

The Indigenous Work-integrated Learning Resource Hub: A needs-based approach to addressing barriers and opportunities for Indigenous students

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Despite increases in Indigenous enrolment in post-secondary institutions (PSIs) in British Columbia, Canada, there are significant disparities in Indigenous student access, retention, and success in work-integrated learning (WIL) programs. By analyzing Indigenous-specific WIL literature, this article identifies existing barriers to Indigenous WIL as well as unrealized opportunities to expand and transform WIL approaches and practices. Based on these findings, the paper offers 10 recommendations for the development of resources and strategic Indigenous WIL initiatives, recommendations that also served to guide the creation of a publicly-accessible Indigenous WIL Resource Hub (IRH). However, the literature review also revealed limitations to academic publishing and challenges in institutional reporting. Accounting for these scholarly limitations and recognizing the value of on-the-ground and community-held knowledge, the directives guiding the IRH and shared in this article's conclusions are based on the understanding that initiatives to act on opportunities and address barriers must be needs-based and community-specific.

Keywords: Indigenous WIL, Canada, decolonization, higher education, community engagement

As defined by Co-operative Education and Work-integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada (2021), work-integrated learning (WIL) is “a model and process of curricular experiential education which formally and intentionally integrates a student's academic studies within a workplace or practice setting. WIL experiences include an engaged partnership of at least: an academic institution, a host organization and a student” (para 1). Working through an expansive definition of WIL, this paper is broadly concerned with Indigenous student access, retention, and success in a range of WIL programs: co-operative education (co-op), internships, entrepreneurship, apprenticeships, service learning, applied research projects, mandatory professional practicum/clinical placement, field placement, and work experience.

Key to implementing inclusive practices in WIL, Valencia-Forrester et al. (2019) argue that there must be accessible resources aligned to the needs of students and staff navigating existing barriers to WIL opportunities. Motivated to support the development of such resources, this article explores a current field of knowledge concerned with identifying the obstacles and opportunities that (carry the potential to) impact Indigenous learners' participation in WIL programs. The work to increase WIL accessibility and inclusivity also responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, a nationally-initiated framework for truth-telling and strategic action to redress the harms of the Indian Residential School (IRS) system in Canada (TRC, 2015). Positioned to support Indigenous students, communities, and Nations, WIL carries exciting and transformative possibilities. Most obviously, WIL programs enhance a student's labor market readiness by offering training opportunities, work experience, and access to career networks. Beyond these individual benefits, strategic WIL placements in partnership with Indigenous groups also offer opportunities for capacity-building, cultural

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revitalization, and community development. Of the 94 Calls to Action (TRC, 2015), WIL programs are well-positioned to directly respond to five of these calls to:

- Eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians (Section 7);
- Develop culturally appropriate curricula (Section 10[iii]);
- Increase student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect (Section 63[iii]);
- Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects (Section 92[ii]); and
- Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism (Section 92[iii]).

Recognizing a responsibility to engage with these Calls to Action, and motivated to create more accessible and inclusive WIL programs and experiences, this article reviews and synthesizes the state of literature on Indigenous WIL with the intention to outline known barriers to, and opportunities for, Indigenous participation and success in WIL. The literature review was conducted and supported by a team of researchers and WIL practitioners at the University of Victoria's (UVic) Co-operative Education (Co-op) Program and Career Services (UVic Co-op & Career). As the only institution in Canada that offers a formalized Indigenous co-op program at this time, UVic Co-op and Career Services received funding from the British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training, and was tasked to create an Indigenous WIL Resource Hub (IRH) on behalf of the BC WIL Council. Briefly summarized, the IRH Project was designed to reduce barriers to Co-op and WIL opportunities for Indigenous students; broaden access to Co-op and WIL in rural BC; and improve Indigenous students' educational experiences and labour market readiness. The IRH will be housed on the Association for Co-operative Education and Work-integrated Learning (ACE-WIL) BC/Yukon website, where it will be accessible publicly and to all BC post-secondary institution (PSI) members.

This article emerges from the context of a Canadian Institution's efforts to create a collection of resources to support the accessibility and development of Indigenous WIL programming in the province of BC. Although the IRH addresses regional priorities, the literature review conducted as part of this project brings together and derives a number of general conclusions from an international body of knowledge related to Indigenous WIL. In developing resources to support Indigenous WIL locally and provincially, we were left to reflect on the extent to which scholarship could speak across contexts and how this scholarly knowledge might be translated into actionable and locally-informed projects. Despite diverse contexts, the literature brings forward several common insights into the challenges and opportunities encountered in Indigenous WIL programming. The following pages synthesize and address these shared conclusions as well as reflect on the limits of existing scholarly knowledge in the development of resources and strategies to increase Indigenous participation and success in WIL. These limitations, however, are not necessarily barriers in themselves to understanding and action. Instead, these gaps in knowledge may indicate and, indeed, call for the necessary centering of lived experiences, relationships, and participatory knowledge sharing in efforts to address disparities in WIL accessibility, retention, and success.

As much as the IRH project was guided by the findings of our literature review, our team relied on the knowledge emerging from conversations held formally and informally with colleagues at UVic and throughout the province. Furthermore, our work on the IRH project was informed and accompanied by the creation of a needs assessment survey delivered to universities and colleagues in BC in 2021. This survey explored Indigenous WIL programs across the province to gauge the resources already available and still needed to address gaps in, and to build on the strengths of Indigenous WIL services. Respondents provided an added layer of insight into many of the themes discussed in this review of existing scholarly knowledge.

CONDUCTING THE REVIEW AND LITERATURE LIMITATIONS

The authors respectfully acknowledge that this work has been conducted on the unceded and traditional territories of the *ləkʷəŋən* (Songhees and Esquimalt Nations) and *WSÁNEĆ* peoples, who carry historical and continuing relations with these lands. This acknowledgement comes with the recognition and reminder of our responsibilities at the Universities of the Victoria, situated on the village site of the *ləkʷəŋən* Checkonien family, to honor local relationships and protocols as guests on these territories.

The scope of the literature collected and consulted was broad, with researchers seeking to identify articles and book chapters discussing approaches and challenges to Indigenous WIL globally. To account for variations in language across international and educational contexts, researchers conducted searches inclusive of a range of Indigenous identities and forms of WIL. Research queries paired each of the keywords “Indigenous,” “Aboriginal,” and “First Nations” with each of the terms “work integrated learning,” “cooperative education,” “hands on learning,” “experiential learning,” “internship,” and “practicum.” The research phase brought together articles written by scholars situated within the territories claimed by Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States, discussing programs, experiences, and challenges within their respective countries. Adding to this formal review process, the authors consulted with colleagues and revisited their own research projects to identify additional materials, for example, written reports and internal strategic plans, bringing context and depth to this review.

In 2008, Nagel et al (2008) conducted a study entitled “Assessing the barriers for Aboriginal students to access and participate in Co-operative Education at UVic,” which both initiated the development of the Indigenous WIL program at UVic and directed attention to the absence of research concerned with Indigenous WIL. A decade later, reviews of the state of the field (Crane et al., 2019; Mackaway & Winchester-Seeto, 2018) suggested the continued need for Indigenous WIL reporting and publishing to support Indigenous program development. A number of overlapping reasons can account for this general and sustained lack of formal, academic engagement with Indigenous WIL in the Canadian context. The goal of this section is to situate a body of Indigenous WIL literature within the context of Canada’s past and continuing destructive policies, exclusionary institutions, and chronic inactions that amount to a genocide of Indigenous peoples.

Within education systems, the continued privileging of Euro-Western defined pedagogy, learning objectives, and measures of success has displaced Indigenous knowledges and epistemologies. In addition to impacting Indigenous standpoints and relationships with schooling and higher education, this process of colonial displacement and exclusion has continued through the attitudes of PSIs towards Indigenous students, scholars, and their research. Consequently, little space has been created for Indigenous knowledge, as Canadian post-secondary institutions operate through values and practices

contrary to Indigenous governance models and cultural protocols. Systemic racism alongside structural barriers and inequalities, embedded within the institutional frameworks of the academy, exclude and tokenize Indigenous students, staff, and researchers (Pidgeon, 2016). Compounding this, efforts to Indigenize research (to bring Indigenous knowledges into traditionally Western spaces) have been met with apprehension, where some Indigenous academics (Kovach, 2009) express concern for the risk of “misinterpretations, appropriations, and dismissals that often accompany Indigenous ways of knowing within the academy” (p. 12). The history and structure of Canadian post-secondary institutions significantly limits the recognition and publication of research for and by Indigenous people.

Further contextualizing the lack of published research and reporting in this area is methodological discrimination against Indigenous ways of knowing. Indigenous knowledges are relational and often orally communicated and transmitted, with teaching, learning, and techniques of verification intertwined with conversations, experiences, and stories. In addition to Western scholarship privileging written traditions over spoken conventions, Indigenous land-based and relational approaches to knowing are frequently discounted within scholarly disciplines that operate through positivist or universalistic methodological assumptions (Atleo [Umeek], 2004). Similarly, Mitchell et al. (2018) note that Indigenous ways of knowing are generally rendered incompatible with rigidly and strictly defended Western standards of what counts as knowledge and scholarship, and thus not well represented. Transformative moves to Indigenize and decolonize academic disciplines and institutions have opened new possibilities for knowledge creation and transmission (Bendix et al., 2020). In conducting this work, the researchers acknowledge that there is significant knowledge on this topic that has been excluded from published literature, and is instead accessible through open communication with Indigenous colleagues, students, Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and communities. Listening to lived experiences and building responsive and reciprocal relationships is essential to this work.

BARRIERS TO INDIGENOUS WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

Thinking of barriers structurally and systemically, Pidgeon (2016) reiterates that, at the institutional and administrative level, Canadian PSIs tend to operate in ways “contrary to Indigenous governance models and cultural protocols” (p. 82), and in ways which tend to limit Indigenous leadership to a check mark on a reconciliatory ‘to-do’ list. At the level of teaching and research, Mitchell et al. (2018) explore ways of addressing the cultural violence arising from higher education curricula that “fail to honor and accommodate Indigenous Peoples’ colonial histories, rights, and cultural worldviews” (p. 350), suggesting Canadian PSIs need to create spaces for Indigenous science and philosophy so as to inform a collective decolonizing praxis. Further, PSIs conducting community-based research and engagement carry the tendency of disempowering Indigenous communities, where “asymmetric power relations” (Crane et al., 2019, p. 705) render the communities to be passive, voiceless, and objectified ‘problems’ to be solved within a limited period of time. In this sense, PSIs themselves, as colonial and oppressive institutions, may be barriers to Indigenous PSI enrolment long before students submit their post-secondary application packages (Crane et al., 2019).

Reflecting on particular struggles, Nagel et al. (2008) identify a number of barriers at UVic, which are reiterated across institutional contexts elsewhere in the literature, such as:

- Funding issues, including restrictive criteria for federal funding, lack of financial support from family, and additional financial responsibilities carried by mature students with dependents (Hunt et al., 2010);
- Limited and insufficient tracking of Indigenous enrolment numbers at PSIs;
- Lack of preparation for university entrance and foundational skills gaps;
- Family and community obligations impacting ability to relocate;
- The residential school legacy and PSIs continuing to operate as colonial and exclusionary institutions; and
- A lack of awareness about WIL opportunities among Indigenous students.

In addition to facing financial constraints, related to the costs of relocating, caring for dependents, and taking on unpaid work (Valencia-Forrester et al., 2019), Indigenous students may be insufficiently supported within institutions of higher education that fail both to recognize an Indigenous student body on campus and to offer needs-specific and culturally-relevant programming. As Pidgeon (2016) discusses, Indigenous enrolment numbers have been challenging to collect and track. To track Indigenous enrolment, students usually must self-identify and register as Indigenous. Indigenous students are frequently cautious about self-identifying to PSIs due to prior experiences of race-based discrimination against themselves or members of their communities. Further, students who do not have status (a 'legal identity') through Canada's Indian Act, who are not registered members of a Band (a formal governing body), or who otherwise do not have a paper trail of ancestry and belonging, face barriers in providing proof of their Indigenous ancestry (Pidgeon, 2016, p. 84). Offering proof may not only be a difficult task, but also one rooted in colonial assumptions and practices, especially for students impacted by gender discrimination in the Indian Act, by cross-cultural adoption, by relocation, and by other contributors to community separation such as Residential Schools and the 'Sixties Scoop' (Spencer, 2017).

With respect to WIL programs at PSIs, opportunities for Indigenous students are further impeded through gatekeeping, where human resources professionals and administrative staff regulate, determine, or enforce a set of hiring preferences and criteria (Mackaway & Winchester-Seeto, 2018, p. 143). These preferences, linked with expectations held by hiring organizations to find students compatible with their company cultures, reinforce discriminations of citizenship status, social capital, educational attainment, and life background (p. 147-8). Human resources professionals and staff occupy a position to control access to WIL placements, and their behaviors have the potential to reinforce discriminatory structures or to challenge the status quo (Mackaway & Winchester-Seeto, 2018). Mackaway and Winchester-Seeto emphasize the need for anti-discrimination education and cultural competency training to enhance the accessibility and fairness of WIL placements for Indigenous students and equity seeking groups.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIGENOUS WIL

The barriers to Indigenous WIL, as they are identified in the consulted literature, are indications of areas where WIL practitioners can take actionable and transformative steps to make programming more equitable and to increase Indigenous student access, participation, and success in WIL. The literature also identifies programs and directives that have contributed to Indigenous student access to, and success in, WIL programs, which are synthesized here as opportunities for introducing new

approaches to WIL. The opportunities suggested in the literature tend to resonate with how Hunt et al. (2010, Table 56) have identified six critical and interconnected factors of Indigenous student success in higher education. These principles and practices provided the foundations for the LE,NONET program at UVic. LE,NONET (a SENCŌFEN word meaning ‘success after enduring many hardships’ or ‘paddling a canoe in a storm and making it safely to the other side’) “offers an integrated suite of services and programs with the aim of supporting Indigenous students” (Ramji et al. 2021, p. 310) including mentorship, experiential learning, and bursary programs and have supported the development of Indigenous-specific programming across university departments:

- Reciprocal learning,
- Supporting Indigenous identity development,
- Culturally relevant programming,
- Community building,
- Relationship building, and
- Individualized programming.

With regards to Indigenous WIL programming, Ramji et al. (2016, 2021) situate these success factors in the context of developing and assessing UVic’s Indigenous International WIL exchange program (IIWIL). The following pages expand on how WIL practitioners and program developers might look to integrate these dimensions of success and support in their approaches to Indigenous WIL.

Community

As reported by Hunt et al. (2010) and Ramji et al. (2016, 2021) Indigenous students’ perception of success was strongly influenced by their sense of community connectedness and the strengthening of their Indigenous identities. Pidgeon (2016) also finds that the idea of success is not limited to graduation, but encompasses the process of being empowered as an Indigenous person. In this way, we identify the need to remain mindful of both whole person and community-oriented ideas of success in developing resources with the aim of increasing and enhancing Indigenous student engagement and achievement with WIL.

Further, the LE,NONET project report (Hunt et al., 2010) found that some Indigenous students linked their educational achievements to the development of skills, competencies, and tools they saw as relevant to addressing community and family needs. Measuring this achievement, some students attributed greater importance to the usefulness and applicability of their acquired knowledge than to their location on a grading scale (p.28). Community is not only central to how many Indigenous students define success, but also, as Timmons (2013) reports, key to understanding many of the financial and social challenges faced by students leaving their home communities to attend PSIs located in urban areas. An analysis of UVic’s IIWIL program emphasizes the value and success of the Campus Cousins program for welcoming and integrating incoming students from the Wollotuka Institute into the fabric of community life at UVic (Ramji et al., 2016). This peer-network program not only supported the growth of students’ cross-cultural understandings, but also facilitated transitions to life in a new and unfamiliar environment.

Beyond the campus setting, WIL practitioners might center community in developing measures and strategies for Indigenous student success by creating placements that are community-based, culturally relevant, and widely-accessible through targeted outreach initiatives (Lee & Chen, 2014; Harder et al., 2016; Valencia-Forrester et al., 2019). Lee and Chen’s (2014) study finds that Indigenous students developed self-confidence alongside “a better grasp of their ethnic identity” (p. 12) when completing

WIL placements in Indigenous communities, as was also the case for UVic's IIWIL program which studied the critical success factors for the exchange (Ramji et al., 2021). Reflections on the IIWIL program also supported the notion that creating educational opportunities and WIL placements in partnership with Indigenous communities and organizations is a positive way of supporting a student's ambitions and efforts to strengthen their relationships with community and identity.

To support Indigenous students' community relationships and identity connectedness, many researchers argue that it is important to build relationships with Elders and to respect the value of intergenerational learning (Cull et al., 2018; Timmons, 2013; Solyom et al., 2018; Nagel et al., 2008; Viscogliosi et al., 2017; Viscogliosi et al., 2020). In their review study of intergenerational solidarity and individual and community wellness, Viscogliosi et al. (2020) found that Elders' participation in education settings laid the groundwork for environmental, economic, and cultural enhancement and security.

Ramji et al. (2016, 2021) speak of how engagement with Elders enhanced the students' IIWIL experiences, kept students connected to their cultural traditions and contributed to a sense of community for the students. As well, Solyom et al. (2018) recommend that PSIs designate and construct Indigenous centers on campuses to serve not only as a refuge for Indigenous students but also as spaces for cultural reconnection, resurgence, and learning. As places where people can gather and coordinate, Mitchell et al. (2018) and Pete (2016) also argue that Indigenous centers on PSI campuses are opportunities to increase Indigenous student engagement.

Partnerships

Pete (2016) advocates for the Indigenization of academic programs, meaning the transformation of the academy through the inclusion of "Indigenous knowledges, voices, critiques, scholars, students and materials" (p. 81) at the core of PSI practice and pedagogy. In order to develop effective and responsive Indigenous WIL programs and placements, PSIs must take direction from Indigenous students, staff, communities, and hiring partners to act on identified opportunities, capacities, and needs (Crane et al., 2019). WIL programs have the potential to foster community networks to the benefit of Indigenous students, hiring organizations, and the communities with which they partner. It is important to collaborate with Indigenous communities and employers to ensure that the PSI's programs are respectful, responsive, and relevant to the interests, initiatives, and priorities of Indigenous communities (Smith & Smith, 2018; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Indigenous engagement and partnership are processes of building trusting and ongoing relationships. As such, collaborations should be guided by mutually agreed understandings of precedent and protocol, where community partners share power and hold the capacity to lead and hold institutional parties to account for their actions and inactions. These collaborations must integrate Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members as key stakeholders in WIL policy and practice. Memoranda of Understandings (MOU's) between communities and institutions can help with building trust and set the stage for ongoing relationship development.

Reflecting on questions emerging from Indigenous WIL programs in Australia, Crane et al. (2019, p. 708) found that not only do students gain valuable, culturally-relevant skills and knowledges through community-connected placements, but that communities, when empowered to identify their own requirements for hosting WIL students, benefitted from the practical and developmental contributions of students. At the center of initiatives to develop WIL placements is the concept of sustained reciprocity, where both WIL students and community hiring partners are empowered as contributors

and teachers in a relational process of working and learning (Crane et al., 2019). The value of community learning, centering on reciprocity was also highlighted by Hunt et al. (2010) and by Young and Karme (2015), and the process of relationship building forms a key component of the UVic IIWIL program (Ramji et al., 2016, 2021). On the part of PSIs, the work of creating and maintaining these community relationships requires a sincere acknowledgement of Indigenous agency as well as a strategy for reducing “the inherent risk of the re-enactment of dominant relations through ‘helping’ in forms of false or imposed allyship” (Mitchell et al., 2018, p. 354).

Conscious not to reproduce harmful dynamics of control and subjugation, Solyom et al. (2018) suggest that PSIs develop “purpose-driven framework[s] that strengthen students’ motivation to persist” (p. 19) in university and college environments. This entails PSI support for Indigenous mentorship networks and for peer-support groups, wherein Indigenous students may find role models, form a sense of belonging, and, with collective weight behind them, identify systemic obstacles to success and voice concerns about PSI programming.

PSIs can support these student-led initiatives by hiring and supporting the work of Indigenous staff who can offer community, support, and care for Indigenous students. Mitchell et al. (2018) and Pete (2016) confirm the finding of Nagel et al.’s (2008) findings that hiring Indigenous staff for front-line work with students has been a successful strategy for increasing and maintaining Indigenous participation in post-secondary programs. In addition to working with students, Indigenous staff may be instrumental in helping to build institutional or departmental relationships with Indigenous communities and Nations in a sustainable, ‘good way’ (University of Victoria, 2017) that is accountable and responsible. In the context of WIL programs, PSIs that endeavor to increase Indigenous student enrollment as well as develop more culturally-relevant WIL placements should look to support existing staff and create leadership positions specifically for Indigenous people.

Material Support

Earlier, this review identified a number of financial barriers to Indigenous student access and success in WIL programs. While PSIs might create new, specialized funding programs for Indigenous students as one way to address disparities in WIL enrollment, Solyom et al. (2018) suggest that PSIs collaborate with Indigenous communities to strengthen or adapt their existing funding partnerships rather than “impos[ing] formulaic programs” (p. 21) that neglect particular circumstances and needs. Here, there exists an opportunity to connect with funding organizations and committees to increase understanding of WIL programs and their associated costs related to relocation, transportation, accommodation, and the loss of time to engage in paid work (Valencia-Forrester et al., 2019; Solyom et al., 2018). WIL placement coordinators, holding an institutional backing, might also consider lending support to (community-organized) grant applications which promise to create and fund various job opportunities for students. Focused research into the role of MOUs (such as those explored by Ball & Janyst, 2008) for developing ethical institutional relationships with local Nations and communities, remains something to be assessed and considered within the literature on WIL placement development.

In terms of programming, some of the barriers to Indigenous WIL can be mediated with flexible access. Similarly to Harder et al. (2016), Valencia-Forrester et al. (2019) suggest supporting part-time or virtual (online) WIL placements to enable students to still meet their other obligations while participating in WIL. Flexible access can also be integrated as a part of individualized programming that takes into account the personal circumstances and needs of students, allowing them to pursue their interests, develop their skills, and set and achieve their own standards of success (Hunt et al., 2010; Ramji et al.,

2016, 2021). Working with hiring partners who offer remote (work from home) or rurally-accessible placements can help reduce the financial and social barriers to Indigenous student participation, especially in cases where the cost of relocation significantly negates the rate of pay, or where students are rooted in place due to family and community obligations (Harder et al., 2016, p. 2).

Valencia-Forrester et al. (2019) and Mackaway and Winchester-Seeto (2018) both discuss the importance of human resources professionals in WIL programs. Reflecting on 'wise practice,' Valencia-Forrester et al. (2019) argue that PSIs carry the responsibility for transforming their approaches to WIL, where efforts should be directed towards amending programs to meet the needs of students rather than burdening students to change to satisfy program expectations (p. 37). To facilitate this, the authors highlight the potential to work with human resources professionals and community-based research groups to develop reflexive protocols and partnerships between PSIs and community stakeholders to guide the development of relevant WIL programming and placement opportunities. Additionally, unconscious bias, cultural intelligence, and Indigenous cultural competency training for WIL program coordinators and human resources professionals can help build up the tools and strategies for staff to take action to challenge the status quo (Mackaway & Winchester-Seeto, 2018; Ramji et al., 2016, 2021). This leads to an opportunity to develop resources for human resources professionals and WIL practitioners that offer strategies to address challenges to Indigenous student success in WIL programs. More than removing barriers to Indigenous WIL, developing and providing the appropriate resources will help WIL practitioners create, and expand on, meaningful and accessible placements for Indigenous students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The literature identifies a wide range of barriers to Indigenous participation and success in WIL as well as opportunities to develop, expand upon, and transform WIL programs for Indigenous students. Despite these insights, we cannot derive from this international body of scholarly knowledge a series of clear and immediately actionable directives and strategic approaches to creating more inclusive, culturally relevant, equitable, and accessible WIL programs. Instead, the literature leads us to a better understanding of the collaborative and responsive process through which practitioners might envision and support Indigenous student success in WIL within their local context.

The recommendations we propose in the following pages were used to guide our own efforts to create the Indigenous WIL Resource Hub (IRH). It was in the process of creating information sheets, worksheets, and other educational materials in response to calls for community-building resources that we identified a significant responsibility: resources and strategic initiatives to develop and support Indigenous WIL must be informed and carried out through long-term and close partnerships with local communities and stakeholders. Building relationships, responding to particular needs and initiatives, and recognizing the value of community-held knowledge must all hold a central place in the development of Indigenous WIL resources and programs. The following recommendations are proposed both to indicate areas for partnership, and to affirm the intrinsic value of a process of building relationships and uplifting lived experiences and community knowledge. These ten general directives have been drafted with several partners and stakeholders in mind: human resources professionals, PSI WIL staff, third party funders, employers/host agencies, host communities, and Indigenous students.

Be Continuously Guided by, and Accountable to, Indigenous Participants, Collaborators, and Advisors

In the process of doing this work and developing the Indigenous WIL Resource Hub, our team has worked alongside and has taken direction from an Advisory Committee and a Joint Working Group of

Indigenous faculty, staff, students, and Elders. Our terms of engagement explicitly recognize that the work of the collective is reciprocal and continuous, where the process of learning rests in the supportive and respectful relationships we build together. Similarly, PSIs and WIL program developers can better inform their practices and missions by inviting the participation of, taking direction from, providing compensation, and remaining accountable to Indigenous leaders and partners.

Invest in Indigenous Community-Building on Campuses and Within Work-Integrated Learning Networks

The literature confirms the importance of institutional support for community initiatives, mentorship programs, peer networks, physical gathering spaces, Elders in residence programs, and Indigenous leadership, that support and affirm an Indigenous student's sense of belonging, identity, and success. With this directive, we reiterate the importance of creating spaces where Indigenous WIL students feel welcome and respected in bringing their whole selves to environments in higher education and work. Increasing the availability of financial resources for community initiatives (e.g. through the development of institutional strategic plans) would support and encourage Indigenous leadership and social programming on campus.

Collaborate with Indigenous Communities and Students to Develop New Work-Integrated Learning Placements

This review has identified the need to create accessible and culturally-relevant WIL placements with and for Indigenous students. This directive echoes the cautions of researchers (concerning the imposition of institutional goals on Indigenous communities) in recommending that WIL placement coordinators take care to listen and act appropriately in response to the particular initiatives, needs, capacities of the Indigenous communities, organizations, and hiring bodies partnered through WIL. It is better to ask rather than make assumptions about the needs and priorities of Indigenous groups.

Build Flexibility Into Work-Integrated Learning Programs and Placements

Reflecting on the social and financial barriers to Indigenous student participation in WIL, it is recommended that WIL practitioners develop flexible programs and placements with particular attention to increasing part-time and remotely accessible placements. The move to work from home as a response to the COVID-19 global pandemic has opened opportunities for virtual work placements (Kay et al., 2020). It is worthwhile to survey and assess Indigenous student experiences during this time and table for consideration the possibility of continuing remote work placements for rural students. The results of asking and listening might be brought to employers and students who might accommodate and benefit from online placements and their flexibility. There is also space to provide personalized WIL programming for students, allowing students to think and operate through their own definitions of success in drafting learning plans and goals.

Increase Financial Support for Indigenous Work-Integrated Learning Students

The literature outlines several financial barriers to Indigenous access to and participation in WIL opportunities. To compensate for the cost of relocation and working for less or no pay, PSIs can increase opportunities for financial support by either expanding and promoting existing financial assistance programs or by setting up new bursary or salary top-up programs. Advisors and WIL coordinators might also take a more active role in ensuring the non-interference of WIL placements with existing and continuing scholarship and sponsorship programs. Then, given that WIL programs may significantly extend a student's timeline for degree completion, consideration needs to be given to how

to support students whose set-term funding packages end, and living expenses continue, before degree completion.

Create Awareness of Work-Integrated Learning Programs and Opportunities

For the purposes of recruiting Indigenous students into WIL programs, encouraging continued funder support for students, and creating opportunities for WIL placements with new and varied hiring partners and community groups, it is worthwhile to widely promote Indigenous WIL opportunities and success stories. The distribution of information and stories can be facilitated through the creation of: posters, video interviews, blogs, social media take overs, pamphlets (to be given in welcome packages and distributed to academic advisors and local clubs/network coordinators), partnerships with campus newsletters highlighting student success, and casual WIL information sessions.

Expand Indigenous Counseling and Advising Services

The literature strongly suggests that mentorship opportunities and knowledgeable, sensitive academic advisors strengthen a student's ability to seek, access, and devise academic programs aligned with their interests, values, and ambitions. Resources, such as information sheets, drop-in sessions, clear contact information to connect with WIL coordinators, student testimonials and blogs, and easily accessible web pages, will help in informing students' outlooks and decisions concerning their academic programs and plans to transition into labor markets.

Work With Hiring Partners in Decolonizing and Indigenizing Practices

Reflecting on the limits of how WIL coordinators can directly engage in supporting Indigenous student access, retention, and success in WIL, the literature highlights the work to be done by employers and placement partners themselves in creating equitable workplaces, recognizing diverse experiences and contributions, and accommodating student needs. WIL practitioners can support employers in this work by creating resources (short informational videos, pamphlets, and workshops) that address what it means to decolonize and Indigenize hiring and workplace practices. Within the Canadian context, WIL practitioners might engage employers in conversations over the TRC's Calls to Action. Further, WIL coordinators might also encourage employers to exercise flexibility to accommodate the needs of remotely located students and those with dependents and care obligations.

Respond to the Needs and Concerns of Indigenous Students Navigating Work-Integrated Learning Hiring Processes

Some of the most insightful articles consulted in this review synthesized the knowledge and testimonies of Indigenous students (Hunt et al., 2010; Timmons, 2013). Recognizing the knowledge and agency of students in expressing and addressing their needs, WIL coordinators should take active steps to keep lines of communication open with students so to facilitate relationship-building and so to remain responsive to changing student concerns. Holding regular office hours, drop-in sessions, and check-ins as well as keeping contact information accessible and up to date will help build those communicative links. Then, by collecting questions and feedback from Indigenous students on WIL programming and placements, WIL coordinators can better support and inform the development of resources to address shared questions and concerns.

Provide Specialized Training for Work-Integrated Learning Staff and Human Resources Professionals

The literature positions WIL coordinators, staff, and human resources professionals as gatekeepers to WIL programs and placements. Acknowledging the potentials held by individuals to maintain or challenge discriminatory procedures and systems, this recommendation echoes suggestions to offer anti-racism, unconscious bias, cultural intelligence, and Indigenous cultural sensitivity training for staff. Additionally, the work of WIL practitioners and human resources staff may be supported through the creation and dissemination of resources to explain and identify tokenization and its harms. Further, WIL program developers and placement coordinators may benefit from gaining an understanding of some of the barriers to, and enablers of, Indigenous WIL, so that they might be better informed in revising and personalizing program admission and completion requirements (balancing grades-based and community/volunteer/work-based criteria).

CONCLUSION

While the recommendations made in this paper have been used to develop resources for the Indigenous WIL Resource Hub, none of these recommendations should be understood as short-term projects, nor should they be thought of as free standing, being sufficiently achievable on their own. The work of creating more accessible and supportive WIL programs in a good way requires a holistic approach as well as sustainable, long-term timelines, commitments, and partnerships.

Coming to this work in response to the TRC's Calls to Action on employment and education equity, we concluded this article with a summary of recommendations to guide the creation and collection of resources to support Indigenous WIL. First, the difficulties of finding published reports and studies on Indigenous WIL has indicated that further research must support the use of environmental scans, surveys, and interviews to strengthen understandings of the circumstances and barriers to Indigenous WIL. Beyond encouraging further reporting and publishing on this topic, this analysis of the literature reveals general consensus in favor of Indigenizing PSI policy and practice. However, the literature also highlights that Indigenization is a transformative process that empowers, rather than tokenizes, Indigenous leaders, collaborators, and stakeholders as knowledgeable partners and decision-makers in adapting institutional strategies and frameworks to address the specific needs of Indigenous students. As such, these findings hesitate to prescribe a one-size-fits-all approach to addressing the barriers to Indigenous WIL. Instead, these findings have identified ten open-ended recommendations that can be further refined and developed in collaboration with Indigenous communities local and relevant to particular PSIs and their student bodies.

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STATEMENT OF PLACE

Julianne R.C. Nielsen (she/her)

On my father's side, I am descendent from Danish and English immigrants who settled on the unceded Ts'msyen territory of the Kitselas and Kitsumkalum First Nations. My mother was adopted at birth and raised on Snuneymuxw territories. My knowledge of her Métis, Cree, and Ojibwe relatives is incomplete and I am not claimed by a particular community. I grew up in the village of Gold River, BC, as a guest on the territories of the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation before coming to study, work, and live on the traditional lands of the ɫəkʷəŋən (the Songhees & Esquimalt Nations) and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples. I am thankful to learn and grow with colleagues and friends at the University of Victoria who have supported and inspired my efforts to reconnect and serve in community.

Renée Livernoche

Kwe! I am Renée Livernoche and I trace my roots to the Innu Nation of Québec and to the French settlers of Trois-Rivières. I am privileged to be born and raised on the ɫəkʷəŋən Territory amongst the Coast Salish Peoples of the Pacific North West Coast of Turtle Island (Victoria, British Columbia, Canada). I owe my gratitude and hold my hands up to the local Salish, Nuuchahnulth and Kwakwaka'wakw Elders and knowledge holders for sharing with me their cultural teachings and worldviews over the years. I have a background in education, youth work, and job coaching and have been of service to the local Indigenous nations for over two decades. As the LE,NONET Experiential Learning Coordinator at the University of Victoria, I co-teach the LE,NONET Preparation Seminar and help Indigenous students find meaningful work in their field of study. Students come see me to explore culturally relevant LE,NONET community internships and research apprenticeships as well as co-op and career opportunities. I have a strong belief that everyone has a profound impact on the world they live in and I am dedicated to working collaboratively with others in order to learn, share, and build healthy, open communities.

Karima Ramji

I am of South Asian heritage, born in Uganda, and raised in Kenya, East Africa. I have been blessed to live, work and raise my family as a visitor on the traditional Coast Salish territories of the ɫəkʷəŋən peoples, specifically, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations as well as the W̱SÁNEĆ peoples of the Pacific North West Coast of Turtle Island (Victoria, British Columbia, Canada). It has been my privilege and honor to work with colleagues at the University of Victoria's Office of Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement and Co-operative Education Program and Career Services as we collectively develop quality, culturally relevant work integrated learning programs for Indigenous students locally, nationally and internationally.

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International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning Special Issue



Indigenous Perspectives and Partnerships: Enhancing Work-Integrated Learning

About the artist:

Harry Pitt is an Indigenous Australian artist, who resides on Yuin nation. He is a proud Torres Strait Islander and Fijian man from Darnley Island on the Torres Straits. Harry has completed a Bachelor of Creative Arts, majoring in Visual Arts and Design, at the University of Wollongong and is a proud member of the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre community.

Harry shares that the Hawk is a representation of 'connectedness'. The hawk is the proudest and self-ruled animal of the sky. With its eyes looming over all those that move below, he is the master of its own rule. But like all living things, the Hawk recognizes they live in a sophisticated and interconnected relationship with all the elements of Country including the sky, the land and the waters.

This artwork has been gifted to represent the Special Issue of the International Journal of Work Integrated Learning 2022 entitled "*Indigenous Perspectives and Partnerships: Enhancing Work Integrated Learning*". The co-editors of this Special Issue envisioned the three entities of community, university, and students on the Hawk, working together to help our students soar.

The International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning gratefully acknowledge the guest editors and the sponsors of this Special Issue

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About the Journal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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