Indigenous Educational Pathways

Access, Mobility, and Persistence in the BC Post-Secondary System

By Stephanie McKeown, Adrienne Vedan, Kendra Mack, Sarah Jacknife, and Cody Tolmie
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BCCAT

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(Cover Image: Haida boat; also appears on p. 1 of this report.)

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Executive Summary

Across Canada, systemic barriers have created an environment where Indigenous learners encounter various obstacles to accessing and persisting through post-secondary education, resulting in an educational gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. The federal government has recognized the importance of and made it a priority to address this gap. Although the proportion of Indigenous high school graduates and the count of Indigenous students entering into the post-secondary system have been increasing, the Indigenous post-secondary attainment rate remains significantly lower than that of non-Indigenous learners.

This report aims to expand upon the existing knowledge of Indigenous student access, mobility, and persistence in British Columbia.

Given this educational gap, the importance of improving access to post-secondary education, and increasing completion rates of Indigenous learners, this report aims to expand upon the existing knowledge of Indigenous student access, mobility, and persistence in British Columbia (BC). The rationale for this study is to develop a deeper understanding of Indigenous educational pathways, as well as to explore the various approaches that institutions within BC are undertaking to advance Indigenous student success.

Key stakeholders from each BC public post-secondary institution, and other British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) member institutions, were interviewed by the researchers. The participants included representatives involved in admissions and/ or student services (e.g., registrars, admissions directors, deans) and Indigenous

programming/ services/ education (e.g., directors, advisors, coordinators, recruiters). Transcriptions of interviews were analyzed for emerging themes in the areas of access, persistence, and mobility. Additionally, unique programs, services, practices, and policies were identified.

Indigenous learners continued to face significant barriers in accessing and persisting in their post-secondary studies.

In general, it was found that there were a variety of programs, services, practices, and policies in place across the participating institutions, which supported Indigenous learners in accessing and persisting through their post-secondary studies. However, the study revealed that there was an overall desire by stakeholders for more data and information related to the mobility of Indigenous learners in particular, as well as access and persistence in general. Many of the interviewees felt that Indigenous learners continued to face significant barriers in accessing and persisting in their post-secondary studies.

The current phase of our study includes the perspectives and information solicited from institutional representatives and admissions policies. Future research would involve gathering Indigenous students' as well as academic and Indigenous community experts' perspectives on post-secondary educational pathways. The next phase of research would supplement the information presented in this report, and help us to understand whether the students' views match or challenge those of admissions/student services and Indigenous programming/ services/ education representatives within post-secondary institutions in BC.

UBC's First Nations House of Learning. (Photo Credit: Don Erhardt.)

Introduction

Identification of Indigenous Learners

The Government of BC's Ministry of Advanced Education (2015) recognizes Indigenous learners as "students with Indigenous ancestry who self-identified in the BC Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system or who self-identify as Indigenous at a BC public post-secondary institution" (p. 3). They note that their counts of non-Indigenous learners may include Indigenous learners who have not self-identified (BC Ministry of Advanced Education, 2015).

Terminology

In this report, we use the term "Indigenous" to describe the first peoples within Canada, which include the following: First Nations including both Status and Non-Status, Métis, and Inuit. All of the institutions that were interviewed for this study used various terminologies (i.e., Aboriginal, First Nations, etc.) to describe their Indigenous student populations. However, we use the term "Indigenous" in this report so as to be all-encompassing. As well, although naming conventions for departments supporting Indigenous students were different across institutions, we used "programs and services in support of Indigenous students" to represent them all.

Background

The Educational Gap

Indigenous students within Canada face various systemic barriers that hinder their ability to access and persist in post-secondary education in Canada. This has resulted in an educational gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations (Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2005; First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008; Gordon & White, 2014; King, 2008; Mendelson, 2006; Munro, 2014; Price & Burtch, 2010; Whitley, 2014). Federal and provincial governments have recognized the importance of providing an integrated, relevant, and effective post-secondary education system for Indigenous learners. Most recently, addressing the educational gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners has been identified as a priority within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada and United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP).

In 2015 the TRC released the *Calls to Action* document. The *Calls to Action* acts as a mandate that includes ninety-four recommendations for ways to improve the lives of Indigenous peoples across Canada. This includes article 10 of the mandate, which states:

In this report, we use "Indigenous" to describe the first peoples within Canada, which include the following: First Nations including both Status and Non-Status, Métis, and Inuit.

Addressing the educational gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners has been identified as a priority within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada.

"Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning." (United Nations, 2008, p. 7)

"We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles:

    i.   Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation;

    ii.   Improving education attainment levels and success rates;

    iii.   Developing culturally appropriate curricula; and

    iv.   Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 2).

The Canadian federal government has announced their commitment to working towards fulfilling these multiple recommendations. The federal government has also recently announced their support of UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), which includes a clause about ensuring Indigenous people globally have access to and control over their education. Article 14.1 of UNDRIP declares:

"Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning" (United Nations, 2008, p. 7).

Moreover, Mendelson (2006) specifically identified the Northern and Western regions of Canada as areas where improved pathways for Indigenous Canadians in the post-secondary education system would result in enhanced social well-being and economic prosperity. The research has argued that, by increasing the number of Indigenous people who become educated within Canada, the average income of Indigenous people will increase, as well as their quality of life will be improved (Mendelson, 2006; Preston, 2008; Price & Burtch, 2010).

Current Trends

The Student Transitions Project (STP) data demonstrates that the proportion of Indigenous students among high school graduates has slightly increased from 2011 to 2013 (see Figure 1 in Appendix A). However, it should be noted that this increasing proportion could be influenced by demographic changes, and by changing patterns of self-declaration over time.

Mendelson (2006) specifically identified the Northern and Western regions of Canada as areas where improved pathways for Indigenous Canadians in the post-secondary education system would result in enhanced social well-being and economic prosperity.

Looking at post-secondary transitions rates by region since 2001/2002, overall the largest proportions of Indigenous students are transitioning from high school in the Vancouver/Langara (48%) and Northern BC (45%) regions to a post-secondary institution in BC.

The number of Indigenous students entering into the post-secondary system has also been increasing. As of the 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 academic school years, 40% of Indigenous students in BC high schools immediately transitioned to post-secondary education, with an additional 10% of students transitioning after a one-year delay in 2012/2013 (see Figure 2 and Table 3 in Appendix A).

Looking at post-secondary transitions rates by region since 2001/2002, overall, the largest proportions of Indigenous students are transitioning from high school in the Vancouver/ Langara (48%) and Northern BC (45%) regions to a post-secondary institution in BC (see Table 4 in Appendix A). These proportions include students who transitioned immediately and delayed their transition one or more years.

In 2011, 48% of Indigenous learners aged 25 to 64 had completed a post-secondary level certificate, diploma, or degree, compared to 65% of non-Indigenous learners (Statistics Canada, 2011). Specifically, among Indigenous populations in 2011, 14% had a trades certificate, 21% attained a college-level diploma, just over 3% had acquired a university certificate or diploma below the bachelor level, and 10% had acquired a university-level degree (Statistics Canada, 2011). In comparison, of the non-Indigenous population in 2011, 12% had earned a trades certificate, 21% had acquired a college-level diploma, 5% had achieved a university certificate or diploma below the bachelor level, and about 26% had a university-level degree (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Thus, even though Indigenous learners are on equal footing with non-Indigenous learners in terms of college and trades levels of attainment, they remain significantly behind in university level attainment (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009; Gordon & White, 2014; Statistics Canada, 2011). From 1996 to 2011, the rate at which Indigenous people completed a university degree rose from 5% to 10%, but this proportion is still significantly lower than the non-Indigenous university attainment rate of 27% (Gordon & White, 2014; Statistics Canada, 2011). Overall, although both Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations have made gains in post-secondary attainment, the gap between these two populations has remained (Gordon & White, 2014).

Barriers

Although secondary school graduation and post-secondary school completion rates among Indigenous learners are on the rise, Indigenous students within Canada continue to face systemic barriers to accessing and persisting in post-secondary education, which have perpetuated the educational gap (BC Ministry of Advanced Education, 2012; Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2005; First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008; King, 2008; Mendelson, 2006; Price & Burtch, 2010; Whitley, 2014). Barriers faced by Indigenous learners include:

- Social and cultural barriers (e.g., racism, discrimination, historical distrust of educational institutions due to the intergenerational effects of residential schools, and community and family responsibilities) (Pidgeon, 2014; Preston, 2008; Price & Burtch, 2010; Restoule et al., 2013; Statistics Canada, 2012);

UBC-O Student Sidney Paul. (Photo Credit: Darren Hull.)

> *Mendelson (2006) argues that the key to encouraging Indigenous students to access post-secondary education is to focus on promoting the completion of high school.*

- Institutional barriers (e.g., a lack of Indigenous curriculum being taught within educational settings; students being academically unprepared; a lack of Indigenous languages being offered; limited flexibility towards Indigenous methods of learning, teaching, and research; a lack of representation of Indigenous staff, faculty, and executives at a decision-making level; a lack of Indigenous role models within post-secondary institutions; and the mismatch between Indigenous and western values and ways of learning) (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2013; Malatest, 2004; Oloo, 2007; Pidgeon, 2014; Price & Burtch, 2010; Timmons, 2009);

- Financial barriers (e.g., high rates of poverty, and a lack of funding available) (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2012; Timmons, 2009);

- Geographical barriers (e.g., traveling from remote communities) (Gordon & White, 2014; Timmons, 2009); and

- Personal barriers (e.g., health concerns, pregnancy, requiring childcare, lacking confidence or motivation, etc.) (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2013; Statistics Canada, 2012).

Furthermore, Mendelson (2006) argues that the K-12 school system plays a significant role in the gap in post-secondary education attainment, and that the key to encouraging Indigenous students to access post-secondary education is to focus on promoting the completion of high school. For example, Indigenous peoples who had not completed high school were more likely to report that they felt unprepared or felt that they lacked the confidence to pursue further

> *It is clear from the literature that post-secondary institutions must offer more Indigenous curriculum and/or courses at their institutions, and make courses more open to Indigenous methods of learning, teaching, and researching.*

schooling than those who had completed high school (Statistics Canada, 2012). Additionally, Indigenous peoples who did not finish their high school education were more likely to cite time constraints, the available courses not matching their personal needs, and financial considerations as barriers to furthering their education (Statistics Canada, 2012).

It has also been suggested that high schools often have lower expectations for Indigenous students (Restoule et al., 2013). Whitley (2014) discusses how high schools may encourage Indigenous students to take lower level courses and that many high schools only teach Eurocentric-based curriculum. He attributes the lower levels of high school completion rates among Indigenous students to these factors.

Recommendations

Despite the barriers faced by Indigenous learners in accessing and persisting in post-secondary education, institutional professionals and academics have been working to improve the delivery of services and programming for Indigenous learners (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2013). As well, many institutions are engaging in dialogue with Indigenous communities and/or students to understand what programming and services are relevant to and effective in improving the students' educational experiences.

It is clear from the literature that post-secondary institutions must offer more Indigenous curriculum and/or courses at their institutions, and make courses more open to Indigenous methods of learning, teaching, and researching (Oloo, 2007; Preston, 2008; Price & Burtch, 2010; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008). Post-secondary institutions that have implemented these practices have seen a rise in Indigenous student success rates (Oloo, 2007; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008). As well, the literature suggests that by offering Indigenous language courses, and training faculty and staff to understand Indigenous students' history and the barriers they face, Indigenous students' post-secondary experiences can be improved (Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada, 2009; BC Ministry of Advanced Education, 2012 Timmons, 2009). Furthermore, offering activities and services in post-secondary institutions that allow Indigenous students to remain connected to their identity and to develop a sense of community can positively impact their ability to navigate through their post-secondary experience (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2013).

Recommendations were also made by researchers to increase the partnerships and enhance the dialogue between institutions' stakeholders and Indigenous students and/or community members (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008; King, 2008; Timmons, 2009). This partnership process would help ensure that curriculum is culturally relevant and applicable to Indigenous students' needs.

Another common recommendation has been to improve the relationships with Indigenous-controlled post-secondary institutions within Canada; for example, partnership development between Indigenous controlled post-secondary institutions and public post-secondary institutions would help to ensure that Indigenous students' transitions between these institutions are seamless (Aboriginal Institutes Consortium, 2005).

Purpose, Scope, Objectives, and Limitations of the Study

Overall, it is clear from literature and data that Indigenous students' educational pathways are improving. However, in Canada, there remains a significant educational gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners in terms of accessing and completing post-secondary education. This educational gap has been identified as a priority of the federal and provincial governments within Canada.

Given the current trends in Indigenous students' post-secondary school completion rates, as well as the importance of post-secondary education for Indigenous peoples to BC's and Canada's success, this report aims to expand upon the existing knowledge of Indigenous student access, mobility, and persistence in BC and within the BC Transfer System. Specifically, this report will result in a comprehensive analysis of Indigenous students' educational pathways and a deeper understanding of the systemic barriers they face within public post-secondary institutions in the province. This information will provide institutions with a summary of practices used to better support Indigenous learners and, it is hoped, will generate discussion of how public post-secondary institutions in BC are currently addressing these issues.

Themes identified during interviews with representatives of post-secondary schools are described. In particular, the report focuses on public post-secondary institutions in BC, as well as other members of the BC Transfer System. Universities, colleges, and technical institutions were included.

In this report, access, persistence, and mobility describe the varied pathways that Indigenous students take when transitioning to post-secondary education and persisting throughout their studies – for example, transitioning to post-secondary from K-12 education, starting in one program, taking a break from one's studies, returning to a different program or institution and, eventually completing a degree and/or diploma. Specifically, we defined access as, "the ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure—or at least strive to ensure—that students have equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education" (Great Schools Partnership, 2014). We defined persistence as "the act of continuing towards an educational goal (e.g., earning a bachelor's degree)" either at the same institution or at another institution ("Post-secondary Retention and Persistence," n.d.). The term mobility in our research refers to the understanding of the flow of students from one post-secondary institution to another (British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer, n.d.).

In this report, access, persistence, and mobility describe the varied pathways that Indigenous students take when transitioning to post-secondary education and persisting throughout their studies.

Kliluk, the spotted lake in Osoyoos, BC.

The objectives of this study include:

- To gain a systematic understanding of the policies and practices across BC and other BCCAT member institutions in terms of Indigenous student post-secondary access, persistence, and mobility;

- To identify gaps in information needed to further understand the issues of Indigenous student post-secondary access, persistence, and mobility; and

- To share successful practices, policies, services, and initiatives across the institutions included in the study.

Although, this report will provide a detailed description and in-depth analysis of how stakeholders are working towards closing the educational gap, there are key perspectives that are missing from this report. For example, the perspectives of Indigenous communities, Indigenous students, and academic experts in Indigenous post-secondary educational pathways will not be included due to the time and financial constraints of the study.

As well, this report only reviewed public post-secondary institutions within the BC Transfer System. Thus, a number of private post-secondary institutions and most Indigenous controlled post-secondary institutions[1] in BC were not included in this study.

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[1] Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) was the only Indigenous-controlled institution that was included within this study because the institution is also regarded as a public post-secondary institution.

Methodology

This study involves two main components:

- A review of the published literature, to contextualize this report and to present a broader spectrum of perspectives on the issues; and
- Interviews with key stakeholders –post-secondary institutional representatives involved in admissions and/or student services (e.g., registrars, admissions directors, deans) and Indigenous programming/services/education (e.g., directors, advisors, coordinators, recruiters).

The interview questions were created to:

- Learn more about the applications and admissions processes in place for Indigenous students;
- Identify themes in Indigenous students' trajectories during post-secondary education;
- Learn more about programming, services, outreach programs, and bridging programs for Indigenous students;
- Note institutional strategies, policies and procedures related to Indigenous students; and
- Determine the existing strategies for Indigenous status identification and data collection, as well as any gaps in data collection practices.

Key stakeholders from each public post-secondary institution were identified, and this list was reviewed to ensure that the most appropriate initial contacts would be reached. Key stakeholders were contacted via email. The email invitation described the project and requested 30 minutes of the individuals' time to participate in an interview. Individuals were asked to provide us with alternate contacts if they felt there was a more appropriate contact at their institution. Additional key stakeholders were added to the list as they were identified by our initial contacts. Reminder emails were occasionally sent out to contacts who had not yet replied. Please see Appendix B for the list of post-secondary institutions involved in this project.

Telephone interviews were conducted from November 2015 through May 2016 by one of two Student Research Assistants or the Research Analyst. With permission from the participants, each interview was digitally recorded for accuracy in reporting.

The interview questions were reviewed by the research team members to ensure that culturally appropriate language was used. The Research Assistants and Research Analyst were provided with a script detailing the description of the study and the interview questions to ensure consistency. Please see Appendix C for the list of interview questions.

After the interviews were conducted, the recordings were transcribed and the transcriptions were analyzed for key points, which were aggregated into emerging themes.

Results and Findings

Response

Ultimately, all of the post-secondary institutions contacted were interviewed. The response rates are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Response Rates

Institutional Response Rate:	
Institutions Invited	28
Representative(s) from Institution Interviewed	28
	=100%
Admissions and Student Services Representatives Response Rate:	
Total Invited	38
Total Interviewees Scheduled	26
	=68%
Programs and Services in Support of Indigenous Students Representatives Response Rate:	
Total Invited	42
Total Interviewees Scheduled	22
	=52%

Note: Two representatives were involved with both admissions and programs and services in support of Indigenous students, and were counted under both the "Admissions and Student Services Representatives" and "Programs and Services in Support of Indigenous Students" columns.

Table 2 illustrates the department areas of interviewees by the institution. While most participants were interviewed alone, there were some institutions that participated in a group interview with more than one individual present. Most often, group interviews involved a collaboration between representatives from both admissions and student services and programs and services in support of Indigenous students.

Table 2: Representatives from institutions

	Admissions and/or Student Services Representative	Programs and Services in Support of Indigenous Students Representative	Group Interview
Athabasca University	✓		
British Columbia Institute of Technology	✓		
Camosun College	✓	✓	
Capilano University	✓		
College of New Caledonia	✓		
College of the Rockies	✓		
Douglas College	✓	✓	♦
Emily Carr University of Art and Design		✓	
Justice Institute of British Columbia	✓	✓	♦
Kwantlen Polytechnic University	✓		
Langara College	✓		
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology	✓		
North Island College		✓	
Northern Lights College		✓	
Northwest Community College	✓		
Okanagan College	✓	✓	
Royal Roads University	✓	✓	♦
Selkirk College	✓	✓	
Simon Fraser University	✓	✓	
Thompson Rivers University	✓	✓	
University of British Columbia Vancouver		✓	✱
University of British Columbia Okanagan	✓	✓	
University of the Fraser Valley		✓	
University of Northern British Columbia		✓	
University of Victoria	✓	✓	♦
Vancouver Community College		✓	
Vancouver Island University		✓	
Yukon College	✓	✓	♦

Notes: *Group interviews involving participants from both admissions and/or student services and programs and services in support of Indigenous students are indicated with "♦" and those with multiple participants from only programs and services in support of Indigenous students are indicated with "✱". Two representatives were involved with both admissions and programs and services in support of Indigenous students and were counted under both the "Admissions and Student Services Representatives" and "Programs and Services in Support of Indigenous Students" columns.*

Results

Emerging themes were organized into the general topic areas of access, persistence, and mobility; however, we acknowledge that many themes cut across more than one of these topic areas. For example, while most policies described by participants impacted access for Indigenous students, some policies also targeted persistence and mobility. Further, policies that increase access for Indigenous students (e.g., reserved seats, priority registration) may also impact persistence and mobility.

Some institutions had specific admissions policies in place for Indigenous learners, others had practices that had yet to be made into policy, and others had none.

ACCESS

Policies

Participants described several approaches to Indigenous admissions policies. Some institutions had specific policies in place, others had practices that had yet to be made into policy, and others had none. Of the institutions that did have Indigenous admissions policies, there was a variety of types of policies. Some examples of the identified policies related to the admission of Indigenous students are as follows:

- Setting aside a number of reserved seats in certain programs for Indigenous students;
- Offering Indigenous students priority registration;
- Having dedicated Indigenous recruitment staff;
- Publishing information on their website regarding bursaries, scholarships, and awards available for Indigenous students;
- Offering specific programming and services for Indigenous students;
- Having an Indigenous advising body involved with any decisions that impact Indigenous education;
- Allowing Indigenous students' applications to be reviewed on an individual basis by a specific committee, in terms of grades and/or cultural knowledge and life experience as potential substitutes to admission requirements;
- Considering Indigenous applicants who meet minimum admissions requirements, but not competitive averages; and
- Offering to help applicants create an individualized curriculum plan if they do not meet the requirements for their program.

Admissions, Application, and Registration Processes

At the majority of post-secondary institutions across BC, the admissions process for Indigenous students is managed by the Registrar's office. While there was a general absence of involvement by those responsible for Indigenous support programs and services, some institutions noted that these programs and services did provide guidance and support during the admissions process. In all cases, however, the Registrar's office made the final admission decision.

Some institutions indicated that they would admit all Indigenous applicants who met the minimum admissions requirements. Most of these institutions had open admission programs, which operated on a first come, first served basis. Indigenous applicants who did not meet admissions requirements for their desired program were automatically admitted to Adult Basic Education (ABE)/ upgrading programs. Some interviewees mentioned that they connected inadmissible Indigenous students with advisors to come up with a plan of support and to discuss other options.

Some institutions offer Indigenous students priority registration, which allows for class registration before other groups of students. Reserved seats in particular programs or classes that were popular among Indigenous learners were also noted by some institutions. Moreover, a few interviewees expressed interest in creating an Indigenous student cohort, allowing Indigenous students to progress through their post-secondary experience together.

Identification

At every public post-secondary institution, students are given the opportunity to voluntarily self-identify as Indigenous on their application form. Many institutions rely solely on self-identification when connecting students to available programs and services intended for Indigenous students, such as scholarships and bursaries. The majority of interviewees mentioned that their institution asks students who self-identify as Indigenous to specify whether they are First Nations, Inuk (Inuit), and/or Métis. A few institutions also noted that self-declared Indigenous learners were asked to indicate whether they are status or non-status, which band or community they are from, and/or who is sponsoring them. At some institutions, students can choose to self-identify after being accepted into the institution, and/or choose to withdraw their information about their identity at any time during their studies. In some institutions, students are required to contact the registrar or a student services professional to change their self-identification, where at other institutions students could access their student information online and change their Indigenous identification themselves.

In 2002/03, the Ministry of Advanced Education began reporting on Indigenous student headcounts for public post-secondary institutions (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, 2008). The Ministry use data collected from both post-secondary institutions as well as from K-12 data through a link on personal education numbers (PENs[2]). Most participants in our study indicated that student headcounts of Indigenous learners reported from their institutional records tend to be lower than the counts reported by the Ministry. This discrepancy occurs because many Indigenous students do not identify themselves in post-secondary data collection systems (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, 2008). Thus, Indigenous headcounts using institutional administrative records are likely an under-representation of Indigenous learners in the BC post-secondary system.

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[2] The PEN is a nine-digit number assigned to each student as they enter the British Columbia education system. This identification number follows the student through their K-12 and public post-secondary education.

Some interviewees expressed their concern about how accurately self-identification reflected the number of Indigenous students actually enrolled at their institutions.

Frequently, interviewees were unsure about whether changes in identification were recorded and how often changes in identification occurred. Among those who were quite knowledgeable about the process involved in Indigenous self-identification, most stated that the history of changes in Indigenous status is not recorded at their institution and that they felt students changed their status minimally. Some mentioned that they usually only see students change their status to declare or change what Indigenous group they self-identify with, as opposed to removing their identification.

Challenges with Identification

Some interviewees discussed the challenges they had encountered in relying on a self-identification process. These participants often expressed their concern about how accurately self-identification reflected the number of Indigenous students actually enrolled at their institutions. Specifically, because there are Indigenous learners who choose not to identify, some felt the counts of Indigenous students reported at their institution were likely too low. Some participants found it difficult to understand why Indigenous students might not self-identify, while others suggested that a distrust of educational institutions, and the purposes for which this personal information might be used, were potential reasons. Some respondents suggested that more Indigenous students might self-identify if post-secondary institutions were to state exactly how this information would be used, and if the benefits of self-identification during the applications process were thoroughly explained to them. Lastly, some interviewees indicated that they had concerns about the accuracy of the numbers of Indigenous learners reported in the CDW data, which often provides counts that are higher than the number of self-declared Indigenous students at an institution.

Pathway Programs and Services

Pathway programs and services provide potential applicants with an introduction to the post-secondary institution or an opportunity to gain the necessary qualifications to enter their program of choice (i.e., university/ college preparation programs).

Many interviewees noted that there is a staff member, elder or Indigenous student at their institution who supports Indigenous student recruitment by providing detailed information about the post-secondary institution's campus, application process, funding, admissions requirements, Indigenous student services, etc. Additionally, institutions often offer campus tours dedicated for Indigenous students. Respondents referred to dual-credit programming, which allows students to take post-secondary classes for credit both at their secondary school and at the post-secondary institution, although most noted that this programming was not specific to Indigenous students. Similarly, immersion-type programming, which allows secondary school students to stay at the institution for a few days and fully experience university/ college life (i.e., stay in residence, campus tours, attend classes, etc.), mentorship programs, and conferences specific to high school students were described. While these programs were not focussed on Indigenous students, they provided opportunities for Indigenous students to connect with Indigenous post-secondary students to learn about the transition to post-secondary school, develop relationships, and receive advice.

Numerous institutions offer ABE, upgrading or university/ college preparatory programming that allow students to take the courses they need to meet admission requirements and then enter into their desired program. For instance, across Canada, sixty-one universities offer transitional programs that help Indigenous students transition to the post-secondary environment (Universities Canada, 2013). In some cases, these pathway programs are focussed on Indigenous students, while at others any student can participate. As well, there are many institutions offering ABE, upgrading or university/ college preparatory programming directly in Indigenous communities.

A few of the larger universities offer summer camp and other programming for Indigenous youth, including both high school- and elementary school-aged participants. The summer camp programs, which include a variety of cultural activities; math and science activities; information sessions on post-secondary pre-requisites, course planning, and admissions; and career information sessions are designed to allow Indigenous youth and communities to become introduced to the university and campus life.

Funding/ Fees

Many interviewees mentioned that their institution received Indigenous Emergency Financial Assistance funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education, and some noted that they offered scholarships, bursaries, and/ or awards specifically for Indigenous students. In addition, many participants commented that staff, usually in programs and services in support of Indigenous students, helped direct Indigenous learners to potential sources of funding.

A lack of funding was identified as a barrier for Indigenous students in terms of accessing and continuing post-secondary education by some interviewees. Several interviewees noted that in some situations the Indigenous student's band and/or sponsorship would not cover the costs of upgrading courses or an ABE program, which could put the student at a disadvantage. A few institutions waive fees (e.g., application fees, tuition fees) for Indigenous students who cannot afford to pay them or who were previously a child in care.

Partnerships

Many institutions have partnered with Indigenous communities to offer courses, programs, and/or practicums directly in the community. Across Canada, 71% of Canadian universities have partnerships established with Indigenous communities (Universities Canada, 2013). The courses, programs, and/or practicums offered are most times based on the communities' needs and requests. Often ABE or university/college preparatory programming is the type of programming delivered in the communities. Another form of partnership mentioned involved Indigenous communities bringing their cultural and traditional knowledge into the classrooms (i.e., First Nations carving, language programs, Elders teaching traditional medical knowledge, etc.). Some institutions mentioned partnering with smaller rural institutions and/or Indigenous institutions (i.e., Native Education College and Nicola Valley Institute of Technology) to create and share curriculum.

Many institutions have partnered with Indigenous communities to offer courses, programs, and/or practicums directly in the community. Across Canada, 71% of Canadian universities have partnerships established with Indigenous communities (Universities Canada, 2013).

As well, some post-secondary institutions have partnered with others to facilitate the seamless transfer of Indigenous students (e.g., transfer agreements). For example, Langara College has an Indigenous transfer partnership with the University of British Columbia's Vancouver campus, which gives Indigenous students who complete the university's program requirements at Langara guaranteed admission into certain degree programs at the University of British Columbia's Vancouver campus.

However, partnerships proved to be a challenge for some of the smaller institutions located in rural/ remote communities. For instance, many of the rural Indigenous communities lack access to technology, which makes communicating with, establishing partnerships with, and running programs within the communities a challenge.

Prior Learning Assessments

Several interviewees stated that their institution performed prior learning assessments, which allowed "students to earn credit toward a course or program offered by a post-secondary institution if they can demonstrate, through a systematic and valid assessment process, that the learning is equivalent to that which normally would be acquired through conventional study at the post-secondary level" (BC Ministry of Advanced Education, n.d.). Through prior learning assessments, courses that are taken in the Indigenous community, traditional forms of learning, and work in the community could be recognized and credited.

Credit for Courses Taken in Indigenous Communities

In terms of credit offered for courses taken in the Indigenous community, most interviewees discussed how programs and courses their institution offered within Indigenous communities led to credits being granted, such as upgrading (i.e., secondary school) credits, certificates, diplomas, or post-secondary transfer credits. Knowledge and skills developed through non-transferable coursework can be evaluated through prior learning assessments. When asked if there were any courses students took within the Indigenous community that their institution did not accept or give academic credit for, many interviewees stated that they were not aware of any. Some participants who expressed that there were courses taken in the Indigenous community which would not be awarded transfer credit cited lack of academic rigor (e.g., the teacher not qualified enough, assignments and exams do not meet university level) as the primary reason credit would not be granted.

Common Program Choices

Quite a few interviewees stated that certain programs were more popular among Indigenous learners. These programs included trades, ABE programming, health, early childhood education, family/community studies, social work, child and youth care, and Indigenous-focused programs.

Most interviewees discussed how programs and courses their institution offered within Indigenous communities led to credits being granted, such as upgrading (i.e., secondary school) credits, certificates, diplomas, or post-secondary transfer credits.

Overall, all post-secondary institutions had a variety of designated staff and services to provide programming for Indigenous learners. Examples of Indigenous student services staff included Elders-in-Residence, coordinators, advisors, counselors, mentors, tutors, transition planners, and recruiters.

The Challenge of Rural/ Remote Communities and Access

Another challenge recognized by some interviewees was the rural/ remote residency of a good proportion of Indigenous students. This geographical factor sometimes makes contacting students difficult (e.g., lack of internet/ email services) and forces Indigenous students to make long commutes to and from their community and their institution. In general, rural/ remote institutions seemed to service communities where there were more challenges in terms of access.

PERSISTENCE

Orientation

Generally, post-secondary institutions did not offer orientation sessions specifically for Indigenous students. Often interviewees noted that this program absence was attributable to a lack of demand or small student population, and that the general orientation incorporated components specifically for Indigenous students (e.g., an introduction to Indigenous student services, the gathering place, Indigenous student support staff). Some larger post-secondary institutions indicated that they did offer an orientation specifically geared towards Indigenous students. Furthermore, some institutions that did not offer a full Indigenous student orientation did host a feast or lunch for new and returning students within their gathering space, which occurred during the first week of classes as an informal orientation.

Support Staff, Services, and Events

Overall, post-secondary institutions had a variety of designated staff and services to provide programming for Indigenous learners. Examples of Indigenous student services staff included Elders-in-Residence, coordinators, advisors, counselors, mentors, tutors, transition planners, and recruiters. Elders-in-Residence provide cultural knowledge and

support through a variety of practices, including healing circles, talking circles, brush-offs, smudging ceremonies, etc. Other institutions mentioned having an Indigenous Students' Association and informal mentorship programs where Indigenous students connected with each other and created community or student events.

A few interviewees mentioned that their institution used Strengthening Connections for recruitment of Indigenous students, which is an inter-institutional "group of Indigenous recruiters and advisors from several BC post-secondary institutions with the mandate to provide Indigenous peoples in BC with the information they need to successfully pursue a post-secondary education" (Strengthening Connections, 2011).

In terms of services, the majority of interviewees mentioned that their post-secondary institution had an Indigenous student gathering place, where programming and services were based. Some institutions lacked specific academic programs for Indigenous students, while others offered tutoring/ academic services targeted at Indigenous students in their gathering place. Some of the participants touched on the distinct programming they offered Indigenous students at their Indigenous gathering places. Programming included cooking lunch every day, having a community kitchen where traditional foods are cooked, having the center open 24 hours per day, allowing students to host cultural events in the gathering place (e.g., naming ceremonies, pipe ceremonies), and hosting other fun and cultural activities for the students to participate in (e.g., bonfires, speaker series, pow-wows).

In general, bigger institutions and institutions with larger Indigenous student populations tended to offer more dedicated staff, services, and events, as compared to smaller and remote/ rural institutions. Some participants discussed how a lack of resources, such as funding and staffing, was a barrier to being able to offer more services and programs to Indigenous students in support of retention.

Curriculum, Strategic Planning, Indigenization, and Knowledge Sharing

Some interviewees noted that in order to promote the success of their Indigenous learners, their institution was working on Indigenizing the curriculum and/ or incorporating Indigenous learners into their strategic plan or success strategies. Additionally, some institutions have an Indigenous advising body (e.g., First Nations Council, Indigenous Advisory Council, Elders-in-Residence), which makes recommendations in terms of curriculum, programming, and current issues, with the goals of making strides in Indigenous education and ensuring Indigenous communities' needs are met. For example, one interviewee mentioned how all curriculum was first reviewed by their First Nation Initiatives Committee before being taught within classrooms. This process is implemented to ensure that Indigenous perspectives are included within all aspects of the curriculum and that the content is not solely Eurocentric. Certain interviewees commented that their institution works with faculty and staff to educate them on how they can best support and accommodate Indigenous learners. Such strategies include workshops, having Elders help with curriculum and classroom support, and offering other professional development opportunities.

Quite a few institutions offer courses or programs that focus on Indigenous topics and/or give students the option of completing their practicums, internships, or research apprenticeship within Indigenous communities or organizations. Some examples of Indigenous-focused programs are as follows: Indigenous Studies, Aboriginal Tourism Certificate, Certificate in First Nation Taxation, Business Administration Certificate for Aboriginal learners, Native Indian Teacher Education Program, Masters of Indigenous Community Planning, Indigenous Family Support Certificate, Indigenous Leadership Program, Aboriginal Trades Training Program, Indigenous Health Care Assistant Program, and Masters of Business Administration in Aboriginal Business and Leadership. Examples of Indigenous-specific courses include: Canadian Native Peoples, Native Archeology, Oral Traditions, Topics in Indigenous Health: A Community-Based Experience, and a variety of traditional language courses that are often offered in partnership with Indigenous communities.

The Challenge of Rural/ Remote Communities and Persistence

Some interviewees representative of rural/ remotely located institutions discussed their concerns that Indigenous students residing in rural/remote communities often have a more difficult time in transitioning to the post-secondary environment, possibly due to strong ties to their community, long commutes, and family obligations. A few interviewees noted this geographic barrier resulted in the Indigenous students feeling alienated from the student community and feeling uncomfortable within the institution's environment. In addition, some interviewees said that Indigenous students might not have the resources to make the long commute, and would go home and not return to their post-secondary studies. Overall, institutions that were located in rural/ remote areas seemed to have more issues with persistence.

Analysis of Persistence

Most often, interviewees felt that the Indigenous programs and services at their institution were increasing the retention of Indigenous students. However, frequently institutions lacked formal evaluation processes for these programs and services, and most of their evidence was anecdotal. Quite a few interviewees noted that their institution had poor data on retention, while some were specifically tracking the retention of their Indigenous student population. Generally, there is inconsistency across the post-secondary institutions in BC in regards to the quality, collection, and use of Indigenous student retention data. Some interviewees expressed that a barrier to being able to better examine the persistence and retention of Indigenous students was the lack of resources (e.g., staffing, funding).

Gaps in Persistence Data

When questioned about existing gaps in data and which data they wish they had in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Indigenous student persistence, interviewees had a variety of answers and ideas. Recurring topics that participants cited they would like more data on included: barriers Indigenous students experience to entering an staying in school, and why they leave post-secondary studies.

Several of the smaller institutions noted they had established partnerships with larger universities by creating trasfer agreements. These partnerships give Indigenous students the opportunity to complete their first few years at the smaller institution and then transfer if they meet the minimum admission reuqirements of the university.

MOBILITY

Transfer Agreements

Several of the smaller institutions noted they had established partnerships with larger universities by creating transfer agreements. These partnerships give Indigenous students the opportunity to complete their first few years at the smaller institution and then transfer if they meet the minimum admission requirements of the university. Examples of transfer agreements can be seen between Camosun College and the University of Victoria, and Langara College and the University of British Columbia's Vancouver campus. A couple of the interviewees also mentioned their transfer agreements with an Indigenous controlled post-secondary institution and/or their local Indigenous community. With specific courses and/or practicums, Indigenous students are given the opportunity to complete portions of their course work within an Indigenous community or Indigenous controlled institution. Respondents reported that, overall, these transfer agreements seemed to help increase Indigenous student retention rates.

Trends in Mobility/Patterns of Attendance

A few institutions mentioned that they noticed an increase in the proportion of Indigenous high school students making a direct transition to post-secondary institutions. As well, some interviewees indicated that they often saw Indigenous students transferring from a smaller institution to a larger institution in the middle of their degree.

Some interviewees said that often Indigenous students at their institutes elected to take time off from or restarted programs and/ or they had taken an extra semester/ year to finish their program. Specifically, a few interviewees noted that some Indigenous learners took time off due to community/ cultural events and during certain seasons (e.g., hunting, fishing, gathering, and trapping). There is a mismatch between the timing of post-secondary institutions' semesters and seasons important to Indigenous communities, resulting in some Indigenous learners having to take time off or start school in the second semester.

Institutions that were located in urban areas seemed to attract more Indigenous students that had previously lived within large cities; therefore, making their transition to post-secondary education smoother. On the other hand, institutions that were rural /remotely located often expressed concern that Indigenous students frequently had a hard time making the transition into the post-secondary environment, which may be due to the stronger ties the students have to their Indigenous community and family, as well as the long distances they have to travel to attend the institution. This connection often results in the Indigenous students missing class as they have to travel home for cultural activities, family/community responsibilities, and seasonal activities.

Interviewees were asked whether they felt the trends they observed were specific to their region, or if these trends were more broadly applicable. Most interview respondents felt that these trends could be seen across BC or even wider, as opposed to being specific to their institution, with some exceptions. Interviewees who mentioned the pattern of Indigenous students taking time away from their studies to participate in community/ cultural events and during certain seasons (e.g., hunting, fishing, gathering, and trapping) felt that it was specific to Northern and more rural/ remote regions in BC.

A few institutions mentioned that they noticed an increase in the proportion of Indigenous high school students making a direct transition to post-secondary institutions.

Keeping in Contact with Transitioned Students

Most times, interviewees commented that their post-secondary institution did not keep in contact with students who transition to other post-secondary institutions, or did so informally. The majority of respondents reported that they informally kept in touch with Indigenous students who transitioned, saying that their institution lacked a formal process for doing so (i.e., exit interviews, exit surveys, recording conversations with students in a system, etc.). However, a number of respondents mentioned that their institution made an effort to follow up with alumni.

Analysis of Mobility

Quite a few interviewees mentioned that they have poor data related to mobility at their institution, while some noted that they are tracking Indigenous student mobility. There appeared to be a lack of knowledge at some institutions in terms of how to access and use Student Transitions Project (STP)[3] data. While a few interviewees mentioned they frequently rely on STP data to analyze Indigenous student mobility, other interviewees commented that they were unsure if they had access to this information. Additionally, institutions that are positioned near the Alberta border commented that it was difficult to analyze mobility data, as many of their Indigenous students transferred to institutions within Alberta; the STP does not capture students transitioning to institutions outside of BC. Certain participants identified a lack of resources (e.g., staffing, funding) as an issue and a barrier to being able to better track the mobility of their Indigenous students. In general, the quality, collection, and usage of data on the mobility of Indigenous students varied across BC post-secondary institutions.

Gaps in Mobility Data

Some interviewees stated that, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the mobility of their Indigenous students, they would like to have more data on which high schools Indigenous students were transitioning from. Additionally, they wished they had more information on where Indigenous students went and what they did (e.g., whether they went on to graduate studies, what kinds of jobs they were doing, where they were living) when they transitioned or left.

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[3] The Student Transitions Project provides annual reporting and targeted research on student transitions from K-12 to post-secondary education. See https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/data-research/student-transitions-project for more information.

Unique Programs, Services, Practices, and Policies

This section details interesting practices, policies, services, and programs impacting access and persistence, which occurred in only a few institutions, and were deemed worthy of note as sources of ideas and insight for other institutions.

ACCESS

Some participants discussed unique opportunities that they offered to Indigenous communities. For example, one participant mentioned how a math professor from their institution would take a math workshop into Indigenous communities in order to teach the community members math from an Indigenous perspective.

In addition to unique opportunities offered to Indigenous communities, one participant mentioned offering a community outreach program that allows community members of all ages to learn about and be given the opportunity to create Indigenous art.

A few participants discussed specific practices related to the review of Indigenous students' applications and previous life experience. One participant discussed their institutional use of an Indigenous portfolio, which allowed students to articulate their traditional and lived experiences and to have this experience transferred over as credit. Another interviewee mentioned an Indigenous policy that allowed the students' previous life experiences, cultural knowledge, and educational background to be taken into consideration as prerequisites for acceptance into their institution.

One interviewee discussed how their institution had particularly low levels of enrolment at one of their campuses. Upon investigation, it was found that many Indigenous students residing in the surrounding rural areas relied on subsistence living, so hunting season was extremely important to them and their families. Therefore, the institute implemented a semester start date that coincided with the end of hunting season for local communities, as opposed to the traditional semester start times of post-secondary institutions. The semester runs later than those typically of other post-secondary institutions (i.e., is still the same in length and not compressed). However, the interviewee noted that this schedule change had not negatively impacted those students wanting to transfer as the year still ends in time for students to attend other institutions with usual fall start dates.

Some participants mentioned unique policies in place at their institution, which would increase access for Indigenous learners. For example, two interviewees noted that their institutions offered domestic tuition rates to American Indigenous students. Specifically, one institution offered domestic rates to American Indigenous students residing in territories near the Canadian border, while the other did so for all American Indigenous students. Another commented on a policy that allowed band-funded Indigenous students to register at the time of registration and the band to pay at a later date.

Numerous distinct services in support of persistence were discussed. For instance,
a few interviewees mentioned having unique components to their Elders-in-Residents program,
such as having an Elder take nursing students to work in Indigenous communities,
and bringing in a different Elder for one week each month to live at the institution
and provide a wide variety of cultural knowledge and teachings.

PERSISTENCE

Numerous distinct services in support of persistence were discussed. For instance, a few interviewees mentioned having unique components to their Elders in Residence program, such as having an Elder take nursing students to work in Indigenous communities, and bringing in a different Elder for one week each month to live at the institution and provide a wide variety of cultural knowledge and teachings.

Moreover, a small number of interviewees mentioned programs they offered that teach cultural knowledge to students. One participant noted that they offered opportunities for Indigenous carving to students.

A select number of interviewees also discussed achievement programs they offered to Indigenous students. Specifically, a participant mentioned their Student Success Plans, which allowed students to identify challenges, and then had a discussion with members of their department, Indigenous advisors, and/or management, who then discussed a plan of how to better support the student. In addition, one institution mentioned a program they offered to first-year students that enabled them to work with Indigenous programs and services to create a co-achievement plan. Students were awarded a small bursary if they successfully fulfilled their achievement plan and completed the program.

A number of unique practices were identified by interviewees. For example, one of the participants noted how their institution was moving towards learning outcomes and evaluation standards that focussed on individual definitions of success, and away from a western paradigm of academic success. This practice could be particularly useful in assessing the success of Indigenous learners.

As well, one participant discussed how Indigenous students were given the option to wear traditional regalia at their commencement ceremony, and how the ceremony included traditional Indigenous drumming and recognition of the location of the institution on the Indigenous territory.

Some distinct practices designed to support Indigenous students in their learning and curriculum were noted. One interviewee described how they held monthly meetings with various departments to further discuss how they could support Indigenous students, which helped create an open dialogue and ensure there were no gaps in information.

Another interviewee mentioned how at their institution they had required all students to take a First Nations Core Competency course before they could graduate from their program. All staff members were also required to take the course, and the institution is currently developing more advanced Core Competency classes for staff members who have more interaction with Indigenous students. This course helps faculty, staff, and students become more knowledgeable about their local First Nations' history and culture, as well as creates an atmosphere that further supports their Indigenous students by developing a more culturally sensitive and welcoming space.

Overall, the post-secondary institutions which were represented in this research described a broad range of policies, practices, initiatives, and services in place to support and understand the access, mobility and persistence of Indigenous learners. Nevertheless, numerous interviewees expressed that there were still barriers that Indigenous students faced to accessing and persisting throughout their post-secondary studies.

Northern lights over downtown Whitehorse, Yukon Territory

In terms of policies, one institution mentioned a unique policy they had in place that allowed them to require certain staff/ faculty positions to be filled by an individual whose ethnicity was Indigenous. This policy was implemented because the institution considered that Indigenous staff and faculty would help Indigenous students feel further supported when dealing with culturally sensitive issues.

Conclusions

Overall, the post-secondary institutions which were represented in this research described a broad range of policies, practices, initiatives, and services in place to support and understand the access, mobility and persistence of Indigenous learners. While there were similar practices, policies, and services prevalent within most institutions, we also noted unique initiatives and approaches to provide services and programs for Indigenous students throughout their post-secondary experience.

Nevertheless, numerous interviewees expressed that there were still barriers that Indigenous students faced to accessing and persisting throughout their post-secondary studies. In particular, there was a desire for more information and data on Indigenous student mobility, as well as access and persistence.

Implications

To our knowledge, this is the first study to conduct a systematic review of the policies, practices, and services in support of Indigenous learners, within all BC public post-secondary institutions (and other members of the BC Transfer System). Our research has contextualized what is currently being done to support Indigenous learners on their post-secondary pathways. As well, in interacting with and interviewing representatives from these institutions, this research renewed conversations and thinking about Indigenous student educational pathways among admissions and student services representatives.

Through our research, we have positioned stakeholders in BC post-secondary institutions to have a more comprehensive understanding of how post-secondary institutions are working to support access, persistence, and mobility for Indigenous learners, and to be aware of the gaps in our understanding of these issues. As improved pathways to post-secondary education for Indigenous peoples are critical to the success of our province and country as a whole (BC Ministry of Advanced Education, 2012; Mendelson, 2006), knowledge of these issues among representatives of BC post-secondary institutions is key. Now that we have identified the gaps in our understanding of Indigenous student post-secondary access, persistence, and mobility, we can better target future research and efforts towards improvement.

Additionally, we have shared unique and common policies, practices and services in support of Indigenous learners that exist among the participating institutions. These various measures provide institutions with a general understanding of what other institutions are doing to support their Indigenous learners, as well as ideas and insights as to future programming, services, and supports they could develop.

Future Research

Although this study expanded upon our knowledge of Indigenous post-secondary education pathways from the perspectives of representatives from post-secondary institutions, due to financial and time constraints, we were unable to capture the perspectives of students, Indigenous community, and academic experts. These additional perspectives would determine whether Indigenous students feel the programming and services that post-secondary institutions offer are effective, and whether the barriers identified by the stakeholders were accurate reflections of the challenges the students feel they face.

A proposal for the second phase of the study that will include the voice of Indigenous students and the perspectives of academic and community experts is therefore being prepared. It is hoped that this proposed research will allow us to compare the data from phase one of the study and to review if the post-secondary institution representatives' perspectives correspond with the views of Indigenous students and the experts, or if there are notable discrepancies and/or gaps in our understanding. The aim of the second phase of the study shall be to create a deeper understanding of Indigenous educational pathways, and to inform institutional representatives in the development of positive learning environments that support Indigenous learners in culturally appropriate and relevant ways.

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Appendix A:
Student Transitions Project (STP) Data

Figure 1: Percent distribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students graduating secondary school
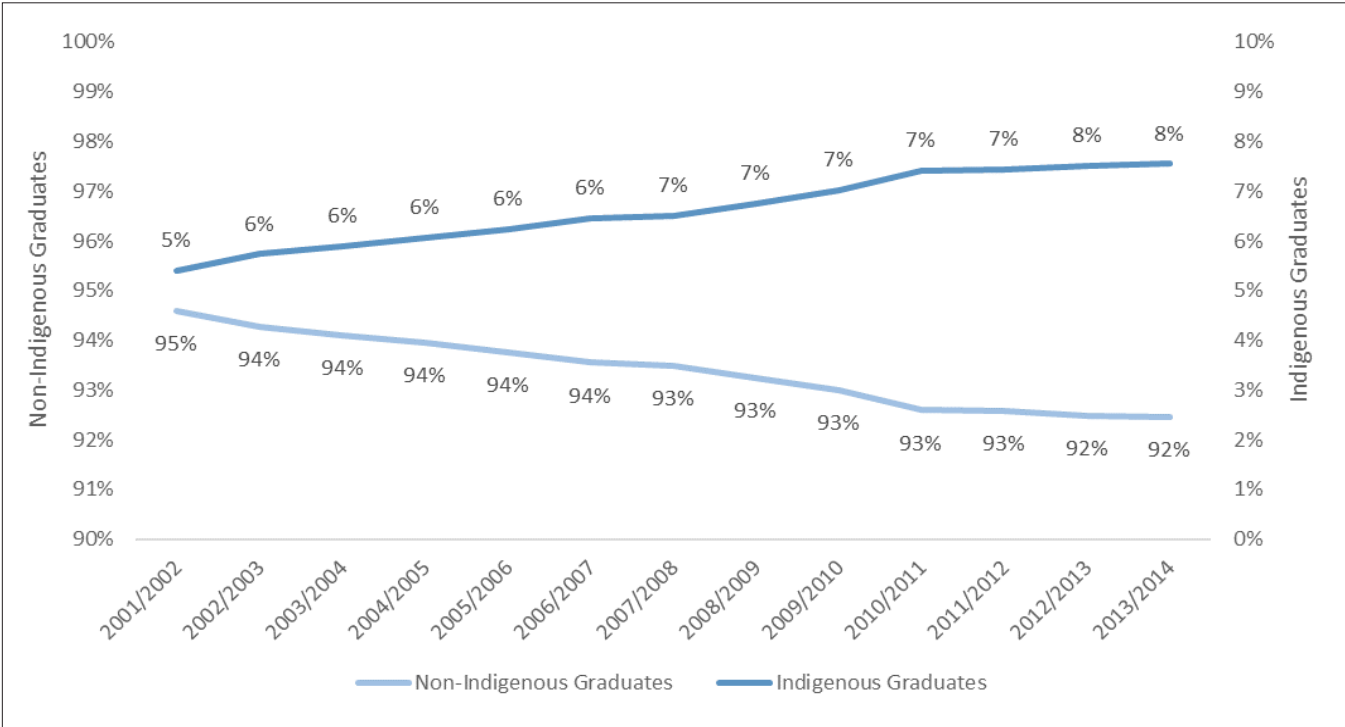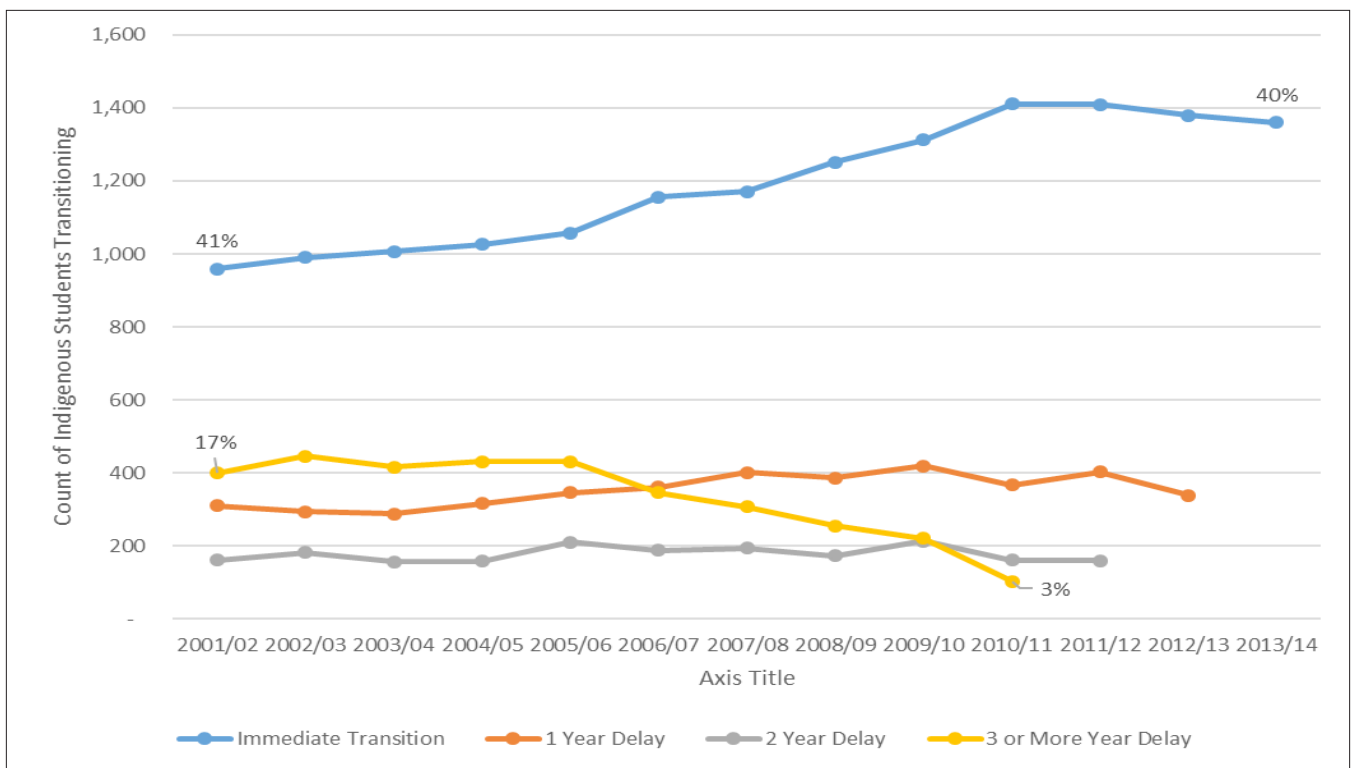

Source: BC Student Transitions Project (2016).

Table 3: BC Indigenous high school graduate transition rates to BC post-secondary institutions by year

High School Grad Year	Immediate Transition		1 Year Delay		2 Year Delay		3 or More Year Delay		No Transition Yet		Grand Total	
2001/02	959	41%	309	13%	160	7%	399	17%	517	22%	2,344	100%
2002/03	990	39%	293	12%	182	7%	445	18%	631	25%	2,541	100%
2003/04	1,007	40%	288	12%	156	6%	416	17%	628	25%	2,495	100%
2004/05	1,026	39%	315	12%	158	6%	430	16%	716	27%	2,645	100%
2005/06	1,057	38%	345	12%	209	7%	431	15%	760	27%	2,802	100%
2006/07	1,156	41%	361	13%	188	7%	345	12%	749	27%	2,799	100%
2007/08	1,171	40%	400	14%	193	7%	306	11%	830	29%	2,900	100%
2008/09	1,251	41%	386	13%	172	6%	254	8%	957	32%	3,020	100%
2009/10	1,312	41%	418	13%	212	7%	220	7%	1,059	33%	3,221	100%
2010/11	1,411	42%	366	11%	160	5%	102	3%	1,335	40%	3,374	100%
2011/12	1,410	41%	402	12%	159	5%	n/a	n/a	1,469	43%	3,440	100%
2012/13	1,379	40%	338	10%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,726	50%	3,443	100%
2013/14	1,360	40%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,011	60%	3,371	100%
Grand Total	15,489	40%	4,221	11%	1,949	5%	3,348	9%	13,388	35%	38,395	100%

Source: BC Student Transitions Project (2016).

Figure 2: Count of BC Indigenous high school graduates transitioning to BC post-secondary institutions by year*

Source: BC Student Transitions Project (2016).

*"%" denotes the proportion of indigenous high school graduates transitioning to post-secondary.

Table 4: BC Indigenous high school graduate transition rates to BC post-secondary institutions by high school region

High School Region	Immediate Transition	1 Year Delay	2 Year Delay	3 or More Year Delay	Cumulative	No Transition Yet	Grand Total
Vancouver/ Langara	48%	12%	4%	6%	70%	30%	100%
Northern BC	45%	11%	5%	9%	70%	30%	100%
Vancouver Island	42%	12%	5%	9%	69%	31%	100%
Capilano	41%	13%	5%	9%	68%	32%	100%
Selkirk	44%	13%	4%	8%	68%	32%	100%
Thompson Rivers	42%	10%	5%	8%	65%	35%	100%
Rockies	35%	11%	7%	10%	62%	38%	100%
Okanagan	36%	10%	5%	10%	62%	38%	100%
Boundary- Fraser Valley	36%	10%	5%	8%	59%	41%	100%
Grand Total	**40%**	**11%**	**5%**	**9%**	**65%**	**35%**	**100%**

Source: BC Student Transitions Project (2016).

Appendix B:
List of Public Institutions in the BC Transfer System

Abbreviation	Full Name	Province/Territory
AU	Athabasca University	AB
BCIT	British Columbia Institute of Technology	BC
CAM	Camosun College	BC
CAPU	Capilano University	BC
CNC	College of New Caledonia	BC
COTR	College of the Rockies	BC
DOUG	Douglas College	BC
ECUAD	Emily Carr University of Art and Design	BC
JIBC	Justice Institute of British Columbia	BC
KPU	Kwantlen Polytechnic University	BC
LANG	Langara College	BC
NVIT	Nicola Valley Institute of Technology	BC
NIC	North Island College	BC
NLC	Northern Lights College	BC
NWCC	Northwest Community College	BC
OKAN	Okanagan College	BC
RRU	Royal Roads University	BC
SEL	Selkirk College	BC
SFU	Simon Fraser University	BC
TRU	Thompson Rivers University	BC
UBCV	University of British Columbia Vancouver	BC
UBCO	University of British Columbia Okanagan	BC
UFV	University of the Fraser Valley	BC
UNBC	University of Northern British Columbia	BC
UVic	University of Victoria	BC
VCC	Vancouver Community College	BC
VIU	Vancouver Island University	BC
YC	Yukon College	YT

Appendix C:
Interview Questions

1. What specific policies, if any, are in place to encourage Indigenous students to apply to your institution?
   a. [If they have a policy] Would you be able to share this information with us via email, or can you please direct us to this on your website?

2. Which office or offices at your institution manage the admissions process for Indigenous students on your campus? For example, is it solely the responsibility of the Registrar's office or is it a shared responsibility of your Indigenous Programs and/or Services and Registrar's Offices?

3. How are Indigenous students identified during the admissions process at your institution? Do they self-identify? If Indigenous students cannot or do not self-identify, is there any other way you identify students as Indigenous? For example, using their Personal Education Numbers (PENs) from the Ministry?
   a. What information on Indigenous identification or self-identification is stored in your student registration system?

4. Are Indigenous students able to change their own status at any time while they are a student? Do they have access to their student record?
   a. [If yes] If a student was to change his/her status (either way) would this override the initial record, or is the history of changes recorded in your registration system?
   b. [If yes] Do you know how often students change their Indigenous status during their time at your institution?
   c. [If they use an alternative approach] Does this information get updated in the student's registration record or is it managed by someone in Excel or a different format?

5. Does your institution admit all students who self-identify as an Indigenous student?
   a. [If yes] Is this applicable to all of your programs?
   b. [If yes] If students do not meet all of your program admission requirements but are admitted to your institution, do you offer a modified program to them? For example, are they limited to a number of courses or credits they can take in their first year?

6. Aside from policies and process related to admission at your institution, what other programs or processes does your institution use to facilitate access for Indigenous students –for example, course selection, financial support, differences for first year versus continuing year students, etc.?

7. Does your institution continually evaluate the success of these access programs and/or processes for Indigenous student <u>persistence</u>? If so, please describe how it is evaluated.

8. Does your institution offer any outreach and/or bridging programs for Indigenous students at early stages of education, such as middle school, high school, college and undergraduate university? If so, please describe these programs.

9. Does your institution offer specific programs to support Indigenous students once they have accepted their offer to attend your institution? For example, is there a pre-university orientation session specifically for Indigenous students? Does your institution have Indigenous student advisors or mentors? Are there specific academic support programs offered to students?

10. [If yes] Have you found that these programs are increasing Indigenous student retention and persistence at your institution? If so, how did you find out?

11. Does your institution have any partnerships with Indigenous communities to deliver educational programming to your students? If so, for what types of activities is credit granted?

12. Does your institution accept and give academic credit for courses that your students take within the Indigenous community? If so, can you identify the programs?

13. Are there any courses students have taken within the Indigenous community that you know of that you do not accept or give academic credit for? Can you provide reasons as to why you do not accept these courses?

14. Are there other initiatives in support of Indigenous student **persistence** taking place at your institution that you'd like to mention?

15. Have you been tracking **mobility** of Indigenous students at your institution? If so, what data do you use, or know exist, to examine patterns of **mobility** for Indigenous students at your institution, or within your region within BC?

16. Have you noticed any trends in post-secondary education **mobility** or patterns of attendance among your Indigenous students? For example, common program choice, time of starting program, taking time off from studies, transferring to other institutions, etc.?
    a. [If yes] Do you think these trends are specific to your institution or to BC?

17. Do you keep in contact with students once they <u>have transitioned from your institution to another institution?</u> Do you keep this information stored in your student record system, or elsewhere?
    a. Does your institution have a process for keeping in-touch with students if they leave your institution <u>for any reason?</u> If so, please describe the process.
    b. [If yes] Do you record this information regularly?

18. Do you feel there are any gaps in the data or information that you are currently collecting or have access to, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Indigenous student **persistence** and/or **mobility** at your institution and within BC?
    a. [If yes] How do you think these gaps could be addressed?
    b. What information or data do you wish you had?