written throughout this literature review will we be in a better place than we are right now. With all of the hard work that is already being done at UBC and beyond, we are in a place where we can move forward in a good and productive way if we begin to seriously listen to the voices that will be highlighted through this project. The reboot of *What I Learned in Class Today* is one important way to help us move forward.

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