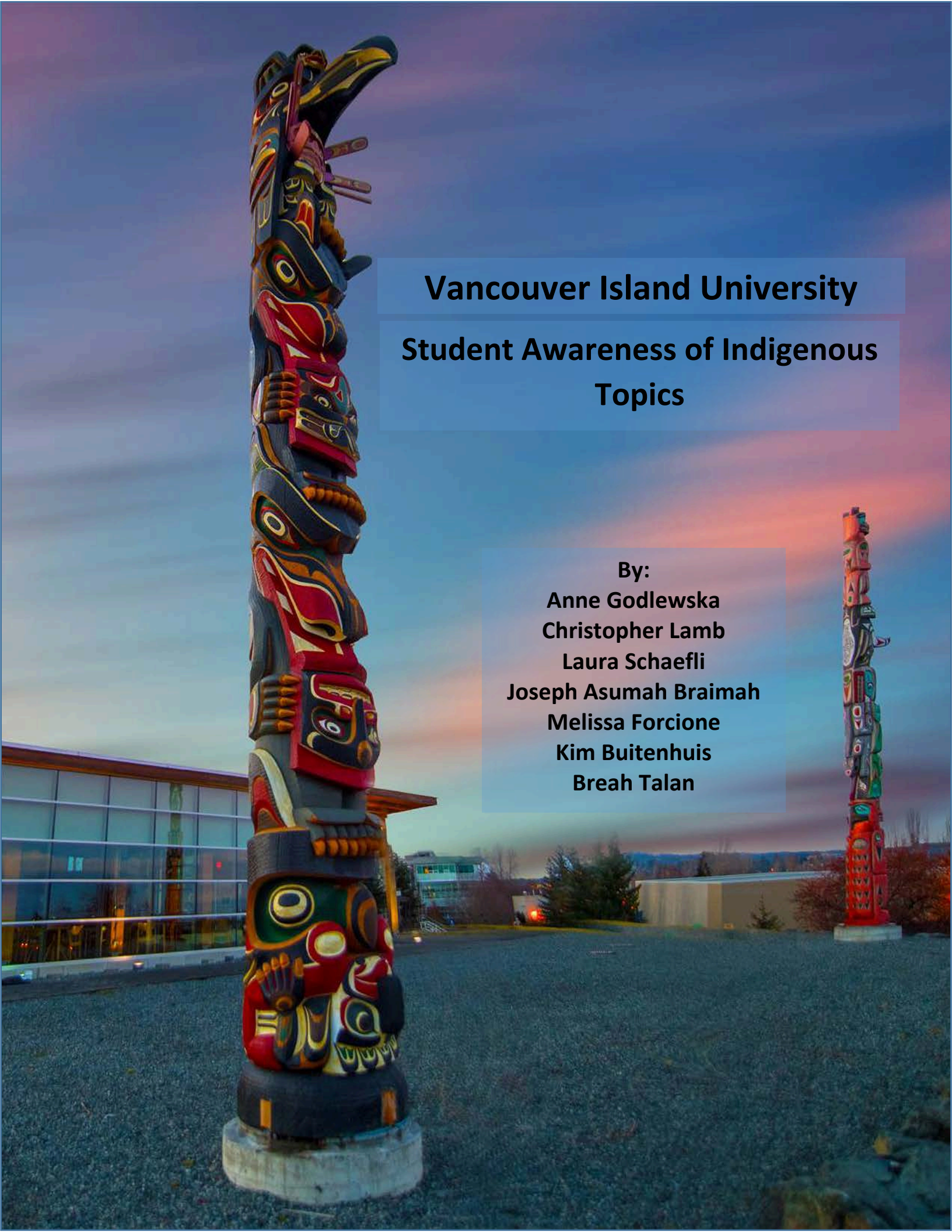

Vancouver Island University

Student Awareness of Indigenous Topics

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Part 1. Front Matter

Acknowledgements

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The title-page photograph was generously donated for use here by Craig Letourneau.

Content Warning: Please note that student responses are included in this report. Some of their responses may be upsetting to some readers.

Introduction

It is our pleasure to present this report to Dr. Carol Stuart, Provost and Vice-President Academic, Dr. Ross MacKay, Associate Vice-President, Academic, Sharon Hobenshield, Director, Office of Aboriginal Education and Engagement, and to the Vancouver Island University community. It is our fond hope that it will be of use to the University and the Indigenous communities associated with VIU as they grapple with the problems of deep social ignorance about Indigenous topics and the colonial nature of Canadian society. There are five parts to this report. The Front Matter acknowledges the many hands and minds involved in producing the report and provides terminology and an Executive Summary. Part 2 describes our methodology. Part 3 is our qualitative analysis of a question we asked entering students prior to exposure to the test portion of the questionnaire: "Name three things you know about First Nations, Métis and Inuit people". Part 4 is our quantitative analysis of the relationship between student performance on the test and where they learned what they know, what they think of what they learned, their responses to social attitude questions, and their responses to a variety of identity questions for both entering and exiting students. Part 5 is a qualitative analysis of 9 open-ended questions asked of exiting students as part of, or following, the test portion of the questionnaire. Part 6 references the scholarship we have used in our analysis. The analysis in this document is focused on two surveys conducted in fall 2018 and winter 2019, the first to entering VIU students in the first three months of their time in VIU and the second to exiting students in their last semester at VIU.

We have shared the raw data, stripped of identifiers, with Vancouver Island University. All data about students is provided by students themselves. In a footnote after each student quotation, we list the respondent's unique identification number in our dataset, whether they have taken courses with significant Indigenous content (and at what level), age, gender, how they identify, focus of study, and what they see as their future career. This information does not allow identification of any individual. Ultimately, we will make the anonymous data available for analysis by others through the Queen's University Scholar's Portal Dataverse.

Terminology

Aboriginal is a legal term, most often used by the government of Canada as an umbrella term for the Indigenous peoples of Canada. This includes First Nations and Métis people (status and non-status) and Inuit. Many Indigenous people prefer that we use the most precise term for a people: so, Snuneymuxw First Nations, for example.

Assimilation involves absorption into the dominant society. It can be either voluntary or forced. In voluntary assimilation, individuals or groups of differing heritage willingly become socially similar to other members of the society. In forced assimilation, the dominant society forces individuals and groups to conform to particular roles. Assimilative strategies include religious conversion, removal of children from their families, land appropriation, the disruption of gender relations, and the prohibition of cultural practices.

Colonialism is the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another territory or people and exploiting both the land and the people economically. It usually involves domination, oppression and marginalization of Indigenous peoples and rejection of Indigenous sovereignty. **Settler colonialism** refers to the colonial strategies of dispossessing Indigenous peoples from their land, replacing them with settlers, and attempting to eliminate Indigenous peoples or assimilate them into settler society.

The term **First Nations** refers to the Indigenous people(s) of Canada who are not Inuit or Métis. The term indicates the richness, complexity, and independence of Indigenous societies as well as presence in Canada prior to Europeans. The traditional territories of First Nations encompass all land from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans.

Indian is a legal term used by the government of Canada to define some Aboriginal rights. We use it only in that context.

The term **Indigenous** refers to the diverse peoples whose ancestral territories and traditional systems of law and governance predate colonial nations. In Canada, Indigenous encompasses First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, territories, communities, and forms of identification and governance that exist beyond those defined under the Indian Act.

Inuit are many culturally distinct Indigenous peoples whose traditional territories span the Arctic.

The descendants of non-Indigenous fur traders and Indigenous women are amongst those called the **Métis**.

Executive Summary

Although we have surveyed relatively few universities and colleges in British Columbia, perhaps because institutions had tenuous relations with First Nations partners, lacked the resources to support the work we proposed to do, lacked the will, or perhaps because they regarded outside researchers with suspicion, our research in Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, and British Columbia leads us to believe that Vancouver Island University is at the forefront of Indigenizing and decolonizing the educational environment in the country. That said, there remains a great deal of work to be done. These are our principal findings:

1. A significant number of students enter VIU with embedded problematic ways of thinking about Indigenous peoples including generalizing, homogenizing and objectifying, consigning Indigenous peoples and colonialism to the past, and distancing themselves and Canadian society from colonialism. International students in particular need to unlearn stereotypical ways of thinking about Indigenous peoples.
2. Although colonial thinking embedded in families does transfer to students, any discussion of the topic at home is better than none.
3. Teaching students in high school is important to their knowledge and perhaps also important to stimulating interest but post-secondary education and especially what is taught at VIU is even more important in terms of the depth and sophistication of their knowledge.
4. As a whole, students are best informed about current events and most ignorant of governance issues (questions that reflect a deeper understanding of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada over land, rights, and identity both past and present).
5. Students can often identify episodes of attack on Indigenous cultures, but they are less able to understand these as part of larger systems and values such as the imposition of Western values of individual accumulation and commercialization.
6. The powerful emotions of guilt and shame, discomfort, and anger are all associated with limited knowledge attributed to inadequate coverage of these matters in school, college, or university.
7. While there is no statistically significant relationship between test performance and gender among entering students, there is an important and statistically significant relationship between gender and social attitude, with females more critical of the education system and males more deeply in denial.
8. In terms of performance by faculty, it seems that the Social Sciences and Health and Human Sciences are doing the best job of educating their students about Indigenous topics.
9. Entering and exiting students learn little about Métis people and almost nothing about Inuit.
10. Thoughtful and engaged land acknowledgements are understood and valued by the vast majority of the exiting students surveyed. Although important, deeply symbolic, and grounded political acts, land acknowledgements cannot bear the burden of educating students.
11. Many Indigenous students and students who have taken courses with Indigenous content in university are much better able to understand more complex concepts such as land rights, the Indian Act, and ongoing colonialism. Students who have never taken such courses are more likely to hold prejudicial misconceptions. Sadly, too many of the latter are preparing for the teaching and medical professions.
12. Too many students have not thought about or cannot answer a question on systemic racism.
13. Persistent ignorance of the racism faced by Indigenous people on a daily basis, but especially Indigenous women, is itself a sign of systemic racism.

14. Based on what we have seen emerging from secondary education in British Columbia, VIU deserves huge credit for educating many of its students to understand the identity wars that the Canadian government has waged and continues to wage against First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. The institution is well placed to consider how to educate the remaining students.
15. Very few students were able to recognize Indigenous peoples as distinct and multiple — each with their own cultural, legal, and ontological life ways — or that Indigenous peoples' claims to sovereignty and self-government are ethically well-founded challenges to the very nature of Euro-Canadian conceptions of sovereignty and property. Universities are in an especially crucial position to enhance critical thinking about Indigenous sovereignty, rights, and nationhood.
16. Too many international students enter and leave VIU unaware of Indigenous realities in Canada.
17. The sense that as a student not from here, I have no responsibility to learn about here, is a sentiment to address in the education of international students.
18. While it seems that many students support Indigenous efforts around protecting the environment, it is unclear whether they also respect Indigenous sovereignty and rights over land and resources when used for reasons that appear antithetical to environmentalist goals.
19. While many Indigenous students feel welcome and supported at VIU, particularly by the Gathering Place, Elders, and the Indigenous/Xwulmuxw Studies Courses department (formerly FNAT), racism and prejudice remain a problem on campus.
20. Overall, the vast majority of students, Indigenous and not, want to see more and better courses, taught by informed faculty.
21. The majority of students (71%), perhaps stimulated by the complexity of the issues pointed to in the questionnaire, thought that they should have been taught more about First Nations and Métis peoples and Inuit throughout their education. Those who have learned something tend to want more education. Those who have not learned anything tend to think the topic is irrelevant.
22. 87% of respondents considered the questionnaire a good assessment of their knowledge.

These are our most significant findings but there is much else to learn from a careful reading of this report.

Indigenous Education and Engagement at Vancouver Island University

Through the ongoing implementation of the *Aboriginal Education Plan* (updated January 2018), the extensive work of the Office of Aboriginal Education and Engagement (OAEE), and the many collaborating community partners, students, and employees, VIU continues numerous activities and initiatives to develop Indigenous education and enhance reconciliation. Recent initiatives build on over two decades of effort aimed at enhancing course design, community relations, and pedagogy across VIU campuses. Contemporary efforts are informed by findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRCC, 2015a and 2015b) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007) (see the Aboriginal Education Plan 2018 Update, the Vancouver Island University Institutional Accountability Plan and Report 2018/2019 and the Office of Aboriginal Education & Engagement Annual Report 2018/2019 for descriptions of currently planned, implemented, and in-progress initiatives). Efforts, such as fostering dialogue around Indigenization and reconciliation at VIU and beyond (e.g., Students as Partners Group; Indigenous Peoples Speakers Series), and enhancing Indigenous perspectives in teaching and learning (Na'tsa'maht Shqwaluwun: Professional Development Series for faculty), are some of the many ways VIU has encouraged students' awareness of Indigenous realities and colonialism.

In writing the *Vancouver Island University Student Awareness of Indigenous Topics* report, the Awareness team acknowledges the long-term Indigenization-, decolonization-, and reconciliation-driven work at VIU. The report is designed to be an independent assessment of the state of students' knowledge of colonialism and Indigenous topics across the disciplines at VIU. We hope that it helps inform the ongoing commitments to fostering powerful educational experiences that reflect the TRC's and UNDRIP's calls for deep social change.

Part 2: Methodology

Co-Designing the Questionnaire

The Awareness team developed the Awareness questionnaire over a period of ten years through 100+ meetings with over 300 First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators, community members, faculty, staff, and students, affiliated with 15 universities and colleges across Newfoundland & Labrador, Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia.[1] The aim of the co-design process in each province has been to develop a questionnaire that allows fine-grained analysis of the relationship between knowledge considered by Indigenous educators to be vital to responsible citizenship, and post-secondary students' formal education, attitudes, and experience. We deliver the co-designed questionnaire to entering and exiting students at partner universities and colleges (Godlewska et al., 2013; Godlewksa et al., 2016; Godlewksa et al., 2017; Schaefli et al., 2018; Schaefli & Godlewska, 2020). We also share raw data, results, and a final report with all partner institutions for use in internal programming.

Co-designing the questionnaire is a living and iterative process. To each co-design meeting, we brought a draft of the questionnaire and reviewed it, word for word, for importance, accuracy, and resonance with co-designers' experiences, understanding, and visions for transforming education. As a result, the questionnaire differs between educational jurisdictions (usually provinces) and each questionnaire is tailored to fit the educational institution. As a research tool that is fundamentally about decolonizing knowledge — transforming educational systems from a conscious or unconscious tool of colonialism to one that is self-aware, critical and moving in the direction of valuing and advancing Indigenous peoples and ways of being — it is vital that the questionnaire reflect many minds and many experiences.

The VIU Questionnaires

We developed two questionnaires: one to survey entering students and another to survey exiting students. The questionnaire developed for entering students at VIU includes 7 different kinds of questions designed to determine:

1. Where students learned what they know (12 questions);
2. What they think of what they know (11 questions);
3. The knowledge they have (1 open-ended and 33 multiple-choice questions);
4. What they think of opportunities to learn at VIU (2 questions);
5. Social attitude (8 questions);
6. Socio-demographics (e.g., age, gender, major) (16 questions); and
7. Reactions to the questionnaire (2 questions, 1 open-ended).

The first-year knowledge test is composed largely of multiple-choice questions, but we have analyzed the "Name three things you know" question for entering students in Part 3 below and the open-ended knowledge questions for exiting students in Part 5 below. The VIU entering survey questions are designed to appraise awareness of:

1. Indigenous presence in what is known today as Canada (geography) (7 questions);

[1] These universities and colleges are: Memorial University (NFLD & LB); University of Windsor, University of Guelph, Wilfrid Laurier University, McMaster University, University of Toronto, Trent University, Queen's University, University of Ottawa, Laurentian University, Lakehead University, St. Lawrence College (ON), University of Manitoba (MB), Douglas College and Vancouver Island University (BC).

2. What is happening for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in what is known today as Canada (current events) (6 questions);
3. Laws or circumstances structuring First Nations, Métis and Inuit lives (governance) (7 questions);
4. Residential Schools (2 questions);
5. Past realities that have shaped today's circumstances (history) (6 questions); and
6. First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultural continuity (culture) (7 questions).

The questionnaire developed for exiting VIU students also includes 7 different kinds of questions designed to determine:

1. Where students learned what they know (thirteen questions, 1 open-ended);
2. What they think of what they know (4 questions, 1 open-ended);
3. The knowledge they have (5 open-ended and 19 multiple-choice questions);
4. What they think of opportunities to learn at VIU (3 questions, 2 open-ended);
5. Social attitudes (11 questions, 1 open-ended);
6. Socio-demographics (e.g., age, gender, major) (13 questions); and
7. Reactions to the questionnaire (2 questions, 1 open-ended).

As senior university students are both better able to express themselves and more likely to have deeper understanding than first-year students, the knowledge portion of the exiting questionnaire has 5 open-ended questions and 19 multiple-choice questions (in contrast, the first-year knowledge test has only one open-ended question and 33 multiple-choice questions). The VIU exit survey questions are designed to appraise awareness of:

1. Indigenous presence in what is known today as Canada (geography) (4 multiple-choice questions);
2. What is happening for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in what is known today as Canada (current events) (3 multiple-choice questions);
3. Laws or circumstances structuring First Nations, Métis and Inuit lives (governance) (5 multiple-choice questions);
4. Residential Schools (1 multiple-choice question);
5. Past realities that have shaped today's circumstances (history) (4 multiple-choice questions); and
6. First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultural continuity (culture) (3 multiple-choice questions).

Delivery and Participants

The Awareness team delivered the entering student survey in person and in the presence of a VIU elder to 29 first-year undergraduate classes at the Nanaimo and Duncan campuses between September 2018 and November 2018. We contacted deans, department heads, and instructors across faculties and disciplines to gain access to these courses. We were successful in accessing first-year courses in Early Childhood Education and Care, English, Tourism, Recreation, and Hospitality, Child and Youth Care, Resource Management, Nursing, Education, and Social Work. In total 1,052 students were asked to take part. 684 students did so and 512 completed the entering questionnaire, giving us a response rate of 65% and a completion rate of 49%. The VIU research ethics office requested that the survey of exiting students be conducted online. VIU University Planning and Analysis distributed the survey of exiting

students to 3,449 exiting students across the Nanaimo, Duncan, and Powell River campuses. 581 students responded and 342 completed the survey, giving us a response rate of 17% and a completion rate of 10%. These rates are typical of our online surveys. The exiting survey went to students at both VIU campuses: Nanaimo (481 completed), Duncan (31 completed) and Powell River (3 completed). The Awareness questionnaire and its delivery were designed to be both diagnostic and educational. Students were shown the correct answers to multiple-choice questions as they completed the questions and, upon completing the survey, were directed to a webpage with resources by Indigenous and decolonial scholars, authors, and activists to learn more.

Tables 1 and 2 describe the student population taking the entering and exiting student questionnaires. The populations are not identical but they are similar. Twenty-one percent of entering- and 17% of exiting-student participants graduated outside Canada. Thirteen percent of entering- and 19% of exiting-student participants self-declared as Indigenous. In both cases, more women than men answered the questionnaires. Unsurprisingly, more disciplines are represented in the online 4th-year survey.

Entering-Students: Selected Demographics					
Country of High School Graduation		**Self-Declared Indigenous Identity**		Political Studies	5
Canada	404	Not Indigenous	363	Visual Art	5
India	32	First Nations	38	Digital Media Studies	4
China	17	Métis	18	Sociology	3
Japan	10	Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry	13	Adventure Tourism and Recreation	2
Vietnam	7	Non-status Indigenous	7	Economics	2
Germany	6	Inuit, non-status	1	Geography	2
South Korea	4	Métis, non status	1	Global Studies	2
Bangladesh	2	Native American	1	History	2
Oman	2	Decline to answer	46	Natural Resource Protection	2
Sierra Leone	2	**Gender**		Physics	2
Indonesia	1	Female	338	Practical nursing	2
Australia	1	Male	156	Women's Studies	2
Taiwan	1	Non-binary	3	Anthropology	1
Hong Kong	1	Female, non-binary	2	Applied Business Technology	1
Saudi Arabia	1	Male, non-binary	1	Arts One-First Nations	1
Egypt	1	Male, Transgender	1	Culinary Arts	1
Ghana	1	Transgender	1	Earth Science	1
Greece	1	Other	3	Event Management	1
Kuwait	1	Decline to answer	9	Geoscience	1
Mexico	1	**Generalized Focus of Study**		Languages and Culture	1
Philippines	1	Education	76	Media Studies	1
Sri Lanka	1	Nursing	66	Theater	1
Tanzania	1	Child and Youth Care	35	No answer	15
United Arab Emirates	1	Other	30	**Aim at VIU**	
USA	1	Business Administration	28	A degree	334
Venzuela	1	Business	22	A diploma	112
Decline to answer	8	Decline to answer	18	Planning to transfer	19
Campus		Social Work	16	Taking some courses	18
Nanaimo	480	Forest Resources Technology	15	Uncertain	15
Duncan	31	Psychology	15	A certificate	11
Undeclared	1	Biology	13	Other	2
Languages Spoken at Home		Computer Science	13		
English	309	Hospitality Management	13		
English and other	66	Criminology	12		
French and English	48	Tourism Management	12		
English and Indigenous language(s)	14	Early Childhood Education	11		
French	8	Recreation and Sport Management	11		
French and English and other	6	Social Services Diploma	9		
French and other	1	Tourism Studies	9		
Other and Indigenous language(s)	1	Creative Writing	8		
English and French and Indigenous	1	Physical Education	8		
Other	51	English	7		
Decline to answer	7	Dental Hygiene	5		

Table 1. Selected entering-student sociodemographics.

Exiting-Students: Selected Demographics					
Country of High School Graduation		**Self-Declared Indigenous Identity**		Dental Hygiene	4
Canada	285	Not Indigenous	234	Culinary Arts	4
India	15	First Nations	45	Community Mental Health Worker	4
China	8	Métis	12	Tourism Management	3
USA	5	Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry	16	Visual Art	3
United Kingdom	4	Non-status Indigenous	3	Global Studies	3
Nigeria	3	Inuit, non-status	0	Arts One-First Nations	3
Germany	2	Métis, non status	2	Fundamentals of Engineering Certificate	3
Japan	1	Native American	0	Graphic Design	3
Vietnam	1	Decline to answer	23	Computing Science	2
Indonesia	1	**Gender**		Sociology	2
Australia	1	Female	244	Natural Resource Protection	2
Mexico	1	Male	89	Women's Studies	2
Philippines	1	Decline to answer	6	Health and Human Services	2
Sri Lanka	1	Non-binary	3	Resource Management Officer	2
United Arab Emirates	1	Female, non-binary	0	Media Studies	2
Belgium	1	Male, non-binary	0	Theater	2
Brazil	1	Male, Transgender	0	Health Care Assitant	2
Croatia	1	Transgender	0	Liberal Studies	2
Russia	1	Other	0	Mathematics	2
Sweden	1	**Program of Study**		Music	2
Turkey	1	Education	53	Political Studies	1
Ukraine	1	Business Administration	30	Economics	1
Zambia	1	Nursing	24	Practical nursing	1
Decline to answer	4	Decline to answer	17	Event Management	1
Campus		Social Work	16	Geoscience	1
Nanaimo	317	Child and Youth Care	13	Philosophy	1
Duncan	16	Criminology	13	Wine Business	1
Powell River	3	Psychology	9	Carpentry	1
Undeclared	6	Biology	9	Chemistry	1
Languages Spoken at Home		Physical Education	9	Hairstylist Foundation Certificate	1
English	230	Anthropology	9	Horticultural Technician Foundation	1
French and English	27	Tourism/Recreation Management	7	Interior Design	1
English and other	25	Education Assistant and Community Support	7	Motorcycle and Marine Technician	1
English and Indigenous language(s)	9	Business	6	Other	7
French	7	Forest Resources Technology	6	**Aim at VIU**	
French, English and other	5	Social Services Diploma	6	A degree	259
French and Indigenous language(s)	3	English	6	A diploma	35
French, English and Indigenous	3	Geography	6	Planning to transfer	0
Indigenous language(s)	2	History	5	Taking some courses	0
Other: non-Indigenous language(s)	25	Hospitality Management	5	Uncertain	5
Decline to answer	4	First Nations Studies	4	A certificate	22
		Creative Writing and Journalism	4	Other	21

Table 2. Selected exiting-student sociodemographics.

Part 3: Responses to the Question "Name Three Things You Know"

In the entering questionnaire, the last question before students take the test portion of the questionnaire is open-ended, designed to investigate what students at VIU think when they think about Indigenous peoples. How students answer the question is suggestive of the nature of their knowledge and social attitudes uninfluenced by the test questions. We asked entering students to name three things they know about First Nations and Métis peoples and Inuit. The question is problematic, as reducing knowledge of peoples to three things is reductionist, with all the associated risks. It is, then, significant that not a single respondent called us out on this. In almost every other college or university where we have asked this question, some students have challenged it. This silence is consistent with the lack of critical understanding reflected in many of the responses below. Using NVivo and in vivo coding and inductive analysis, we used student words and expressions to build themes. This kind of inductive analysis allows data-driven themes to emerge "from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies" (Schiellerup, 2008; Thomas, 2006, p. 2). We believe that the thematic trends in the students' responses suggest important aspects of their knowledge as they come into VIU and point the way forward for decolonizing education at VIU.

Culture and Tradition

A third of students (172/512, 34%) referenced Indigenous cultures and/or traditions. We collected all uses (190) of the words culture, cultural, tradition, and traditional, and analyzed their use. 27 students merely mention "culture" or "tradition(s)." From those who provided more elaboration, most common is reference to culture in the singular, with the apparent assumption that all Indigenous peoples share *a* culture, as in "They have a wonderful culture"[2] or "First nations/Metis culture is important, and misunderstood."[3] This expression of the singularity of Indigenous cultures occurs in 93 of the 145 mentions of Indigenous cultures, or 66% of the mentions. This assumption of singularity and homogeneity of Indigenous cultures is underlined by the comparative responses of several students, such as "The culture is very different from English and other cultures."[4] The references to culture in the singular are often homogenizing and insensitive to the diversity of Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island.

A particularly striking variation of 'culture' and 'tradition' is the description of Indigenous people as "very cultural"[5] and "traditional"[6] given by 40 students. In such responses, non-Indigenous students give the impression that culture and tradition are things that "other" people have or have in a different way from themselves. These students tended to consider remarkable that Indigenous peoples' "culture and way of life is extremely important to them."[7] Some wrote that Indigenous peoples have a "Cultural

[2] #160; in high school (A social studies course with a chapter on indigenous content. And an expo about the indigenous peoples of local land); 18; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; physics
[3] #215; no courses; 29; male; Métis; no program or career information
[4] #183; In high school (It was brought up in the history of Canada in my social studies class); 22; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada), Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Business Administration; Accounting
[5] #346; no courses; 17; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing
[6] #389; no courses; 23; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Social Work; Social worker
[7] #7; no courses; 18; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Tourism leader/planner

background"[8] and a "Very different spiritualize cultural practice,"[9] and that "Indigenous peoples have important cultural aspects that the general public should at least have some knowledge of."[10] Others remarked that Indigenous peoples have "Cultural Traditions"[11] and "many traditions that are essential to their culture,"[12] and that "Their traditions are important to them."[13] In these responses there is an obliviousness to the cultural mechanisms that function in much the same way in any society. There is a kind of multicultural othering at play in the ascription of tradition and culture to Indigenous peoples and the lack of recognition of the importance of culture and tradition to all peoples and societies. So, "They are traditional"[14] is a form of exoticization with hints of primitivism clear in the binary language some students reserve for what they take to be their own 'society' and the 'culture' of Indigenous people: "Their culture is misrepresented by society"[15] or again sympathetically but with the same binary, "Métis are asked to take part in the European Society by the means of forced assimilation. This includes sacrificing their cultural practices, their cultural legacy, their holy lands and a part of who they are."[16] In many of these students' rhetorical constructions, 'we' (an unidentified settler individual/state) have society and 'they' (Indigenous peoples) have culture.

Thirty students wrote about culture as a focus of colonial attack. These students focused on the "Loss of culture tradition language through assimilation process"[17]and "systematic destruction of their culture."[18] Some restricted their comments to historical injustices, as in "they suffered greatly during the time of the Residential school outbreak and much of the culture suffered"[19] and "Canada preformed cultural genocide on these peoples,"[20] while others recognized that "These groups continue to experience cultural genocide and repercussions of colonialization."[21] Some of these students presume the inevitability and absoluteness of the "loss" of Indigenous culture, and that Indigenous peoples

[8] #289; no courses; 21; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Forest Resources Technology; Forestry technician/conservationist

[9] #488; In university (2 semesters of Indigenous Anthropology- Intro level); 25; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing

[10] #137; no courses; 21; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; English; A nomadic writer.

[11] #432; no courses; 19; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education; Elementary Teacher

[12] #423; In high school (Coast Salish Studies); 18; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Education; I hope to become an Elementary Teacher or a Speech Language Pathologist.

[13] #95; no courses; 19; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Recreation & Sport Management; Event planning

[14] #487; In high school (First Nations art rotation in grade 8); 21; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing

[15] #205; In college (Human Service Worker with Indigenous Focus); 22; female; Inuit, Non-status Indigenous person; Child and Youth Care; CYC Worker

[16] #470; no courses; 25; male; International student; Theatre

[17] #468; In college (FNAT 101-102); no age given; female; First Nations, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry, Snuneymuxw; Child and Youth Care; Helping support children in care

[18] #266; no courses; 20; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Visual Art; My goal is to be a tattoo artist, as well as a freelance artist. I also have an interest in pursuing psychology.

[19] #380; no courses; 18; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education; Teacher

[20] #375; In university (FNAT 101); 18; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; teacher

[21] #420; no courses; 25; non-binary; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Other, Lgbt; Advocation Lawyer for LGBT

"have/are going through cultural assimilation"[22] that has "permanently altered their culture."[23] These students distance themselves from the pain and suffering caused by settler colonialism through their conceptualizations of culture. Their formulation of culture as separable from people emerges largely from a focus on the prolonged assault on Indigenous cultures through Residential Schools and the Indian Act. These students argue that Indigenous peoples' "culture was stripped away."[24] This thinking suggests that it was not people who were colonized but their cultures and that "Colonization tried to destroy these beautiful cultures,"[25] not the people. Although not wrong, as culture has long been a focus of colonial attack, in these students' formulation culture is objectified and simplified and separated from the people that give it meaning.

Twenty-seven responses refer to Indigenous peoples' cultural and traditional practices including food, clothing, art, storytelling, and spirituality. Most of these references are simplifications and generalizations, as in the simple mentions of "Their traditional clothing,"[26] "traditional stories,"[27] "oral traditions,"[28] "Traditional Art,"[29] "food culture"[30] "Traditional dances,"[31] and "Having strong spiritual traditions."[32] Although not always using the word culture, these students objectify culture in the "safe zone" of expressive culture (e.g., music, art, and dance) (Doerr, 2008; Fleras & Elliot, 1992; Raibmon, 2005; St. Denis, 2011). These are "cultural expressions" that these students can point to vaguely but do not name, explain, or engage with meaningfully. When referring to cultural and traditional practices, only 5 students provided any elaboration or contextualization, answering from their own experience:

> They are very proud of their culture. I met a drum maker who helped me make a drum. He told me many stories which related to the drum to the healing process[33]

[22] #180; no courses; 19; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Criminology; Lawyer
[23] #480; In high school (A large amount of my social studies focused on Indigenous culture/history), In university (*will be taking First Nations Studies which I'm very excited for!); 18; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Highschool English teacher
[24] #209; In college (Early childhood education), In university (Early childhood education); 21; female; As part of a racially marginalized group; Child and Youth Care; working with children
[25] #246; In high school (Social Studies and First Nations Arts), In college (English class with focuses on social justice, including environmental racism.); 23; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing - possible a public nurse working with groups in need, maternity nurse or newborn care.
[26] #2; no courses; 21; female; First Nations, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Tourism Management; Unsure
[27] #305; In university (aboriginal bridging program); 30; female; First Nations, Lax kw'alaams; Business, advisor for restaurants on finances
[28] #441; In high school (Sciences Humaines 11), In university (FNAT 101); 25; no gender info given; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education; French Elementary Teacher
[29] #327; In high school (Social Studies); 24; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing
[30] #227; In high school (Social Studies, History Through Film); 22; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Nursing
[31] #272; In college (Canadian History course (Indigenous and European relations)); 20; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education, Teacher
[32] #429; In university (Currently taking a social work class where we talk lots about indigenous people); 19; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Child and Youth Care; Working in mental health
[33] #478; In high school (Social Studies 9-11); no age given; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Psychology; Clinical Psychologist

> the cultural teachings, like how to skin animals, hunting, trapping, learning the weather patterns, beading, gathering berries, making baskets, and the traditional medicines[34]

It is striking that for many of these students, the most important things that they can name about Indigenous peoples are general, homogenizing, and objectifying.

Many students de-politicize and sanitize culture, whether remarking on how "very cultural" and "traditional" they consider Indigenous peoples to be, presuming culture to be separable from the people who give it expression, or objectifying Indigenous cultures by remaining in the 'safe zone' of cultural curios. These students demonstrate a construction of multicultural nationalism in which the state is seen as the unproblematic arbiter of rights, while cultures must be subordinate to the state (Kymlicka, 1995; Taylor, 1994). Multicultural nationalism silences Indigenous content and perspectives and is deeply embedded in educational curricula across Canada (Godlewska et al., 2013; Lamb, 2015; Schaefli et al., 2018; St. Denis, 2011), and has influenced deeply how these students understand multiculturalism and culture, as in "They are an important part of our culture."[35] It is because this understanding of multiculturalism and culture is so common that, for all of the 190 mentions of "culture" or "tradition" and their variants, there is only 1 mention of nations in the context of First Nations people, as in, "every nation has a distinct and rich culture."[36]

Some students (21), implicitly recognizing the problematic way many of their colleagues conceive of Indigenous cultures, engage in myth-busting around "culture" and "traditions." Some of these students insist that "There are many different kinds of first nations people, all with their own unique culture and traditions."[37] As one student who recognizes a much deeper sense of Indigenous culture interwoven with place (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Cajete, 2000; Larsen & Johnson, 2017; Tuck & MacKenzie, 2015) says, "Each territory has their own stories and way of life but each is a rich, proud culture with strong bonds to family and the land."[38] Some of these students highlight Indigenous resilience and resurgence, emphasizing that Indigenous peoples are "[1] maintaining their culture, [2] maintaining their culture, [3] maintaining their culture,"[39] and that Indigenous peoples "have fought to maintain their culture and thats unfair."[40] These students argue that "There is much more to Indigenous cultures than the commonly portrayed stereotypes"[41] and that "They are incredibly stereotyped so it is

[34] #464; In high school (Northern Studies); 18; female; First Nations, Dene; Tourism Studies
[35] #151; no courses; 21; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Computing Science; Programmer
[36] #498; no courses; 31; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Registered Forest Professional
[37] #503; no courses; 20; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Tourism Studies
[38] #469; In high school (Social Studies 11 covered a large amount about Residential Schools; conducted a research essay on intergenerational trauma (english); and a social justice course); 17; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Ultrasound technician or teacher
[39] #290; In high school (Social Studies); 23; male; Non-status Indigenous person; Creative Writing and Journalism; writer
[40] #243; no courses; 17; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing, nurse
[41] #260; In high school (Seeds Connections); 18; male; First Nations, Saddle Lake Cree Nation. Status; Business, Working in the production industry for prop fabrication and special effects makeup.

important to challenge that and learn more about their culture from them in order to dispel myths and understand each other."[42]

Past or Away

Over a quarter of the students (136/512, 27%) engaged in past-ing or distancing. The most common trends for these students are to think of Indigenous peoples in terms of the distant past (104 responses), to place colonialism in a past for which they are not responsible (61 responses), and to construct First Nations and Métis peoples and Inuit as vanishing over time (10 responses). The past-ing of Indigenous people is a tendency observed by Susan Dion and illustrated in Thomas King's "You're Not the Indian I Had in Mind" (Dion, 2009; King, 2003). This tendency is so strong because it is one of the most fundamental ways settlers and governments have denied "the geopolitical implications of persistent Indigenous becoming," and the ways that Indigenous existence in the here and now "challenges settler claims to possession now and for the future" (Rifkin, 2017, p. 5). For the young, this perspective is subtly but powerfully reinforced by the curricular relegation of teaching about Indigenous peoples to history (Godlewska et al., 2016; Lamb, 2015; Schaefli et al., 2018).

Many of the students who focused on the distant past are concerned to give Indigenous peoples historical priority. However, the way they do this is sometimes deeply problematic and reflects narratives of national identity (Anderson & O'Gorman, 2006, pp. 204-206). Some students position Indigenous peoples within the narratives of the "discovery" of North America whereby "we are all settlers," disregarding Indigenous peoples' cosmogeneses which place them on Turtle Island from time immemorial (Weir, 2013). These students emphasize that Indigenous peoples "Migrated from Europe"[43] and were the first people to "discover,"[44] and "settle in Canada."[45] In such rhetorical constructions, many students give Canada an eternal status of always having been: Indigenous peoples "are essentially the "first people" who made Canada home."[46] Many of these students place Indigenous peoples in a past before the arrival of Europeans, as in "The First Nations people owned all the land before European settlers arrived."[47] Some demonstrated a particular kind of multiculturalism which presumes an unexamined settler-centric "we" and an Indigenous "they." Some of these students used the we/they construction to reinforce Indigenous priority: "This Country was theirs before we arrived. This land was theirs before we arrived."[48] And other students regard Indigenous priority as a link in the narrative chain leading inevitably to the "shared" settler nation, where Indigenous peoples "founded Canada,"[49] "were

[42] #20; In high school (Socials studies 11); 18; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing; Registered nurse (in pediatrics)
[43] #332; no courses; 18; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Dental Hygiene, Dental hygienist, then in orthodontics
[44] #119; no courses; no age given; female; International student; Business, Prosperous
[45] #63; no courses; 21; female; International student; no career info given
[46] #11; In high school (Social Studies 10); 18; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business Administration, Accountant
[47] #62; no courses; no age give; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Geography
[48] #273; In high school (First Nations 12); 22; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing
[49] #171; no courses; 18; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Recreation & Sport Management, Program Coordinator

the start of my community,"[50] "the background of Canada and its ancestry,"[51] and as such are an "Important part of Canadian history."[52] Some rely on colonial anthropological definitions that reduce complex interrelationships with land to simple (i.e. primitive) practices: "They were very effective hunters and gatherers."[53] Others focus on a moment or event in the past linked to the arrival of Europeans, most frequently in reference to the "Fur Trade." 15 students merely mentioned the word "history."

Overwhelmingly, in the tenses they use and in their sentence construction, these students place colonialism in the past. Many of these students referred to past death abstractly, as in "became ill due to a bad trade, killed half their people."[54] Or they emphasized the death toll brought by European diseases: "Many died from smallpox brought by foreigners;"[55] or "European's brought many diseases to Canada when they arrived that Aboriginal people had not been exposed to, causing many to become sick and still many more died."[56] The emphasis on diseases, and Indigenous peoples' susceptibility to them, is a common theme represented in Canadian education that obscures the violence, killings, and genocide perpetuated against Indigenous peoples by explorers, colonists, and settlers (Sinclair, 2020). Few students recognized the role of colonizers, though even these frequently put it in the past, as in "[1] They were colonized, [2] Brutally beaten and killed if they didn't comply;"[57] or "I know they were exposed to diseases and killed by settlers when the europeans came to colonize Canada."[58] Other students were more abstract and generalizing, writing that Indigenous peoples were "Mistreated back then,"[59] and "Treated horribly in history."[60] Some of these students give a timeframe for such mistreatment, as "during the colonization of Europeans,"[61] or the even more specific yet restricted:

[50] #195; In high school (Socials studies); 17; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Child and Youth Care, Counsellor for youth
[51] #150; no courses; 17; female; First Nations, Peguis band/Ojibway; Biology; I want to work in forensics and technology.
[52] #129; In university (Indeginous Feminism); 20; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; no career info given
[53] #407; In high school (First Nations Studies in Middle School); 19; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Business; Sport Business
[54] #1; In your community (elementary school learning another language); 18; female; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Early Childhood Education and Care; daycare worker in another country
[55] #149; no courses; 17; female; Native American (U.S.); Nursing
[56] #161; no courses; 19; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Adventure Tourism and Recreation; Destination Marketing
[57] #225; In high school (Social Studies 10); 23; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada, As part of a racially marginalized group; Nursing; A mother, wife and possibly business owner
[58] #254; In high school (history class we talked about first nations); 21; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing; A registered nurse
[59] #4; In high school (Social studies); 18; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada), Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Police officer or cook/chef
[60] #127; no courses; 23; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Education; Teacher/Advocate
[61] #384; In high school (Social Studies, History, and Social Justice); 19; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education; Elementary School Teacher

"100 or so years ago they were treated inhumanely by people who came onto their land."[62] Certainly, these students demonstrate no hint of understanding the lasting impacts of colonialism (Quijano, 2007).

Some students performed a double form of distancing though past-ing and identity. By laying responsibility on others, these students distance themselves from a shared responsibility for ongoing colonialism. These students claim that Indigenous peoples "Have a bad history when Europeans first arrived."[63] They tend to see colonialism as a past and finished event, "Understanding that in the time of colonialism the natives were removed from historical lands onto less optimal lands for the benefit of incoming settlers."[64] Or they lay blame for colonialism on particular people in the past:

> "The english tried to strip them of their culture, therefor taking children away from their families to put them in residential schools. They taught them "English ways". A lot of people don't know or forgot that it wasn't that long ago and that families are still having to overcome that huge trauma with what the english did to them."[65]

Through such rhetorical distancing through past-ing, these students seemingly absolve the Canadian state and settler-Canadians of responsibility for the ongoing impacts of colonialism.

The sense of Indigenous peoples' vanishing and absence is not as strong at VIU as it is in universities and colleges in Ontario or especially in Newfoundland and Labrador where the myth of vanishing has been a foundation of the k-12 curriculum for some time (Godlewska et al., 2017; Hallett, 2017; Owen, 2017), but it is present in this student population. Some students claim that Indigenous peoples "had a developed society prior to European colonialism"[66] and that there "Was once a beautiful diverse community of tribes throughout Canada,"[67] presuming that these societies and diverse communities have since "vanished" as a result of diseases brought by Europeans, as in "They were mostly wiped out by smallpox after trying to help the settlers who arrived in Canada over the last 400 years,"[68] or simply that "They died fast."[69] For some of these students, the "vanishing" is complete, and Indigenous peoples were "assimilated into white society."[70] Here, assimilation is not framed as the result of a series of incomplete policies but an inevitable, even 'natural,' historical process. Related to

[62] #473; In university (HCA courses had regular elder visits and some history to better work with indigenous seniors); 23; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Child and Youth Care; Teen counsellor or Behaviour Interventionalist

[63] #134; In high school (First Nations Studies); 18; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Biology; medical doctor

[64] #89; In high school (Aborigines study); 23; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Forest Resources Technology; Forestry engineering

[65] #297; no courses; 19; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing; I would like to obtain my bachelorette in Nursing.

[66] #230; In high school (Socials 11, Law 12); 19; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing; Registered Nurse

[67] #41; In high school (Social Studies covered a section of the class discussing the same topics in this survey); 30; Transgender; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business

[68] #402; no courses; 22; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Social Services Diploma; Social worker or counsellor

[69] #37; In high school (social studies), In university (hist 111, hist 112); 18; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education; Teacher

[70] #29; In high school (Grade 12 First Nations Studies.); 19; male; Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Media Studies

the past-ing performed in these responses, some students also perform a form of geographical distancing, placing Indigenous peoples somewhere far away (Dwyer & Jones, 2000; Laliberté et al., 2017; Lipsitz, 2011; Medina, 2013a, 2013b; Whitt, 2016). For several of these students, what is most remarkable about First Nations and Métis peoples and Inuit is their absence: "Most live on reservations,"[71] "Most live in Aboriginal colonies,"[72] "live in villages,"[73] or they are simply "isolated."[74]

Residential Schools

Nearly a quarter of the students (123/512, 24%) mentioned residential schools among the three most important things they know, suggesting previous education on the topic. 68 of these students mentioned the schools as the first thing they know. In that regard, perhaps the 2015 call of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for better education of students about residential schools has been heard (Treleaven, 2018; TRCC, 2015a and 2015b). However, a significant number of these students (46/123, 37%) did no more than mention the words "residential schools," suggesting limited engagement with the topic. The other students focused on mistreatment in the schools (23), assimilation and loss of culture (19), intergenerational trauma (12), other harms to families and communities (6), the dates the schools closed (5), and that the schools were colonial/part of colonization (2). Although the focus on intergenerational trauma suggests some students' awareness of colonialism's ongoing impacts, it can also work to frame colonialism as a "temporally situated experience which occurred at some relatively fixed period in history" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 125). Most of these students considered residential schools as part of a "dark past" in "Canadian History."[75] However, 15 students explicitly challenged this relegation of the schools and their impacts to history, arguing that "They face systemic barriers because of our history of Colonialism, abuse, residential schools and the effects have, and continue to impact generations."[76] As one student put it,

> The "60s Scoop"/Residential Schools is not some ancient history. Looking at a timeline of Canadian history; it basically happened yesterday. It's wrong to forget about it + it's wrong to think that F.N. people should "get over it." Its effects on their culture are still very fresh.[77]

Overall, although students at VIU seem more familiar with residential schools than any other aspect of colonialism in Canada, their depth of understanding is varied, especially when it comes to recognizing the schools as colonial.

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[71] #347; In high school (Social studies/ history), In your community (Elementary school we were taught some of the local First Nations language); 25; male; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Forest Resources Technology; Forester
[72] #269; no courses; 21; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Business Administration
[73] #178; In high school (Social Studies); 18; male; Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Business Administration; Accounting
[74] #206; no courses; 26; female; International Indigenous person; Child and Youth Care; I want to hear the story of immigrants' child or First Nation's child and youth and help to understand and cure their mind.
[75] #164; In high school (Talked about Residential Schools), In college (Read Indian Horse in English); 20; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Recreation & Sport Management; Recreation Director
[76] #68; no courses; 24; female; Métis; no career info given
[77] #486; In high school (Social Studies); 38; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Surgical Nursing

Land/Nature

Again, almost a quarter of students (118/512, 23%) mention land and/or nature (totalling 134 mentions) in association with Indigenous peoples. In general, these students make this association in five principle ways: they assert that Indigenous people have a special relationship with land and nature (70), they talk about land rights and ownership (35), they focus on the theft of Indigenous land (18), or they mention Indigenous priority on the land (11). The comments focused on Indigenous peoples' relationships with land and nature range from simple assertions like "Nature,"[78] or "Their connection and respect for the earth,"[79] to the somewhat more nuanced "Aboriginal culture is rooted in the land. They live off the land, and often nature, as well as local wildlife play a part in the spirituality of the people."[80] Some of these responses place such relationships in the past, as in "they were very connected to nature,"[81] and some reflect stereotypes of Indigenous peoples as being "one with nature."[82] Some of the comments focused on land rights assert Indigenous ownership of land in the past, but some assert a present sense of sovereignty, arguing that "We are on their land."[83] Some of these students document Indigenous peoples' struggles to get "their land back"[84] and that "There are still a lot of land claims that have not been properly addressed between government and first nation communities across Canada,"[85] or are statements of responsibility considering that "the land is theirs and we have to respect that."[86] Others centre and reinforce the liberal multiculturalist view of the Canadian government as the arbiter and giver of rights: Indigenous peoples are "not given as many rights as they should,"[87] and the "government of Canada has recently been trying to makeup for the destructive past they have places on Indigenous peoples by giving them money and land and respecting their rights."[88] The comments directed at land theft range from the simple and direct "We stole their land"[89] to assigning responsibility for land theft to a different time or specific people, as in "white people stole their land."[90] Land and

[78] #262; In university (FNAT 100 and FNAT 101); 21; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education; Becoming an Elementary or Middle School Teacher
[79] #138; In high school (We did a large unit on residential schools), In college (History 112 at camosun - Calonial Canada); 26; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Creative Writing and Journalism; Creative writing professor
[80] #161; no courses; 19; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Adventure Tourism and Recreation; Destination Marketing
[81] #102; In high school (I took BC First Nation Studies in grade 11); no age given; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; To educate myself
[82] #413; no courses; 57; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Social Work; Womens condition and rights
[83] #412; no courses; 24; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Social Work; Geriatric Social Worker
[84] #155; no courses; 18; non-binary; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Artist/film maker
[85] #505; In college (Canadian History); 37; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education; early years educator - community educator
[86] #385; In high school (social studies); 19; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education; A Teacher
[87] #467; no courses; 22; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; law or government
[88] #233; In high school (A large part of the social studies curriculum throughout school in Alberta involves learning about aborigionals); 18; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Nursing; Being a nurse
[89] #53; no courses; 31; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Child and Youth Care; Counsellor
[90] #177; In high school (social studies); 18; other; First Nations, Métis, Inuit

nature are frequently used by the students with very different understandings and interpretations, many of them fundamentally unexamined.

Stereotypes

In our analysis of the responses we encountered a number of comments that we consider to be stereotypes. Some of these stereotypes fit in the other themes, as in stereotypes about Indigenous peoples' cultures, past-ness, and connections to nature as seen above. Some students' comments presented stereotypes that did not fit within the other themes, and were generally positive (55), neutral (8), and negative (6). Positive stereotypes are blanket statements about peoples that might be true for some but, in relying on generalities, students who relate them demonstrate insufficient knowledge to say anything based on deeper education or experience. The tone and nature of these comments is captured by these examples: Indigenous peoples' are "rich in spirituality"[91] with "strong relationships with family and community,"[92] whose "generosity and kindness is bountiful."[93] Many of the references to culture (particularly in the singular), land and nature fall within this category of stereotype, but we have removed them from the count as we discussed them elsewhere. Neutral stereotypes are generally observational, and some might be offensive, but we suspect they are not meant to be so. Typical of these are: Indigenous peoples have "interesting outlooks on life,"[94] and "Yellow skin and black eyes,"[95] "First nation decorates their head with feathers,"[96] and "Some First Nation parents don't want to let other touch their child's hair."[97] Most of the students writing such responses are international students. Once we subtract those that overlap with other categories such as the Gift category (discussed below), negative stereotypes are few and focus on the supposed poverty of Indigenous people.

Myth-Busting

A small number of students (34/512, 7%) engaged in myth busting, using their comments to attack some of the stereotypes or myths prevalent in Canadian society. Apart from those comments aimed at stereotypes we saw in the themes above, some students argue "That racisim towards First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples is still a real and large issue today,"[98] as "Many people of the majority have negative views and preconceived notions about Indigenous peoples as a whole."[99] Some students use their comments to counter specific myths, as in "aboriginal people dont pay taxes is a myth,"[100] and stereotypes, arguing that Indigenous peoples are "Hardworking"[101] and "each are significantly different,

[91] #82; no courses; 33; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing; Registered Nurse
[92] #277; In high school (Social Studies); 25; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Computer Science; Program Developer
[93] #274; no courses; 47; female; First Nations; Nursing; we will see...im open to whatever comes...but nursing is my current direction
[94] #14; In your community (Elementary School); 18; female; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Child and Youth Care; maybe doctor
[95] #307; no courses; 20; female; International student; Business Administration; Marketing
[96] #497; no courses; no age given; no gender given; International student; Editor or writer
[97] #504; In high school (earthquake drill); 20; female; International student; no career info given
[98] #313; no courses; 23; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing; Hospice or long-term care
[99] #405; In university (I am in the process of taking FNAT 101, Indigenous Identities); 21; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Psychology; Environmental Psychologist, Human Resources, or Education.
[100] #286; In high school (social studies); 20; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing; no idea. i really hope i become a physician one day
[101] #93; no courses; 23; female; International student; Business

yet they are lumped as one."[102] Two students comment, "its not civialized verses savage;"[103] "We are not savages."[104] Others emphasize that Indigenous peoples are "resilient,"[105] and "have over come a lot of difficulties and adapted to how the world around them has changed,"[106] or simply but powerfully are "Still here."[107] As one student who self-identifies as First Nations puts it, "We are not going to give into the intergenerational traumas our families have experienced, and continue to experience, as a result of the department of indian affairs."[108] The focus on resilience is important and political, as is several other students' focus on resurgence, where Indigenous peoples "Are making great strides to overcome the oppression through education and awareness and self governance."[109]

Language

Thirty-three students focused on language, language recovery, or language retention as important issues. Indeed, language retention and recovery are vital to community health and well being and there is hope for the future with Indigenous language recovery in Canada (Dunlop et al., 2018; McIvor & Ball, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2017a). These students tend to notice the diversity of languages, note the loss of language, highlight the importance of language revitalization, point to specific languages, or just cryptically state "language," in the singular.

Government Responsibility

Twenty-four students hold the government responsible for what is going wrong in Indigenous-settler relations. Some of these responses focus on mistreatment by the government, ranging from the general "they where wronged by the canadian government,"[110] to the personal "How the government mistreated my people."[111] Some of these students are highly critical of the government, pointing to "prejudice against them within Canadian government and society,"[112] and how Indigenous peoples "are still deeply under funded (government skews info on this)."[113] And some students critique the

[102] #343; In high school (Socials 11); 23; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing; a nurse or a health care professional

[103] #377; In university (fnat101); 19; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Child and Youth Care; Teacher

[104] #324; In high school (BC First Nations 12 instead of Social Studies), In university (A Social Justice Course at UBC); 18; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community, As part of a racially marginalized group; Natural Resource Protection; Registered Professional Forester, working for The Council of The Haida Nation

[105] #18; In high school (first nation studies(socials) 12 & nuuchahnulth12), In your community (language revitalization); 16; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; Business Administration; certified public accountant

[106] #379; In high school (social studies); 18; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education; french immersion elementary school teacher

[107] #410; no courses; 36; male; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; Business

[108] #324; In high school (BC First Nations 12 instead of Social Studies), In university (A Social Justice Course at UBC); 18; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community, As part of a racially marginalized group; Natural Resource Protection; Registered Professional Forester, working for The Council of The Haida Nation

[109] #334; no courses; 47; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Forest Resources Technology; Forestry

[110] #165; no courses; 18; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, As part of a racially marginalized group; Recreation & Sport Management; recreation programmer

[111] #46; In your community (no description); 19; female; First Nations; Political Studies; Writer

[112] #386; no courses; 29; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education, Teacher

[113] #212; no courses; 26; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Child and Youth Care; Masters as a Child life Specialist in Hospitals

government for not "doing enough to find out more about the missing and murdered Indigenous women across Canada,"[114] and the government's co-implication in settler capitalism: "Political structures that reward corporate and government coercion is promoted over traditional. Especially when money is involved."[115] And a few students focus on the violence perpetuated by the government, one remarking that "apartheid was modeled after Canadian policies towards indigenous peoples."[116] These students recognize the systematic government attempts at Indigenous erasure.

Local and Personal

Twenty-three students' comments (a total of 34 mentions) were focused on local and/or personal reflections. Half of these students self-identified as Indigenous, and made references to their "families history,"[117] exclaimed pride in their community identities,[118] relayed their connection to their land,[119] and referenced specific meaningful territories and places. The other students wrote about their experiences learning from Indigenous friends and people they have met, sometimes mentioning being on Indigenous territory.

Rights

A small number of students (20, 3.9%) focused on rights. Some focused on how they consider that Indigenous peoples have lost their rights, and a few commented on how the "The Indian Act of Canada still limits their rights as people in Canada today."[120] One student connected the assimilative policies of the Indian Act to their own experience: "the b-31 and B-3 acts affected my family, and many other families by taking away their right to a status card to prove that they were indigenous. These bills were some of the worst to be created, and they were used to again try and assimilate the indigenous people."[121] Other students recognize that Indigenous peoples continue to have "special rights," like "Treaty Rights etc,"[122] and that "There are Canadian Aboriginal laws that provide certain Constitutionally recognized rights to land and traditional practices."[123] However, some of the students focus on "Equal rights,"[124] or conversely that there are "No equal rights given."[125] In both of these rhetorical constructions, students fold Indigenous rights within the framework of liberal multiculturalism, obscuring Indigenous peoples' inalienable and sovereign rights as nations and casting

[114] #142; no courses; 19; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Creative Writing and Journalism; A writer (either as a author or a journalist) or an actor.
[115] #139; no courses; 33; male; Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Education; Teacher
[116] #498; no courses; 31; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Registered Forest Professional
[117] #2; no courses; 21; female; First Nations, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Tourism Management; Unsure
[118] #215; no courses; 29; male; Métis; no program or career information
[119] #281; In high school (In all Social Studies courses there was indigenous content); 19; female; Métis; Biology; Doctor of Medicine
[120] #235; In high school (BC First Nations 12); 17; female; Métis; Nursing; Registered Nurse
[121] #271; In high school (Indigenous studies); 18; female; First Nations, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Education; High school teacher in chemistry, psycology, or indigenous studies
[122] #310; no courses; 22; Male, Non-binary; Métis; Creative Writing and Journalism; Writer, digital humanities etc.
[123] #353; In high school (Social Studies); 20; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business Administration; Entrepreneur
[124] #416; In high school (American history and civics); 18; male; International student; Business Administration; Lawyer
[125] #159; no courses; 25; female; International student; Business Administration; Entrepreneur or management

Indigenous peoples as another minority to be managed and the settler state as the arbiter and giver of rights (Blackburn, 2005, 2007; Coulthard, 2014).

Reserves

A small number of students (16/512, 3%) commented on reserves, ranging from the simplistic and distancing mentions we saw in the Past and Away theme to the slightly more nuanced "Many peoples now live on reserves that were created by the Canadian Government."[126] Some students see reserves as gifts, "land that has been set aside for First Nations,"[127] and even that First Nations are "Paid to live on reserves."[128] Other students argue that Indigenous peoples were "put on reservations" as part of the persecution by the Government of Canada.[129] And some students deplore the condition on reserves, arguing that they are "underfunded and ignored,"[130] some even advocating that "We need to join together as a community to help provide the necessities to their land like water, electricity, etc. because our government isn't helping them at all."[131] Yet, few of these students connect colonial dispossession and forced removal of Indigenous peoples to reserves, and underfunding of reserves, with ongoing colonial assaults on Indigenous sovereignty and survivance. Only one student explicitly recognizes the complex relationship between reserves, the Indian Act, and government control of status and identity that produces inequalities:

> Status was decided by what they call "blood quantum" when the Indian act first was created. Because of that and assimilation (for going to war, getting a university degree or marrying someone without status) many Indigenous people do not have status and therefore cannot live on reservations, etc.[132]

Educational Imperative

In surveys in other educational institutions and jurisdictions, students have emphasized the importance of education to the quality of life of First Nations and Métis peoples or Inuit and to transforming settler Indigenous relations. The importance of transforming, decolonizing, or Indigenizing education has been the focus of significant academic research (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Kuokkanen, 2007; Styres, 2017; Tuck & Yang, 2012), advocacy by important organizations like the First Nations Education Steering Committee (see http://www.fnesc.ca/publication/), and activity on the part of the Ministries of Education, school boards and educators (Dion, 2007; Higgins et al., 2015; Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018; St. Denis, 2007; Tupper, 2011; Watson & Currie-Paterson, 2019). In responding to this question, only a small number of students at VIU (15) mentioned the importance of education. Most of these worried about how ill-

[126] #437; In university (HIST 151, learning about the history of Canada's oppression on First Nations and Inuit Peoples); 21; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education
[127] #252; no courses; 17; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Computer Science; Possibly as a web designer
[128] #308; no courses; 27; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing; Community Nurse
[129] #484; In high school (history of Canada); 21; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing
[130] #465; In university (First Nations Studies), In your community (In Cultural Practice); 20; male; First Nations; Education; English Teacher (highschool)
[131] #291; no courses; 17; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Criminology; Lawyer
[132] #431; In university (Arts One, First Nations: Exploring Aboriginal Identities. I am several weeks in to this course.), In your community (no description); 18; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education; Elementary School teacher

informed most people are and that Indigenous peoples "are still extremely misunderstood due to the lack of info taught in the elementary/highschool education system."[133]

Gifts

A small but significant number of students focus on the benefits they feel Indigenous peoples receive. Apart from those who see reserves as gifts from the government, 11 students make such comments, most frequently in reference to "free education." Other students consider that Indigenous peoples have "different privileges then others,"[134] that the "Government Gives them benefits"[135] like "They don't have to pay taxes."[136] One student lists only perceived benefits and another uses two of three spaces to list perceived benefits. In general, these students do not distinguish between First Nations and Métis peoples or Inuit in making these assertions, and most do not recognize any difference between status and non-status people.

Reconciliation

Remarkably few students (9) referred to reconciliation as one of the three most important things they know. These students either merely mention the term, suggest that reconciliation is only the concern of Indigenous peoples, or see reconciliation as "an ongoing process"[137] that is "important because colonialism really messed up F.N. cultures and it's a big job to try to make things whole again."[138] Thinking critically about reconciliation is a must for settlers (Garneau, 2016; Jung, 2018), who have a role to play in transforming the violence and domination of colonialism and supporting Indigenous futurity (Paquette, 2020). Given how few students referred to reconciliation, critically or otherwise, it does not appear to be a prevalent topic of concern for students entering VIU.

Some Deeper Understanding

A small number of students provided significantly more elaboration than their colleagues in comments that reveal some deeper reflection around the three things they know. These comments generally demonstrate a richer understanding of some of the other themes we saw expressed throughout the responses. A student who self-identified as First Nations shared that

> [1] They symbolized the animals. I.e Raven, Bear, Orca. Created story's and tales. The raven was mainly symbol of seperation. (ego). [2] The First Nations connected to the land that they bestowed upon. They used almost all the parts of the animal and saw all animals as valuable. [3] Spiritually, some recognized the interconnected web of life. from my understanding referred to as the great spirit or creator.[139]

A student who self-identified as Métis wrote about importance of place in and to storytelling: "History/Herstory is told through stories passed on throughout generations. Some stories may only be

[133] #479; no courses; 29; female; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Family medicine
[134] #187; In high school (Social studies); 18; male; Métis; Geoscience; Exploration Geologists
[135] #448; no courses; 18; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business; Lawyer
[136] #422; no courses; 18; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Education; High school teacher
[137] #322; In high school (BCFN 12); 19; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Physical Education; The title I am hoping for is geriatric physiotherapist
[138] #486; In high school (Social Studies); 38; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Surgical Nursing
[139] #210; no courses; 19; female; First Nations; Child and Youth Care

told in certain places holding significance or importance to that story."[140] This student also explicitly called out colonialism, arguing that Indigenous peoples "face systemic barriers because of our history of Colonialism, abuse, residential schools and the effects have, and continue to impact generations." Other students demonstrated nuanced learnings and understandings about identity, as in "Two-spirit is an identity celebrated by some indigenous communities and it often pertains to one feeling they contain both feminine/masculine spirits/embraced as a sort of third gender role with wisdom is some communities."[141] Some remark on the passive and active violence of the police towards Indigenous peoples, particularly women and girls:

> Women go missing and are murdered at a high rate among First nation communities. Many of these cases go unnoticed by RCMP or are not investigated properly. In some cases there is abuse by members of RCMP toward first nation women.[142]

A few others demonstrate nuanced understandings of the Indian Act and assimilation policies.

Some Understanding

We classed together the responses that fell into no other category but reflected some understanding. Almost a quarter of students (123/512, 24%) provided at least one response that reflected this general level of understanding, and the students provided a total of 151 such responses. We subdivided them into negative characterizations, neutral comments, and positive observations. Negative characterizations (76/512, or 15% of the students; 89 responses) were of two kinds: recognition of the damage caused by colonialism; and association of Indigenous peoples with social problems without any suggestion of awareness of the colonial source of the problems. Over two-thirds (70%) of the responses making negative associations focused on the damaging effects of colonialism. These responses assert that Indigenous peoples face oppression, mistreatment, and discrimination in Canada, pointing to assimilation, racism, the Indian Act, and the Sixties Scoop as specific examples. 30% of the responses focused on social problems. Some of these responses merely point to intergenerational trauma, while others simply name social problems like substance abuse, criminality, and mental health. While the students responding in this way may be able to locate some of the social issues faced by Indigenous peoples in colonialism, not stating that relationship is problematic in an environment of racism.

41 students (8%) provided a total of 49 responses that we classified in the neutral category. Some were reasonably informed, if generalizing and at the same time particular: "they live on the water."[143] Others were specific but terse mentions of information about, for example, Louis Riel, the Douglas Treaties, and Potlatches.

Positive responses were fewer: 17/512 (3%) students provided a total of 21 positive comments. These responses focused on perseverance, recognition of the importance of respect for Elders such as "They respect their elders and learn from them,"[144] and favourable considerations of Indigenous

[140] #68; no courses; 24; female; Métis; no career info given
[141] #471; In high school (Social Studies grades 8-11, covered some Indigenous content); 18; male; Transgender; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Child and Youth Care; Child and youth care practitioner or teacher
[142] #505; In college (Canadian History); 37; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education; early years educator - community educator
[143] #76; In high school (English 12); 18; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; a nurse
[144] #240; In high school (First Nations Studies); 20; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing; a nurse

lifestyles and artistic expression. Overall, we found that when students demonstrate minimal knowledge about Indigenous peoples, that knowledge tends to be more focused on negative associations.

Don't Know

A generally low level of knowledge is suggested by the significant number of students who could only name one or two things they knew about First Nations, Métis, or Inuit people (69/512, 14%) and the even larger number of students, almost one quarter, who could not name a single thing they knew (125/512, 24%). Eight students expressly admitted their lack of knowledge, and a relatively low level of knowledge is also suggested by the 13 strictly definitional responses, for example: "Metis are descended from French and First Nations."[145] The 50 responses that were too terse to interpret – "Community,"[146] "Beliefs,"[147] "Spirituality,"[148] "Stories"[149] – again suggest a very low level of understanding.

Conclusion

Coming into this test and in response to our intentionally problematic request that they tell us three things they know about First Nations and Métis people and Inuit, students display an array of frequently worrisome perspectives and prejudices. The themes and words we focused on for our analysis are reflected in the headings in this section of the report. While a small number of students displayed deeper understanding of Indigeneity in Canada, and were committed to myth-busting, many reveal a lack of understanding. Many students have a tendency to place Indigenous peoples and colonialism in the past and generally employ a variety of strategies to distance themselves from the suffering of Indigenous peoples and responsibility for colonialism. Stereotypical thinking is common and although the stereotypes are not always negative, they reflect ignorance of Indigenous peoples and of society more generally. The number of students who could not think of three things, or indeed of anything, they knew about First Nations and Métis people and Inuit alone speaks to the limited education these students have received and the need to address that at the university level.

[145] #304; no courses; 24; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Criminology

[146] #35; no courses; no age given; male; Métis, Non-status Indigenous person, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Social Services Diploma; Corrections officer

[147] #115; no courses; 22; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Tourism Studies

[148] #258; In high school (Planning 10 had a strong focus on what occurred in residential schools); 19; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; no career info given

[149] #391; In high school (Kwak'wala); 18; female; First Nations; Social Work; Social worker

Part 4: Quantitative Methodology

We conducted a quantitative analysis of student responses to determine trends in student knowledge and attitudes. All data analysis was completed using Statistical Program for the Social Sciences version 25 (SPSS v. 25). For both the entering and the exiting surveys, we examined statistical differences in participants' performance on the knowledge portion of the questionnaire using independent samples t-tests, or analysis of variance (ANOVA). For sociodemographic variables with two groupings, we employed an independent samples t-test. For sociodemographic variables with three or more groupings, we used ANOVA. We used Welch's ANOVA ($\alpha = 0.05$) specifically, a Games-Howell post-hoc test. Statistical differences in participants' responses within check-all-that-apply items were examined using contingency tables (cross tabulations) and Pearson's chi-square tests of independence (chi-square test). We employed a chi-square test using z-test of column proportions with Bonferonni adjustments ($\alpha= 0.05$) to identify significant differences. For 2 by 2 tables with smaller sample sizes (expected counts less than 5), we substituted Pearson's chi-square test for Fisher's Exact Test. The null hypothesis (H_0) for these analyses was that demographic groupings would not influence awareness. We also employed regression analysis to examine the relationship between test performance and how well students consider they were taught in college and at Victoria Island University.

Data collection methodologies and the survey tool differed between the entering- and exiting-student surveys due to the greater labour demands of surveying many small upper year classes and restrictions placed on the research by the Vancouver Island University Research Ethics Board. Entering students (512 students, 431 of whom are residents of Canada) were tested in class and received a questionnaire including a multiple-choice test with 84 possible points. Exiting students (342 students) were tested with an online survey including a test with 46 possible points. While we provide general data for the performance of international students, our close analysis of the multiple-choice questions in the entering student quantitative analysis excludes these students to give us a better sense of the performance of those who have passed through Canadian educational institutions. As we are interested in what all exiting students have learned, the exiting analysis includes international students. Although the multiple-choice questions on the exiting questionnaire were drawn exclusively from the entering test, the two tests are not strictly comparable. Co-designers agreed that it was more important to give upper-year students the opportunity to express themselves fully in open-ended questions than to reproduce the first-year test. We used the most important and robust questions from the entering-student survey on the exiting-student survey. The emphasis of analysis in this report is on quantitative data for the entering survey and on quantitative and qualitative data for the exiting survey.

Entering- and Exiting-Student Quantitative Analysis

Entering- and Exiting-Student Performance on Multiple-Choice Questions

The entering-student knowledge test comprised 33 multiple-choice questions. 19 of these questions had one correct answer. The remaining 14 had multiple correct answers and were constructed as check-all-that-apply. We calculated student performance by assigning a point to each correct answer. A question with one correct answer would have a maximum score of 1, whereas a check-all-that-apply question with, for example, four correct answers would have a maximum score of 4. Students could score a maximum of 84 points on the multiple-choice questions. Based on this metric, entering students' overall average test performance (including Indigenous, non-Indigenous, and international)

was 51% (*N*= 512). Students who self-identified as International (*n* = 36) performed 27% points less well than domestic students (*n* = 309).

The exiting student questionnaire had 19 multiple-choice questions, 11 of which had one correct answer. The remaining eight had multiple correct answers and were constructed as check-all-that-apply. We calculated the score the same way we did for the entering students. Students could score a maximum of 46 points on the multiple-choice questions. The average students' test score was 57% (*N* = 342). Students who self-identified as International (*n* = 30) performed 32% points less well than domestic students.

While entering students' average performance on the test amounted to a passing score, there was considerable variation in test performance across question themes. We will not focus on themes for the exiting students as there are insufficient questions per theme for robust analysis. Figure 1 provides average test scores for Indigenous and non-Indigenous entering students. Figure 2 shows test scores for entering-domestic students (including Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and International students. International students performed significantly less well on all question categories.

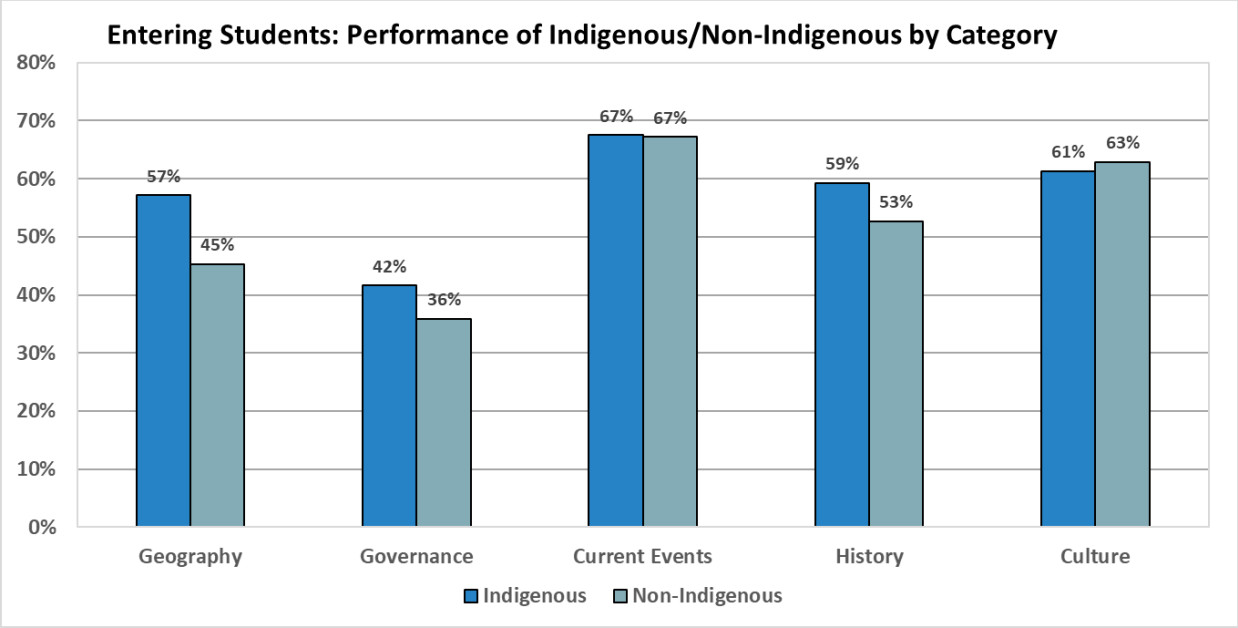

Figure 1. Indigenous and non-Indigenous domestic student performance on the entering survey on questions by category.

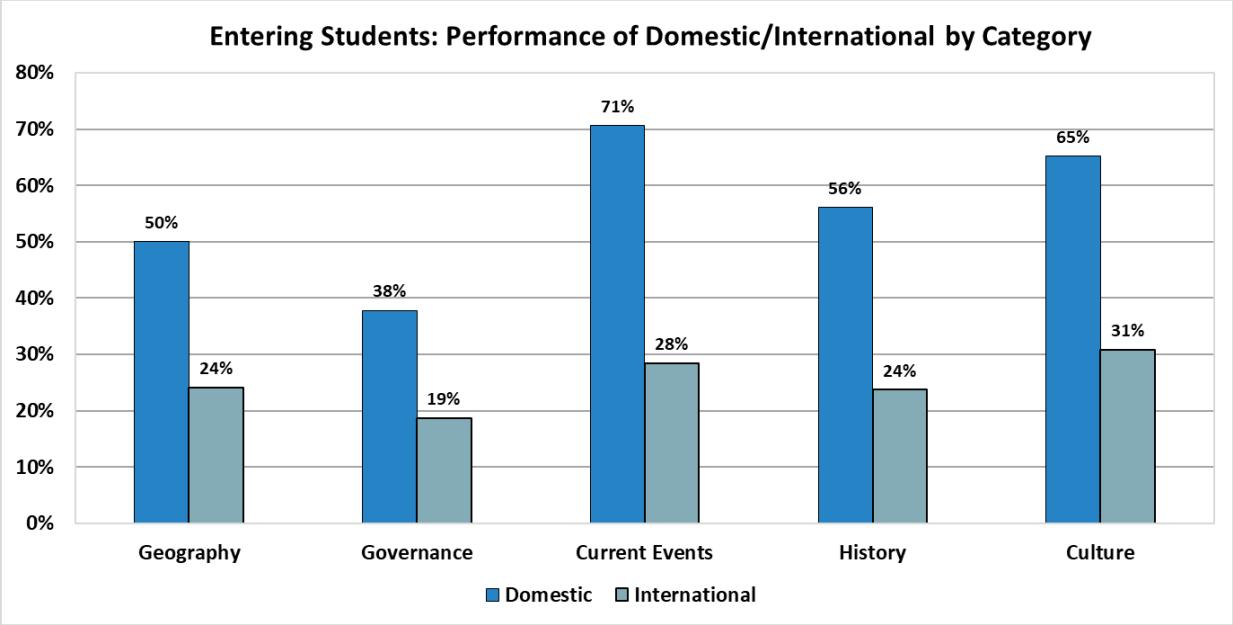

Figure 2. Domestic and international student performance on questions by category on the entering survey. Although reported here, international respondents (N = 81) were omitted from the full analysis on the entering survey.

Entering students (domestic and international combined) did best on current events (*M* = 69%, *SD* = 27%) and culture questions (*M*= 63%, *SD* = 25%). They did less well on questions related to the continuity of Indigenous presence (geography) (*M* = 49%, *SD* = 23%) and particularly poorly on questions on Canadian governance (*M* = 37%, *SD* = 24%). These are the questions that reflect a deeper understanding of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada, past and present.

Entering- and exiting-student performance also differed by question topic. Table 3 summarizes the percent correct score achieved on each question, organized by theme. Entering students did best on questions on the consequences of residential schools (83%), Indigenous conceptions of health and wellbeing (81%), the traditional territory of their campus (75%), and the forced relocation of Inuit by the Canadian government in the 1950s and 60s (68%). As we will discuss below, entering students did least well on questions related to Canadian governance past and present. Important too is that although more than 50% of First Nations people in Canadian provinces live off reserve (Statistics Canada, 2017b), the majority of entering students believe that most First Nations people live on reserve (68% incorrect vs. 32% correct). Misconception is also widespread on whether the population of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people is increasing, decreasing, or staying the same. More than twice as many entering students considered that "The population is decreasing" than answered correctly that the population is increasing (69% vs. 31%). This belief is politically important, as it feeds discourses of ongoing Indigenous decline, a mentality that works to naturalize settler presence (Dunbar-Ortiz & Gilio-Whitaker, 2016; Wolfe, 2006). Exiting students also did best on Indigenous conceptions of health and wellbeing (83%), and the traditional territory of their campus (82%). They also did least well on governance questions and whether the First Nations, Métis and Inuit population is increasing or decreasing and whether most First Nations live off or on reserve. Overall exiting-student performance was almost 10% higher than the entering students on the one-possible-answer questions and 6% higher on the more difficult multi-select questions. The higher score on these questions may reflect what they have learned in university from formal and informal education.

First and Exiting-Year Student Performance on Multiple-Choice Questions (Calculated % Correct* and % All Correct for Mulit-select**)					
Theme	**Multiple-Choice Questions (and # of possible correct answers)**	**1st-Years Calculated Correct***	**1st-Years All Answers Correct****	**Exiting Calculated Correct***	**Exiting All Answers Correct****
Current Events	Consequences of Residential Schools (7)	82.93%	70%		
	Systemic racism (7)	70.97%	43%	76%	53%
	Indian Act gender discrimination (1)	66.13%		67%	
	Upholding treaties (4)	54.00%	35%		
	Reserves vs municipalities (2)	52.55%	27%		
	Post-secondary funding (1)	46.17%		48%	
Culture	Indigenous conceptions of health and well-being (1)	80.97%		83%	
	Positive changes (9)	69.61%	42%		
	Indigenous languages (1)	68.91%		68%	
	Oral history (1)	64.04%			
	Potlatch ban (4)	60.38%	35%		
	Inuit way of life (1)	48.96%			
	All my relations (3)	46.09%	19%	39%	12%
History	Inuit relocation (1)	67.75%			
	Aim of Residential Schools (5)	65.57%	27%	76%	37%
	Status restriction strategies (5)	48.17%	17%	55%	21%
	Louis Riel (1)	48.03%			
	Nation-to-Nations relations (1)	47.80%		65%	
	Land claims blocked (1)	37.12%		56%	
Geography	Traditional territory (1)	74.48%		82%	
	Unceded territory (1)	58.70%		69%	
	Reserves vs traditional territories (1)	58.47%			
	Welcome pole nations (1)	48.49%			
	Government approach to land claims (1)	38.05%			
	Off reserve (1)	34.57%		40%	
	FN, M, I population (1)	31.32%		45%	
Governance	Changes in legal defintions of status (3)	52.05%	13%		
	First Nations Health and Child Welfare Authorities (2)	45.00%	26%	59%	41%
	1876 Indian Act (1)	44.08%		68%	
	Resource rights (5)	43.85%	15%	54%	25%
	Barriers to informed consent (5)	28.03%	3%	39%	1%
	Modern BC treaty process (4)	27.61%	11%	44%	18%
	1982 Constitution (1)	16.01%			

* Calculated as a sum of correct answers divided by total number of possible answers

** All possible right answers to multi-select questions (and none of the wrong answers)

Table 3. Entering- and exiting-student performance on multiple-choice questions organized by theme and calculated score.

We asked students two principal types of questions: one with only one-possible-answer and the other with multiple-possible-answers (multi-select), as indicated in the parentheses in column two of Table 3. In columns three and five we have recorded the average percent score as a sum of the correct answers divided by the number of possible answers. In columns four and six we have recorded the average percent score of students who provided all possible right answers and none of the wrong answers. We have used the first, more lenient, score in our overall analysis of the students' responses. As the multi-select questions allow us to delve a little more deeply into the nature and limits of student knowledge, we will explore their implications in the rest of this section on student performance on multiple-choice questions.

Within the category of current events, the multi-select questions reveal gaps in entering-student knowledge and the strong tendency of many students to make justifications when thinking about reserves. Students performed best on the question about some of the widespread consequences

of the residential school system for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, but a little less well if we score on the basis of all possible answers. The principal cause of the dip in the 'all possible' answers score was selection of two wrong answers. These wrong answers suggested that residential schools bred trust in the government (26%) and a belief that public education in Canada works to support Indigenous peoples (16%). These are strange effects to ascribe to residential schools but probably reflect the transferral of some students' belief in the goodness of Canadian governments to Indigenous peoples. The more substantial drop between the entering-students' scores for the two types of questions about what might indicate systemic racism against a particular group is due to the large number of students who did not recognize overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the child welfare system as linked to systemic racism (44% of entering students failed to choose this option). As international students were not included in the 431 student responses analyzed, it is striking that 17% of entering students chose I don't know as their response. The majority of entering students understood the relationship between systemic racism and social disadvantage, the justice system, violence, media, education, and health. The lower score on the question about who has responsibility to uphold treaties is due to students' belief that such responsibility lies more with the governments of Canada (72%) than with individuals (48%). The significantly poorer response to why reserves might have more difficulties with poor infrastructure, water quality and inadequate housing than most municipalities results from an equally large entering-student tendency to not recognize that governments and settlers have long appropriated land from reserves (64% of entering students did not choose this option) and to ascribe the problems to remoteness (50%), both responses exonerating governments and settlers from responsibility. Exiting students performed at much the same level on the Indian Act gender discrimination question and on the systemic racism question, and while more of the exiting students were able to link the child welfare system with systemic racism, it was also the weakest of their responses.

Within the category of culture, the multi-select questions reveal that many entering students associate Indigenous people with a static version of culture rather than with the complex interconnections between cultural, spiritual, political, and economic life of their own cultures, are unable to think through the meaning of some of what they have been taught, and generally lack depth of understanding. When asked what positive changes are being driven by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, many entering students could name language recovery (81%), cultural revitalization (80%), and pride in identity (80%). Fewer thought college and university graduation (72%) and community movements (71%) were important, and fewer still considered self-government (65%), becoming elected officials (63%), and business ownership (60%) were positive changes being driven by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. These students seem more likely to associate Indigenous people with culture than with contemporary activities associated with politics and business. In the "all my relations" question, students seemed to understand easily that the phrase refers to all relationships with land, plants, animals, people, ancestors, and the Creator (86%) but did not think through that "all" would include Indigenous people's family members (32%) and Indigenous peoples internationally (20%). Their response to this question suggests learning phrases or expressions without thinking through their implications. Or possibly, given the difficulty exiting students had with this question, perhaps it is too tricky and should be removed from future surveys. We offered a series of correct answers from the most descriptive to the more explanatory and systemic for our question about the impacts of the Potlatch Ban and found that entering students were least able to choose systemic and explanatory answers. So, while many could agree that the ban criminalized some First Nations for practicing their

culture (71%), limited ceremonies central to Indigenous governance for generations (63%), and that the taking of irreplaceable ceremonial objects constituted theft (60%), they were less likely to see the ban as an imposition of Western values of individual accumulation and commercialization (48%).

Within the category of history, the multi-select questions show that while most students have been taught well about some issues, there is a lack of nuance and depth to that knowledge for many. We asked students about the aims of the residential schools. While many students could identify as aims Christianization (76%), killing the "Indian" in the child (75%), and breaking Indigenous peoples' ties with the land (73%), fewer could identify the destruction of relationships between family members (70%) or that their education was aimed at keeping them in subordinate social positions (34%). Similarly, for our question about the consequences of more than 100 years of assault on Indigenous identity, while 68% of entering students could identify marrying a non-status or non-treaty man as resulting in the loss of Indian status, fewer knew that the same loss of status would result from leaving the reserve (61%), joining the army (42%), pursuing higher education (37%), or owning land (34%). A relatively large number of entering students did not know anything (25%). Exiting students scored approximately 10% better on the aims of residential schools question in both the calculated correct and the all-answers-correct form, and again did not know that education in residential schools was also aimed at keeping Indigenous people in subordinate social positions (43%).

The geography questions were all single-correct-answers as they did not require further elaboration. As can be seen from the scores in Table 3, and from our discussion above, this does not mean they were easy questions. Exiting students performed significantly better on these questions.

By contrast, the governance questions were more difficult than any other category of question and exiting students performed significantly better than entering students on these, again suggesting the significance of more sophisticated post-secondary teaching and learning. The challenges of Indigenous governance in a colonial context are complex and require careful wording and development. It is for this reason that there are five out of seven multi-select questions for entering students and four out of five single-correct-answer questions for exiting students. The students are also disadvantaged in answering these questions as this type of knowledge is generally imparted in specialized courses at all levels of education in Canada (Godlewska et al., 2016; Lamb, 2015; Lamb & Godlewska, 2020; Schaefli et al., 2018). Yet understanding such questions is fundamental to understanding Indigenous life in Canada today. The co-design team devoted considerable effort to making these questions and answers as clear and concise as possible. While 70% of entering students identified that changes in legal definitions of status for particular groups (such as who may be considered "Indian" or Métis) could redefine community membership and resource rights, excluding some people and including others, and 66% understood that it could disrupt people's sense of belonging and identity, 80% did not imagine that it could also lead to greater self-determination for some groups. So, again, these students are not paying close attention to the political implications of government actions. Only 45% of entering students were aware of the First Nations Health and Child Welfare Authority's responsibility for delivering programs to First Nations, an innovation since 2013 exclusive to British Columbia and of importance to First Nations health and wellbeing in the province. Fewer students understood the implications of the Canadian government's requirement that Indigenous peoples prove the practices they use today to hunt, fish, and sell resources are the same as they were prior to European arrival. Forty-eight percent of entering students and 56% of exiting students understood that this freezing in time impoverishes communities. Forty-nine percent of entering students and 57% of exiting students understood that the freezing in

time requirement imposes a legal burden of continuity exclusively in Indigenous communities. Forty-six percent of entering students and 55% of exiting students understood that the requirement prohibits commercial development for Indigenous communities and that commercial development benefits non-Indigenous Canadians over Indigenous peoples (41% of entering and 56% of exiting students), and fewer still understood that the requirement obscures the mutual influence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures and histories (37% of entering students and 45% of exiting students). Although this issue is of immediate and paramount concern in Canada and British Columbia today, 33% of entering and 22% of exiting students could not answer any part of this question. Student responses to our question about how governments and businesses contradict the requirements of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) by not securing Indigenous consent to development of their land, suggests that British Columbia has a long way to go in educating their electorate to support their newly enacted Bill 41 seeking to implement UNDRIP (Bill 41, 2019). Forty-seven percent of entering students and 63% of exiting students recognized that business and governments have a duty to consult, but often use their financial and legal power to gain what they want. Only 21% of entering students and 28% of exiting students realize that under Canadian mineral tenure law, resource extraction is considered the first and best use of lands in Canada. Nineteen percent of entering students and 11% of exiting students erroneously believe that Canada recognizes the Indigenous right to say no (veto), suggesting that students are unaware of the power imbalances at play in negotiations over resource extraction projects (Blackburn, 2005; Cooey-Hurtado et al., 2019; McCreary & Milligan, 2014). Similarly, there is little student understanding of the modern British Columbia treaty process. Only 36% of entering students and 51% of exiting students knew that the treaty process does not recognize the imbalances of power and resources between the Canadian government and Indigenous governments, only 21% of entering students and 28% of exiting students realize that it involves the extinguishment of Indigenous land rights, and only 17% of entering and 11% of exiting students believe that it has resulted in the restoration of full land rights to Indigenous communities. Fully 44% of entering students and 29% of exiting students could not click the right boxes to describe the British Columbia treaty process. These are very high levels of ignorance about profoundly important matters for Indigenous peoples, British Columbians, and Canadians.

Sources of Knowledge (Entering Students)

Where students learn what they know differs considerably between Indigenous and non-Indigenous entering students. Students also learn differently about First Nations than about Métis and about Inuit. We asked students how much they learned about **First Nations**, from their personal networks and from their use of the institutional environment (Figures 3 and 4). 43% of Indigenous students report learning a lot from their personal experience. By contrast, 14% of non-Indigenous students learned a lot from their personal experience. 44% of Indigenous and 43% of non-Indigenous students reported learning little from friends. With respect to their formal education, 39% of non-Indigenous students said they learned a lot from their formal schooling, while 44% of Indigenous people said they learned a lot from their formal schooling. These students may have been taking different courses. Importantly, more Indigenous students (27%) felt they had learned little to nothing from their formal education. This was true for only 16% of non-Indigenous students. It is worth remembering that BC First Nations Studies 12 is available to students but taken by very few.[150] More than 40% of Indigenous students reported

[150] The enrolment from 2009-2016 in the elective BC First Nations Studies 12 was only 2% of British Columbia students (Lamb & Godlewska, 2020).

learning a lot from their personal initiative while 14% of non-Indigenous students reported the same. Students that learned about First Nations topics on their own initiative performed better on the test (β = .211, $t(351) = 2.860$, $p < .001$). Neither Indigenous nor non-Indigenous students consider they learn a lot from media. More than 60% of Indigenous people report learning from First Nations, Métis, or Inuit persons. This would likely include family members and elders. Interestingly, 30% of non-Indigenous people also report learning a lot from First Nations, Métis, or Inuit persons. This may reflect the importance of Elders in the schools and in the first year at VIU.

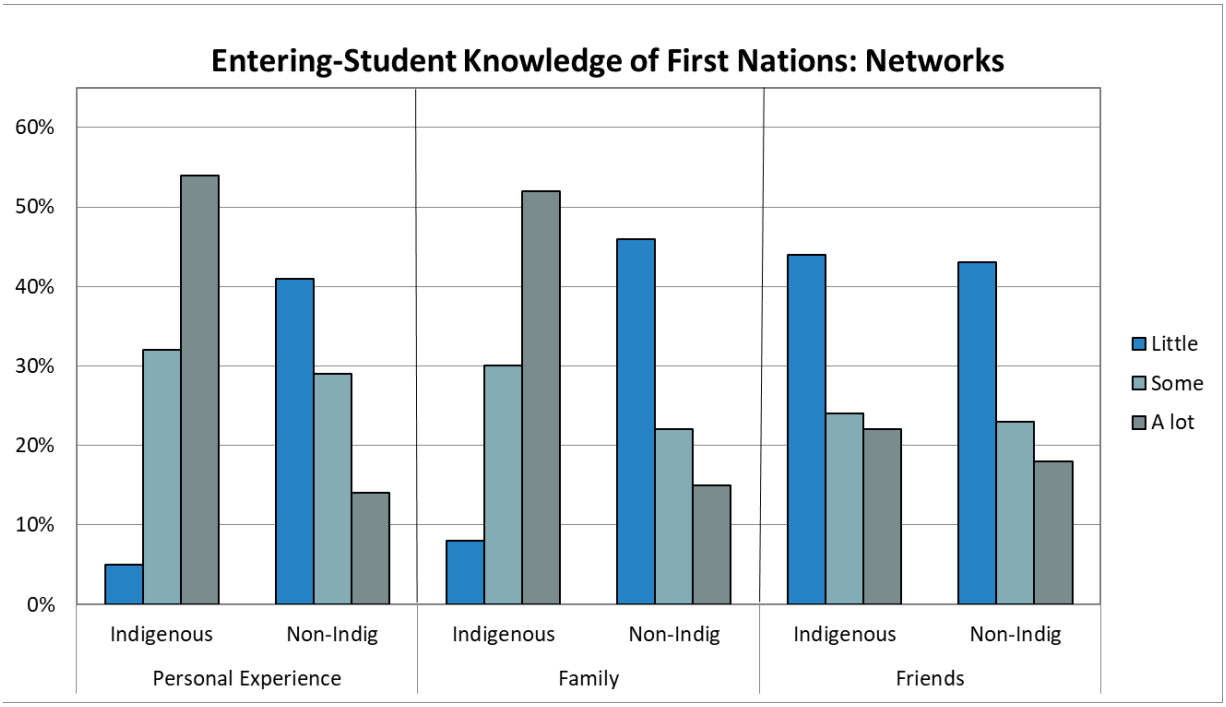

Figure 3. Sources of entering-student knowledge about First Nations topics from personal network sources.

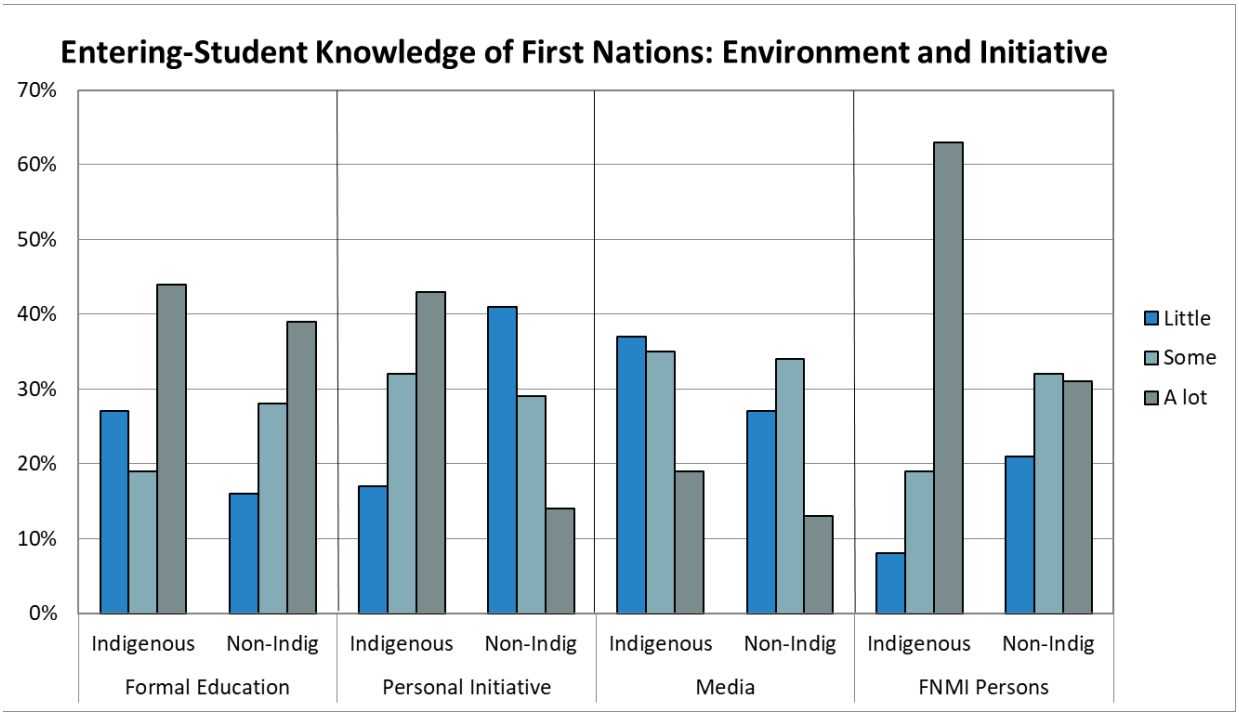

Figure 4. Sources of entering-student knowledge about First Nations topics derived from the institutional environment combined with personal initiative.

With respect to learning about **Métis** topics (Figures 5 and 6), non-Indigenous students overwhelming report learning little to nothing from their networks and from their environment: from media, their personal initiative, and even to a lesser extent from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit persons. They do consider they are learning something from their formal education, but generally not a lot. Indigenous students are even clearer about how little they are learning about Métis topics from all sources but personal experience. However, when students say that they have learned about Métis subject areas as a result of their personal initiative, they perform better on the test (β = .158, t(351) = 2.256, p = .002).

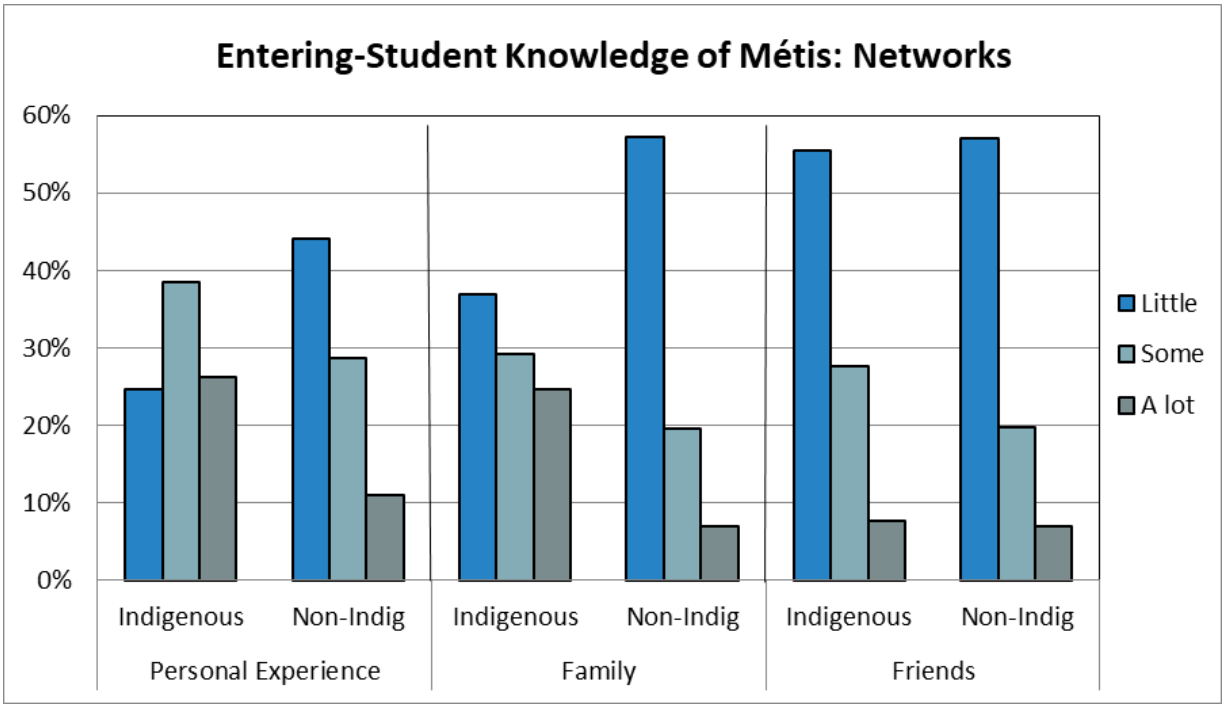

Figure 5. Sources of entering-student knowledge about Métis topics from personal network sources.

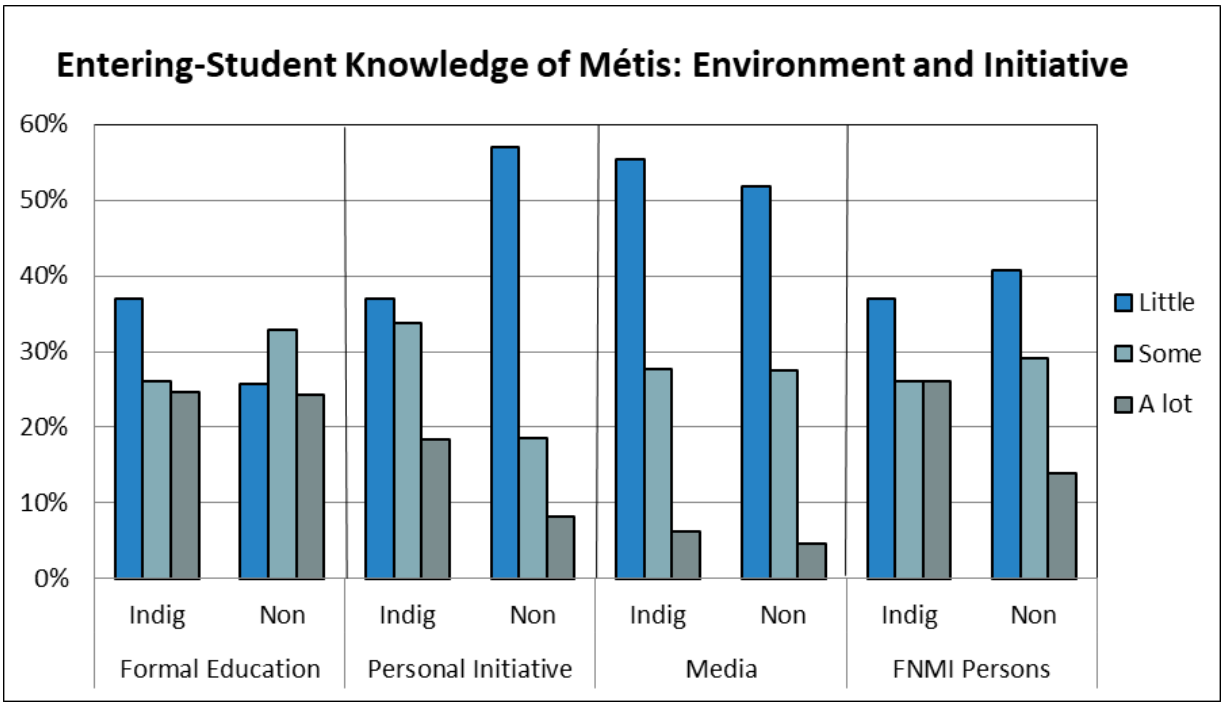

Figure 6. Sources of entering-student knowledge about Métis topics derived from the institutional environment combined with personal initiative

The picture is even starker for **Inuit** topics (Figures 7 and 8). Overwhelmingly, students say they have learned little to nothing from the formal education system, personal initiative, media, or First Nations, Métis, or Inuit persons. Under 10% of Indigenous students say they have learned a lot about Inuit from

their personal experience and family. Again, however, when students say that they have learned about Inuit as a result of their personal initiative they perform better on the test for Inuit subject areas (β = .197, $t(352) = 2.963$, $p = .001$).

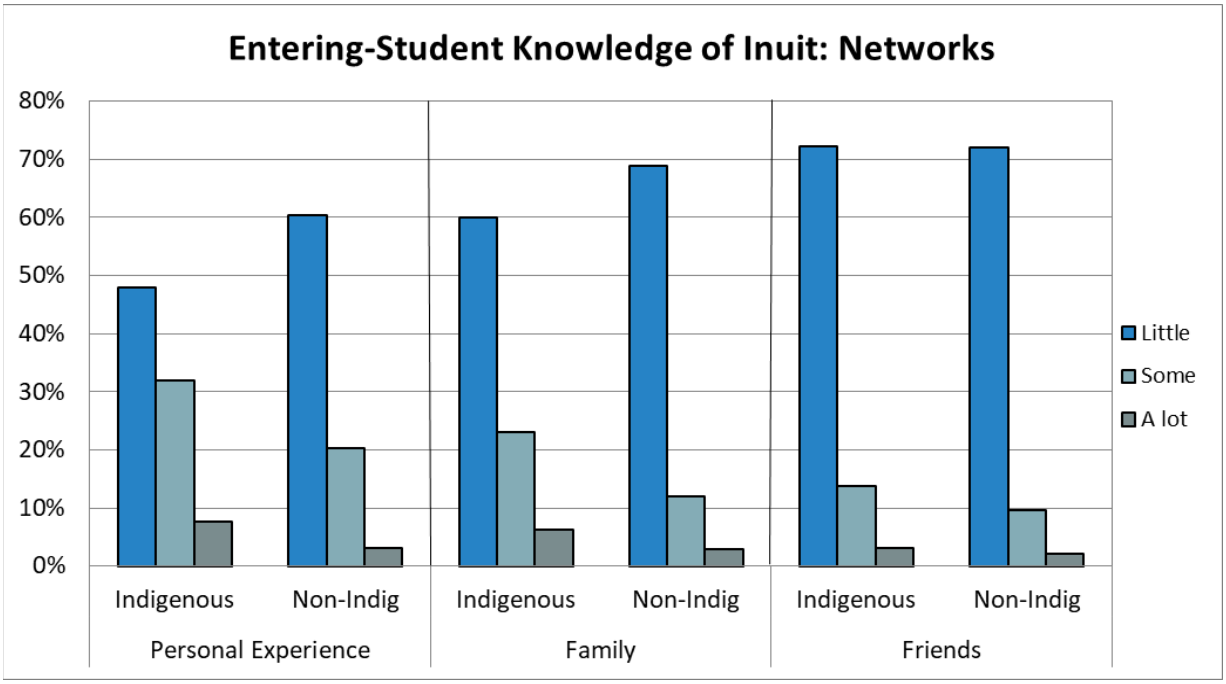

Figure 7. Sources of entering-student knowledge about Inuit topics from personal network sources.

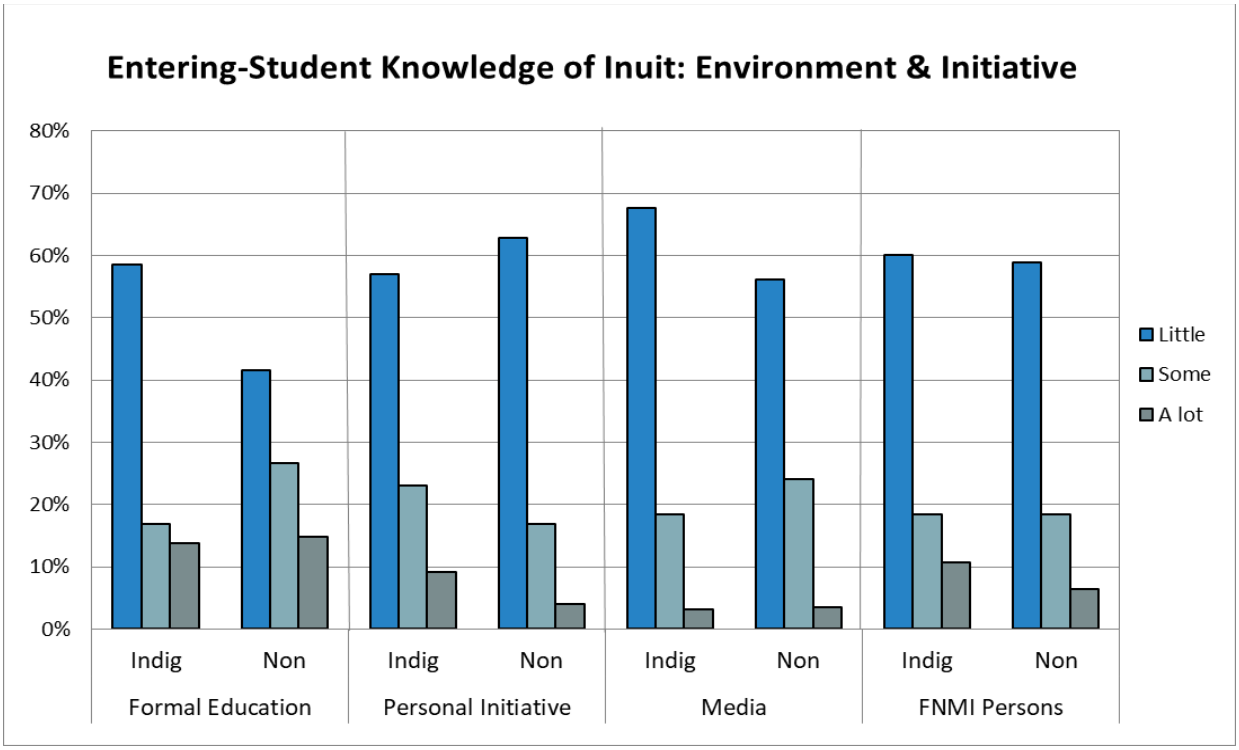

Figure 8. Sources of entering-student knowledge about Inuit topics derived from the institutional environment combined with personal initiative.

These findings are confirmed by Figures 9, 10 and 11. Students consider that they were taught better about First Nations than about Métis or Inuit, though for high school only 36% of students felt they were taught exceptionally about First Nations in grades 9-12 (27% for Métis topics and 19% for Inuit topics). Likewise, 28% of students thought they were taught adequately in grades 9-12 about First Nations (28% for Métis and 19% for Inuit topics). Student perceptions of how well they were taught in grades 1 – 12 (Q1.16 – Q1.19) did not significantly predict overall performance, suggesting perhaps an underestimation of how much there is to know and learn.

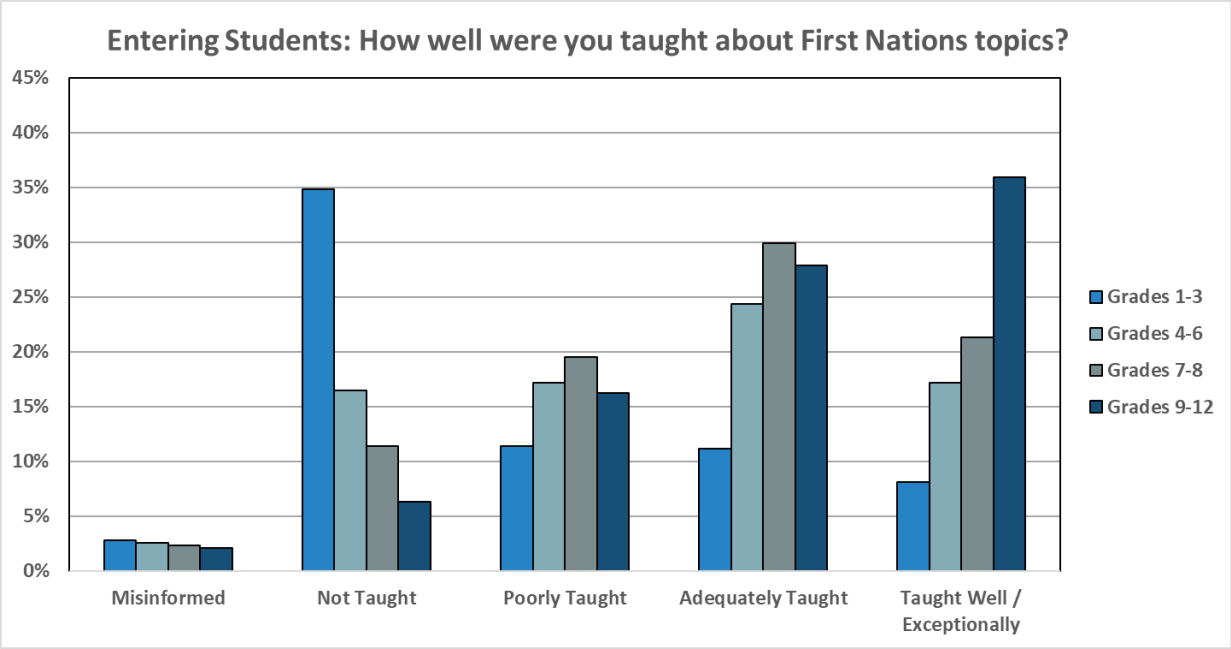

Figure 9. How well entering students consider they were taught about First Nations topics from grades 1-12 in schools.

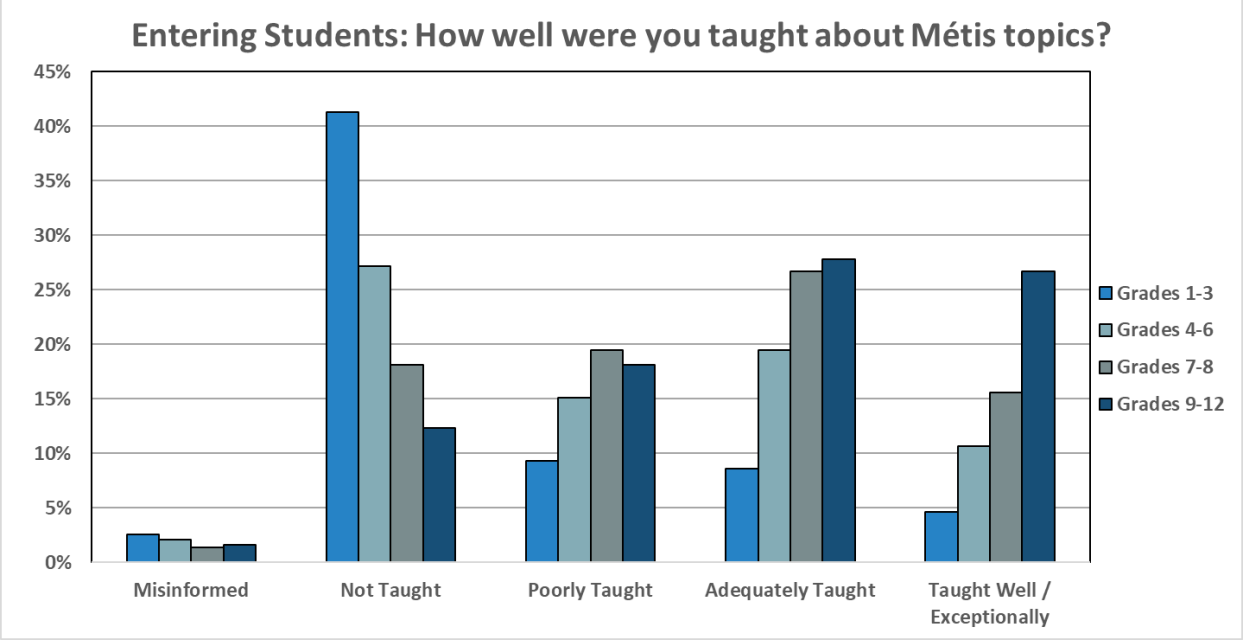

Figure 10. How well entering students consider they were taught about Métis topics from grades 1-12 in schools.

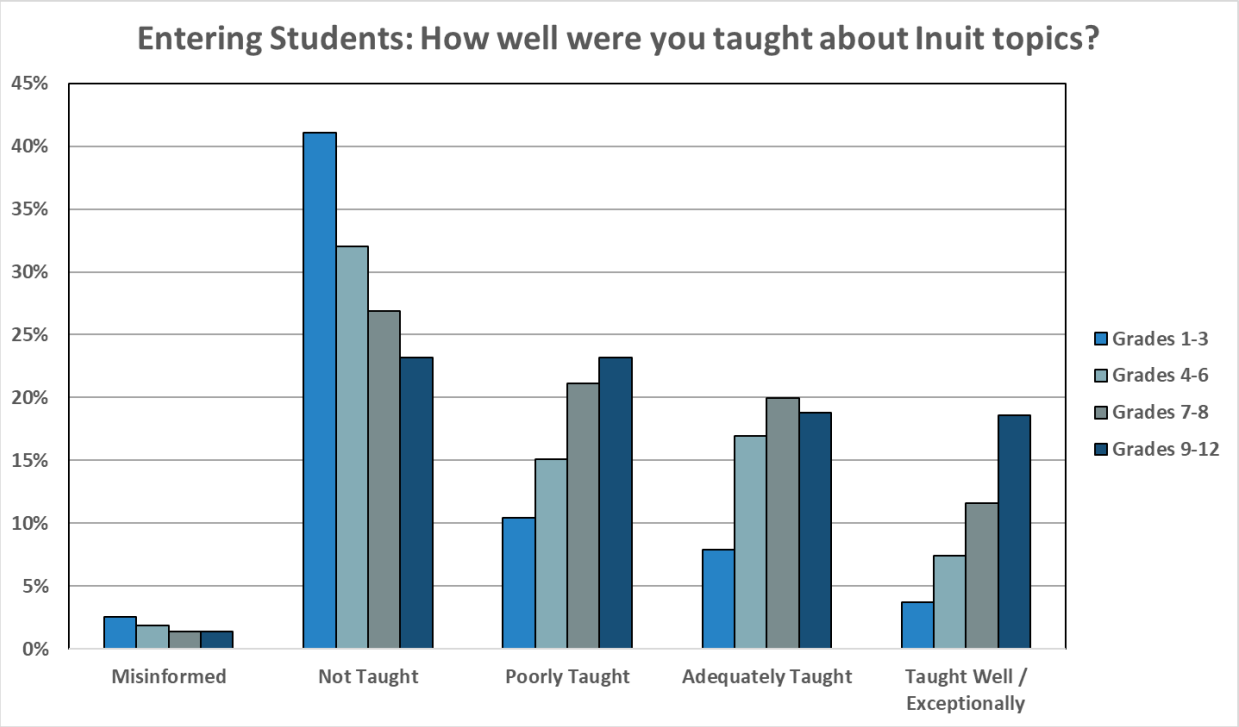

Figure 11. How well entering students consider they were taught about Inuit topics from grades 1-12 in schools.

Sources of Knowledge (Exiting Students)

Where students learn what they know also differs between Indigenous and non-Indigenous exiting students. These students also learn differently about First Nations than about Métis and about Inuit. We asked students how much they learned about **First Nations**, from their personal networks and from their use of the institutional environment (Figures 12 and 13). Within the networks category, 74% of Indigenous students report learning a lot from their personal experience. By contrast, 35% of non-Indigenous students reported learning a lot from these sources. Twenty-six percent of Indigenous and 36% of non-Indigenous students reported learning little from friends. The largest contrast in this data is between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and what they learn from their families. Sixty-six percent of Indigenous students say they learn a lot from their families, while 11% of non-Indigenous students say they learn a lot from their families about First Nations. With respect to learning from the institutional environment and their own initiative, only 27% of non-Indigenous and 29% of Indigenous students said they learned a lot from their K-12 education, unanimously giving K-12 education a fairly low score. This sense of the low impact of much K-12 education is supported by the results of the test: students who reported learning from the formal education system performed no better on the test (β = -.142, $t(286) = -2.41$, $p = .017$). Fully 56% of Indigenous and 49% of non-Indigenous students reported learning a lot about First Nations from courses at Vancouver Island University. There is a statistically significant relationship between overall test performance and learning about First Nations from First Nations, Métis or Inuit persons at VIU. More specifically, students that reported learning about First Nations from First Nations, Métis or Inuit persons performed better ($\beta = .331$, $t(286) = 4.33$, $p < .001$). Only 10% of Indigenous and 18% of non-Indigenous students felt they had learned little to nothing from their courses at VIU. Sixty-three percent of Indigenous students reported learning a lot from their personal initiative while 30% of non-Indigenous students reported the same. When students said they

had learned about First Nations topics on their own initiative, they did perform better on the test (β = .157, $t(286) = 2.07$, $p = .040$). 32% of Indigenous students consider they learn a lot from media while 22% of non-Indigenous students reported the same. The students may be paying attention to very different media sources. 79% of Indigenous students report learning a lot from First Nations, Métis, or Inuit persons. This would likely include family members and elders. Interestingly, 42% of non-Indigenous students also report learning a lot from First Nations, Métis, or Inuit persons. This, again, may reflect the importance of Elders at VIU. Learning from First Nations, Métis, or Inuit persons also statistically significantly predicted performance on our test, with students learning from these persons performing better ($p = .00$).

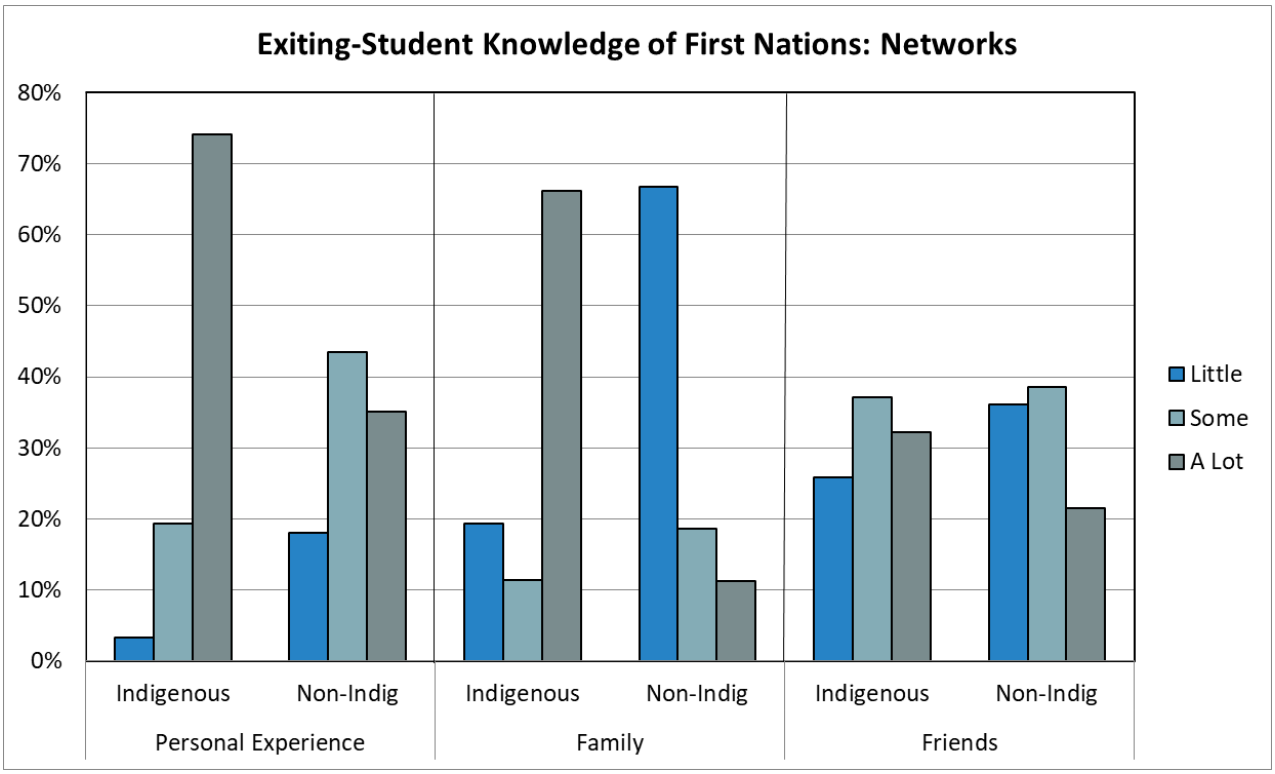

Figure 12. Sources of exiting-student knowledge about First Nations topics from personal network sources.

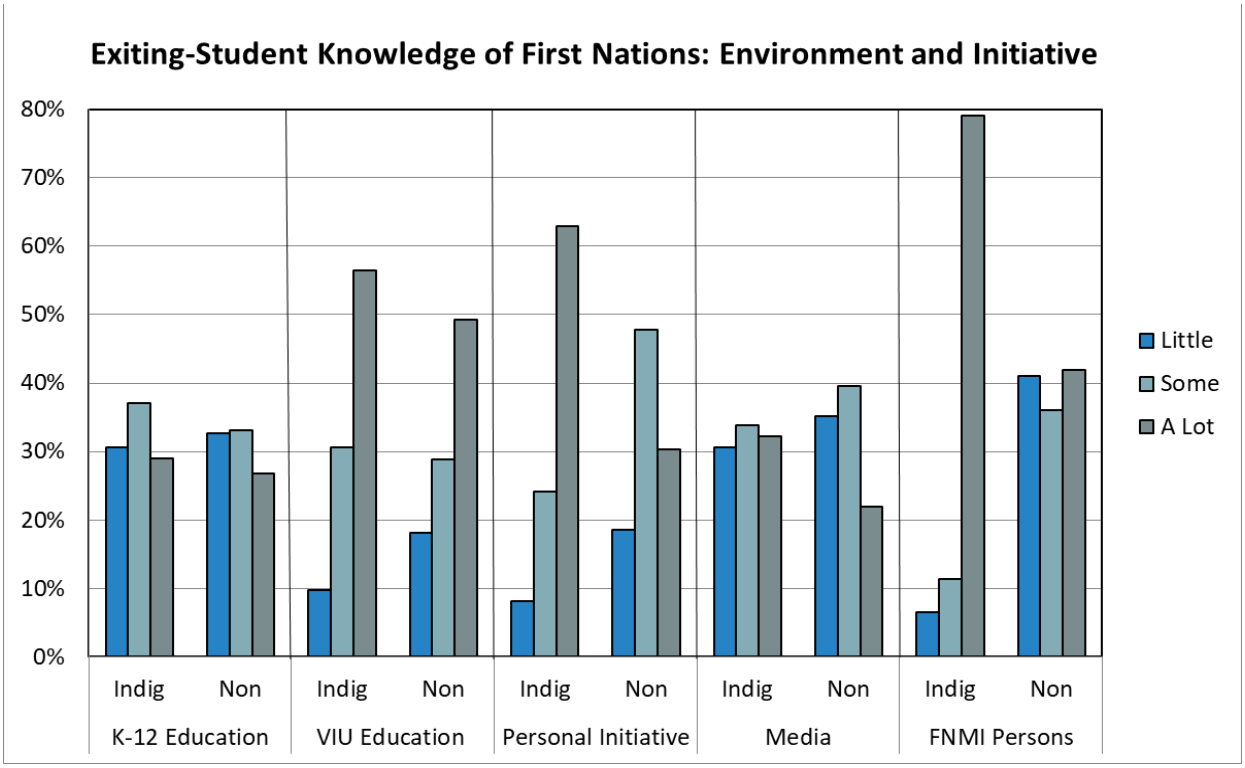

Figure 13. Sources of exiting-student knowledge about First Nations topics derived from the institutional environment combined with personal initiative

With respect to learning about **Métis** topics (Figures 14 and 15), non-Indigenous exiting students overwhelming report learning little to nothing from their networks and from their environment: thus, from media, their personal initiative, and even from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit persons. They do consider they are learning something from their formal education, and certainly more from VIU than from their K-12 education. Indigenous students are even clearer about how little they are learning about Métis topics from all sources but personal experience and personal initiative.

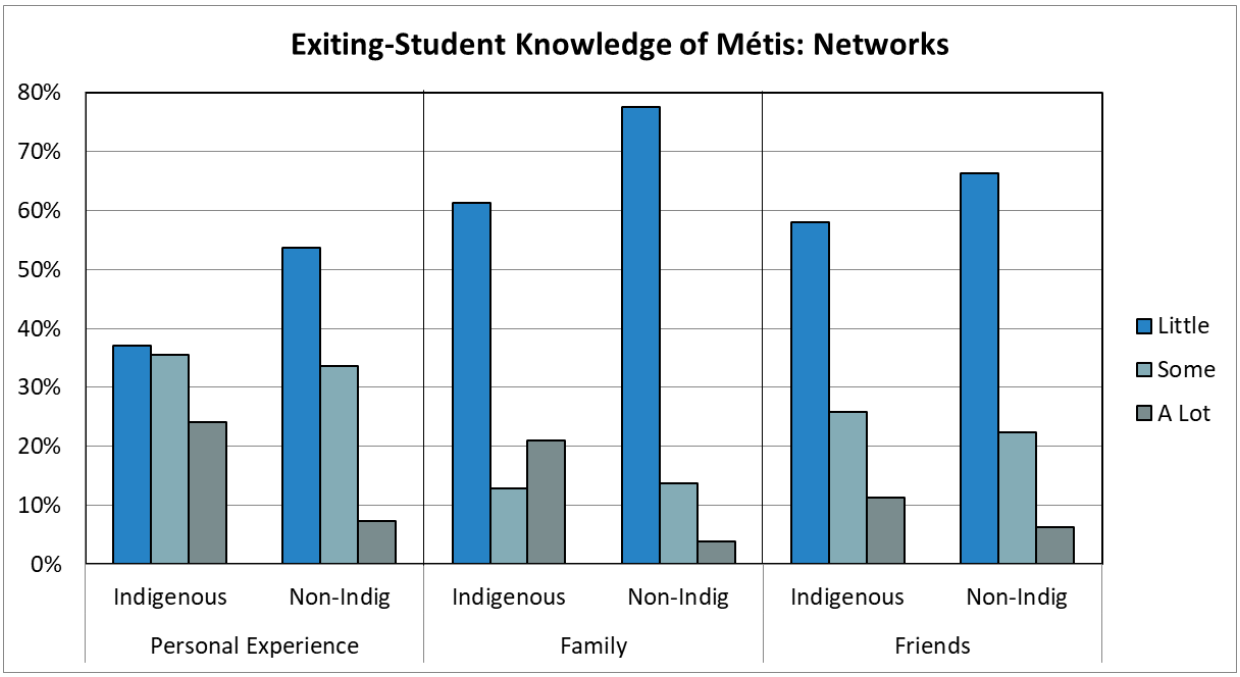

Figure 14. Sources of exiting-student knowledge about Métis topics from personal network sources

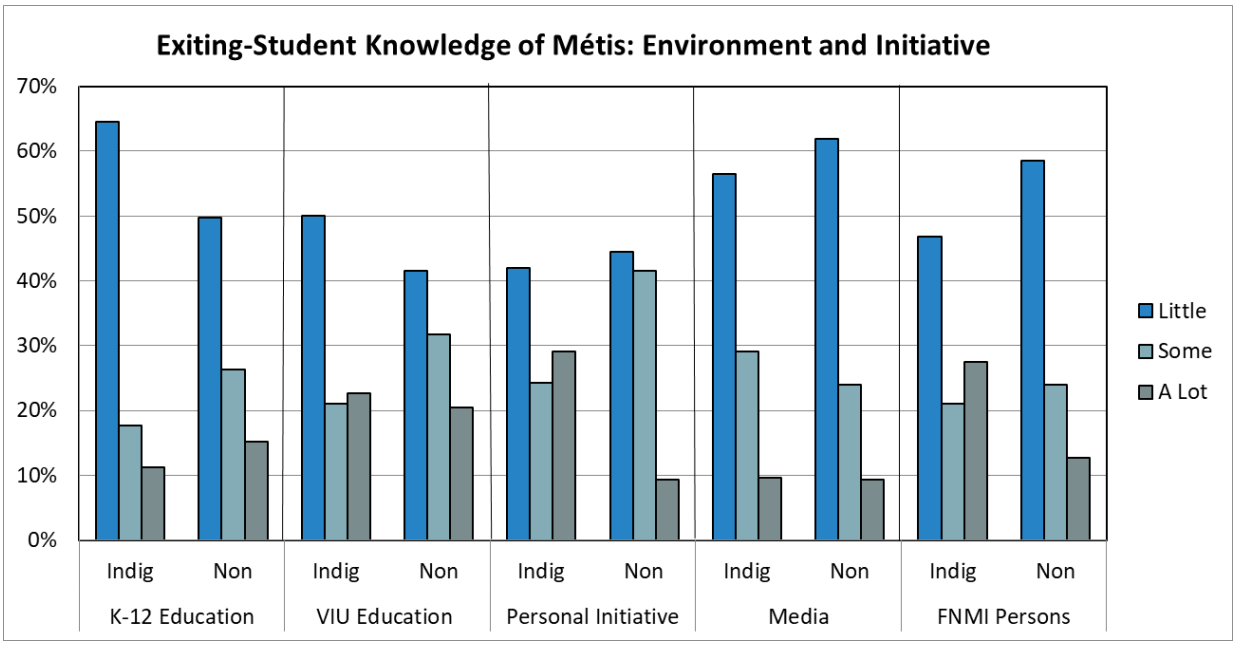

Figure 15. Sources of exiting-student knowledge about Métis derived from the institutional environment combined with personal initiative.

The picture is still stark for **Inuit** topics among exiting students as shown in Figures 16 and 17. Overwhelmingly, the students say they have learned little to nothing from the formal education system, personal initiative (including courses at VIU), media, or First Nations, Métis, or Inuit persons. 11% or less of Indigenous students say they have learned a lot about Inuit from their personal experience and family. Interestingly, 43% of non-Indigenous and 39% of Indigenous students report learning some,

quite a bit, and a lot about Inuit topics from their personal initiative. However, sources of information about Métis and Inuit did not statistically significantly predict overall performance for exiting students.

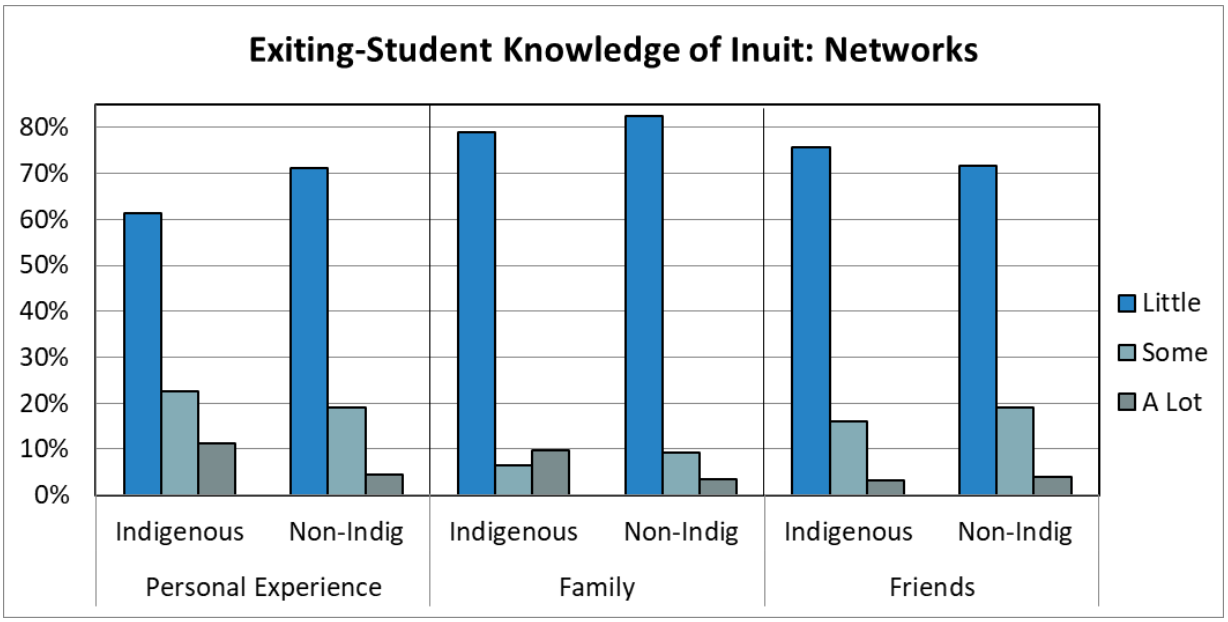

Figure 16. Sources of exiting-student knowledge about Inuit topics from personal network sources

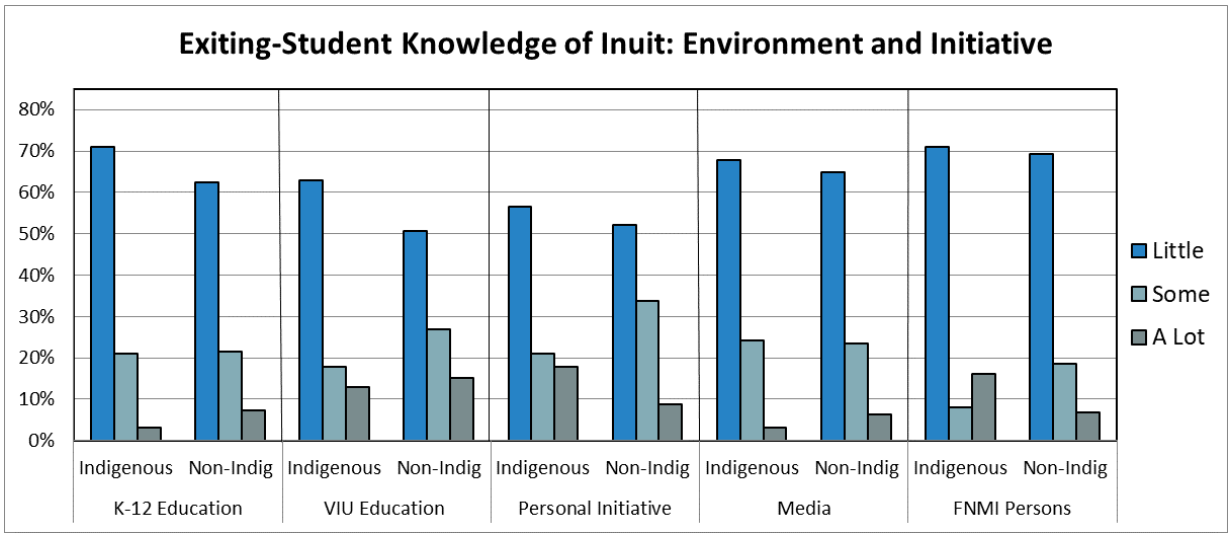

Figure 17. Sources of exiting-student knowledge about Inuit topics derived from the institutional environment combined with personal initiative.

These findings are confirmed by Figures 18 and 19. Students consider that they were taught better about First Nations than about Métis or Inuit, though only 6% of students felt they were taught exceptionally about First Nations in college (1% for Métis and 1% for Inuit topics), and 16% thought they were taught adequately about First Nations (14% for Métis and 10% for Inuit topics). The figures are better for VIU, where 32% of students felt they were taught exceptionally about First Nations and 25% (23% for Métis and 18% for Inuit) thought they were taught adequately. Notably for VIU, only 11% considered they were not taught about First Nations and not a single student considered they were

misinformed. The figures are far less good for Métis (31% not taught) and especially Inuit (40% not taught) topics. Perceptions of how well students were taught in college (Q1.16) did not significantly predict overall performance but there is a statistically significant relationship between overall test performance and perceptions of how well students were taught at VIU (Q1.17) about First Nations.

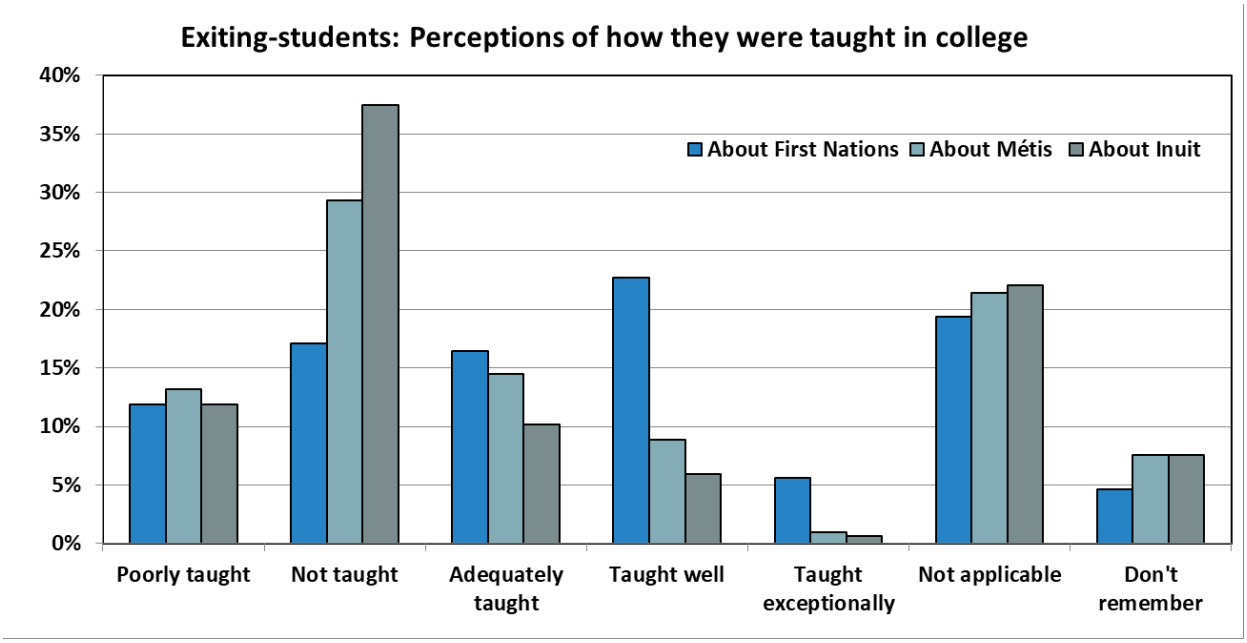

Figure 18. Exiting-student perceptions of how they were taught about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit topics in college.

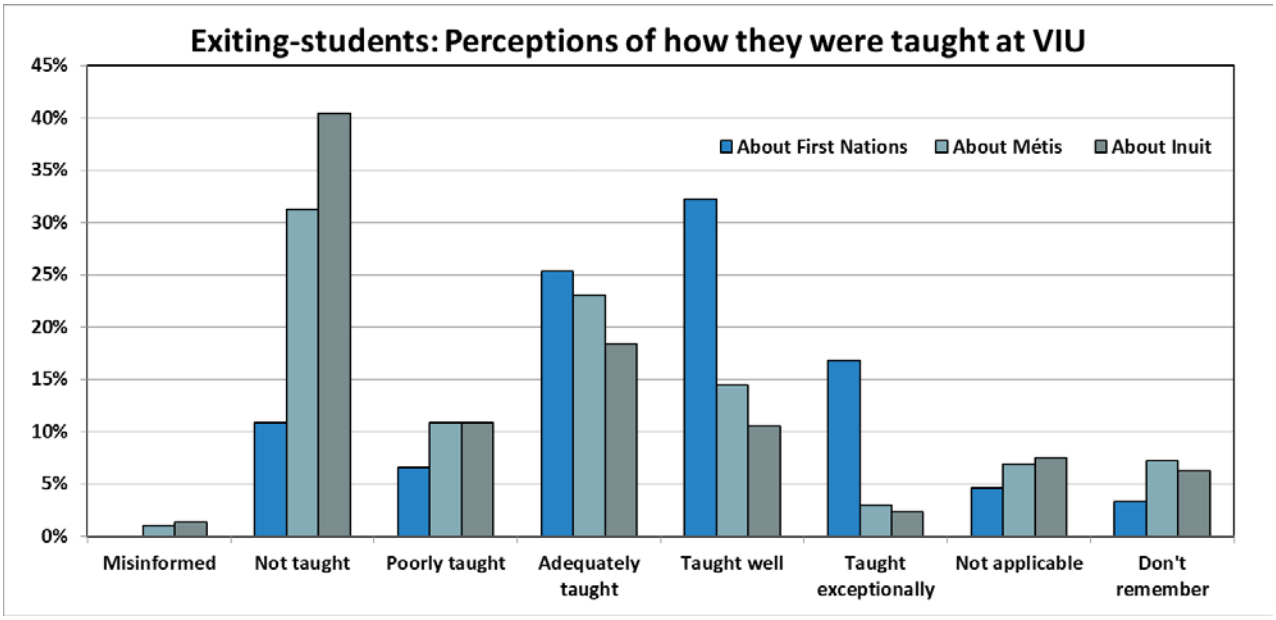

Figure 19. Exiting-student perceptions of how they were taught about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit topics at Vancouver Island University.

Courses Taken and Test Scores (Entering and Exiting)

Taking courses at all levels has an impact on test score, suggesting the importance of high school, college, and university education about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit topics. Fifty-one percent of entering students and 20% of exiting students reported taking no courses. Thirty-seven percent of entering students and 21% of exiting students reported taking high school courses. Five percent of entering students and 9% of exiting students reported having taken college courses and 4% of entering students and 38% of exiting students reported having taken courses at VIU. The mean test score for entering students who said they had taken "No courses" was 11% lower than the mean score for those who did not select this option ($t(413.478) = 5.319$, $p < .001$). The mean test score for exiting students who said they had taken "No courses" was 16% lower than the mean score for those who did not select this option ($t(154.845) = 5.262$, $p < .001$). The mean test score for entering students who took courses "In high school" was 7% points higher than the mean score for those who did not select this option ($t(399.832) = -3.379$, $p < .001$,). The mean test score for exiting students who took courses "In high school" was 6% points higher than the mean score for those who did not select this option ($t(136.387) = -2.104$, $p = .04$). The findings for the mean test score for entering students who took college courses was not significant but the mean test score for the exiting students who indicated they had taken college courses was 12% higher than the mean score for those who did not select this option ($t(66.002) = -3.964$, $p < .001$). The mean test score for entering students who said they had taken courses "In university" was 10% points higher than the mean score for those who did not select this option ($t(429) = -3.296$, $p = 0.001$). The mean test score for exiting students who said they had taken courses "At VIU" was 18% points higher than the mean score for those who did not select this option ($t(83.404) = -4.419$, $p < .001$)[151]. Altogether, these finding suggest that teaching students in high school is important to their knowledge and perhaps also important to stimulating interest but post-secondary education, and especially what is taught at VIU, is even more important in terms of the depth and sophistication of their knowledge.

Courses Taken and Family Attitudes (Entering and Exiting)

Family attitudes and identity do seem to matter in shaping the courses entering students take. Those entering students who said they had taken no courses at any level were significantly more likely to say about the attitudes of family members that "It just never came up as a topic of conversation" (X^2 (1, N = 431) = 4.846, $p = .028$). Those who said they had taken courses in college were significantly more likely to say "My immediate family members are First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit people" ($p = .009$). Similarly, exiting students who say "My immediate family members are First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit people" were significantly more likely to have taken courses in VIU to enhance their knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and topics (X^2 (1, N = 342) = 10.372, $p = .001$). Interestingly, that exiting students' families "hold conflicting views over First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Canada" also predicts taking courses at the college (X^2 (1, N = 342) = 5.088, $p = .024$) level and at VIU (X^2 (1, N = 342) = 5.682, $p = .017$). Together these results suggest that any discussion of the topic at home is better than none.

Limitations to Knowledge and Test Score (Entering and Exiting)

After entering and exiting students completed the test portion of the survey and after they answered what they learned from the test, whether they feel they should have been taught more, and how

[151] Note that students who answered Yes to 4.8 (attended other universities) were excluded from this analysis.

informed they feel about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit topics, we asked them about the causes of any limitations to their knowledge (see Figure 20). With eight possible answers, along with a decline to answer option, survey co-designers sought to capture all possible student answers. Sixty-percent of entering students and 56% of exiting students answered there was inadequate coverage of these matters in school, college, or university. Entering students who felt that their knowledge was not limited scored 9% points higher than the mean score for those who did not select this option ($t(147.218) = -4.079$, $p < .001$). Entering and exiting students dissatisfied with the options to learn in schools, college, or university scored higher than those who did not choose this option: 9% points for entering ($t(307.934) = -4.209$, $p < .001$) and 15% for exiting students ($t(261.424) = -5.888$, $p < .001$). Similarly, those who said "I learned things that I have had to unlearn" had a higher mean score than those who did not select this option: 8% points higher for entering ($t(429) = -2.504$, $p = .013$) and 9% higher for exiting students ($t(340) = -2.95$, $p = .003$). A desire not to learn had the largest impact. The mean score for entering students who selected "I don't want to know about these issues" was 20% points lower than the mean score for those who did not select this option ($t(429) = 3.866$, $p < .001$). For exiting students the impact of the desire not to learn is even more dramatic: the mean test score for students who said "It is all in the past and does not matter anymore" was 45% lower than the mean score for those who did not select this option ($t(340) = 3.81$, $p < .001$).

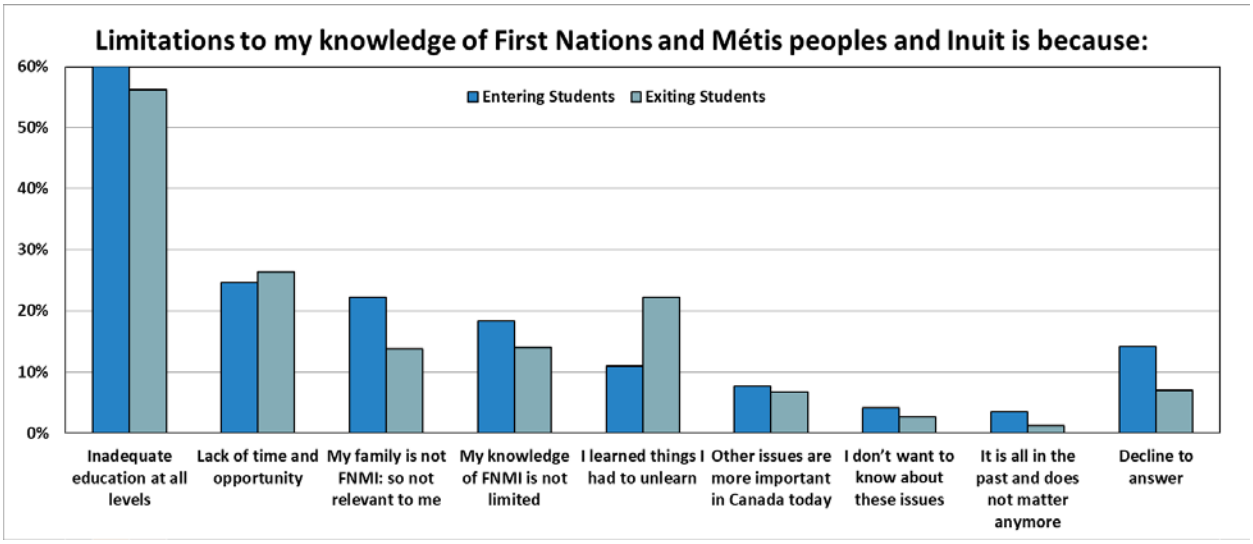

Figure 20. How entering and exiting students responded to our question about reasons for any lack of knowledge about Indigenous topics.

Limitations to Knowledge and Courses Taken (Entering and Exiting)

How students responded to the limitations of my knowledge question is related to the courses they have and have not taken. Those entering students who selected "I do not feel that my knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples is limited" were significantly more likely to have taken courses with Indigenous content in high school (X^2 (1, $N = 431$) = 4.995, $p = .025$), suggesting they gained a sense of knowledge, if not knowledge, from their high school courses. Those exiting students who indicated that they did not feel their knowledge was limited were significantly more likely to have taken courses to enhance their knowledge (X^2 (1, $N = 342$) = 5.273, $p = .022$). Sadly, those entering students who considered "Other issues are more important in Canada today" were significantly more likely to have taken Indigenous courses in high school (X^2 (1, $N = 431$) = 4.647, $p = .031$), which may not speak well for

the capacity of those courses to convince students of the importance of the subject matter. Those who selected "I learned things that I have had to unlearn" in Q3.7 were significantly more likely to have taken Indigenous courses in college (p = .029) and in university (X^2 (1, N = 431) = 11.571, p = .001) suggesting very different coverage of topics in college and university and the importance of post-secondary level education on Indigenous topics.

Limitations to Knowledge and Sources of Learning (Entering and Exiting)

For entering and exiting students, there are statistically significant relationships between declared limitations to knowledge and student declared sources of learning. For entering students, some of these again are suggestive of the nature of education on Indigenous topics in high school. Those entering students who selected "I do not feel that my knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples is limited" were significantly more likely to derive quite a bit/a lot of their knowledge of First Nations from personal experience (X^2 (2, N = 364) = 17.970, p < .001) and personal initiative (X^2 (2, N = 364) = 21.266, p < .001). Clearly, many students are unhappy with the coverage of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit topics in school so it is not surprising that entering students who selected "I feel there was inadequate coverage of these matters in school, college or university" were significantly less likely to indicate that quite a bit/a lot of their knowledge came from the formal education system (X^2 (2, N = 364) = 7.022, p = .030). Exiting students who said that "I do not feel that my knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples is limited" gained a lot of their knowledge about First Nations from personal experience (X^2 (2, N = 312) = 22.472, p < .001) and personal initiative (X^2 (2, N = 312) = 7.644, p = .022) but also reported learning a lot inside and outside class at VIU (X^2 (2, N = 301) = 8.034, p = .018).

Limitations to Knowledge and Social Attitude (Entering and Exiting)

Social attitudes of entering and exiting students was well predicted by their explanations of the limitations of their knowledge. Entering and exiting students who feel education about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit topics was inadequate also indicate that they care a great deal **about the wellbeing** of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (entering: (X^2 (2, N = 422) = 31.423, p < .001); exiting: (X^2 (2, N = 336) = 17.242, p < .001)). In keeping with that, those exiting students who did not select "my family is not First Nations, Métis or Inuit so it is not relevant to me" and did not select "other issues are more important in Canada today" were significantly more likely to care a great deal about the wellbeing of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in Canada today ((X^2 (2, N = 336) = 12.224, p = .002); (X^2 (2, N = 336) = 10.084, p = .006)). Entering and exiting students who are dissatisfied with their education also indicate that they care a great deal **about social justice issues** affecting them (entering:(X^2 (2, N = 422) = 22.649, p < .001); exiting: (X^2 (2, N = 324) = 10.486, p = .005)). We also asked the students how they **feel when First Nations, Métis, or Inuit people have fewer advantages** and opportunities than they do. Exiting students are more likely to choose answers to this question that suggest actively seeking change if they are dissatisfied with education about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples (X^2 (1, N = 342) = 31.560, p < .001), and if they feel they have had to re-educate themselves (X^2 (1, N = 342) = 6.958, p = .008). Conversely, they are more likely to choose blaming responses, such as "I think that everyone can get ahead if they work hard" if they consider not being First Nations, Métis, or Inuit makes knowledge of Indigenous peoples irrelevant to them (X^2 (1, N = 342) = 20.505, p < .001). This pattern is similar for entering students. Guilt and shame (entering: (X^2 (1, N = 431) = 10.693, p = .001); exiting: (X^2 (1, N = 342) = 12.280, p < .001)), discomfort (exiting: (X^2 (1, N = 342) = 15.012, p < .001)), and anger (entering: (X^2 (1, N = 431) = 23.694, p <.001); exiting:(X^2 (1, N = 342) = 15.472, p < .001)) are all positively associated with limited knowledge attributed to inadequate coverage of these matters in school, college or university.

Limitations to Knowledge and Views of Immediate Family Members (Entering and Exiting)

The most important predictor of negative or dismissive responses to why students might have limitations to their knowledge is the response "It just never came up as a topic of conversation" in their immediate families. Exiting students who described silence in the home as a cause for limitations to their knowledge were more likely to assert "My family is not First Nations, Métis or Inuit so it is not relevant to me" (X^2 (1, N = 342) = 11.845, p = .001), "Other issues are more important in Canada today" (X^2 (1, N = 342) = 5.827, p = .036), and "I don't want to know about these issues" (X^2 (1, N = 342) = 10.065, p = .008). Similarly, such entering students are likely to consider the topic irrelevant (X^2 (1, N = 431) = 5.707, p = .017) and the matter all in the past (X^2 (1, N = 431) = 4.220, p = .040). And unsurprisingly, if the entering students' families consider that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people inhabit the past and are not important, then students are more likely to think this way too (p <.001).

Limitations to Knowledge and Gender (Entering and Exiting)

While there is no statistically significant relationship between test performance and gender among entering students, there is an important and statistically significant relationship between gender and social attitude with females more critical of the education system and males more deeply in denial. Those entering students who felt there was inadequate coverage in school were significantly more likely to report being female (X^2 (1, N = 414) = 7.996, p = .005). Also, those who felt that other issues were more important in Canada today or did not want to know about these issues, were significantly more likely to report being male (X^2 (1, N = 414) = 8.842, p = .003); X^2 (1, N = 414) = 9.435, p = .002)). Among exiting students, the mean performance of females was 7% higher than their male counterparts (t(137.624) = 2.226, p = .028).

Social Attitude and Test Score (Entering and Exiting)

There are some strong relationships between social attitude and test scores for both entering and exiting students. Specifically, there was a relationship between test performance and entering students' concern about the wellbeing of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Canada today (F(3, 38.482) = 14.076, p < .001). Those entering students who said they cared a great deal (62.8 $\pm$ 18.9%) about the wellbeing of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in Canada today performed significantly higher on the multiple choice test compared to those who reported that they cared (53.8 $\pm$ 17.9%, p < .001), they cared a bit (44.8 $\pm$ 25.2%, p < .001) or they did not care at all (32.1 $\pm$ 27.0%, p = .025. For the exiting students (F(2, 329) = 12.317, p < .001), the overall performance was significantly higher for respondents reporting that they cared a great deal (61.8 ± 22%, p = .001) compared to those who reported that they cared (51.2 ± 24.1%). Also, performance was higher for those who reported that they cared a great deal (61.8 ± 22%, p = .011) compared to those who cared a bit (39.9 ± 26.9%). The same pattern exists for the question about how much they cared about social justice issues facing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in Canada. Entering students (F(3,41.665) = 18.041, p < .001) performed significantly higher on the multiple choice test if they cared a great deal (63.1 $\pm$ 18.1%) compared to those who reported that they cared (50.3 $\pm$ 19.1%, p < .001), they cared a bit (52.1 $\pm$ 22.3%, p = .014) or they did not care at all (30.2 $\pm$ 26.9%, p = .010). Exiting students (F(2, 48.6) = 16.237, p < .001) performed significantly better if they cared a great deal (63.2 ± 20.3%, p < .001) compared to those who reported that they cared (49.7 ± 26.5%). Also, performance was higher for those who reported they cared a great deal (63.2 ± 20.3%, p < .001) compared to those who reported that they cared a bit (39.5 ± 23.2%). Those entering students who responded to "When First Nations, Métis or Inuit people have fewer advantages and opportunities than you, how do you feel" with "it does not concern me" had the lowest average test score on the test

(47%) but due to the thankfully small number of students who selected this response (n = 17), this finding is not statistically significant. Among the exiting students, those who selected denying or dismissive responses scored much more poorly including: "First Nations, Métis and Inuit people do not have fewer advantages and opportunities" 22% lower (t(340) = 3.996, p < .001); "It does not concern me" 20% lower (t(340) = 2.500, p = .013); and "Nothing much; it is inevitable in any society" 17% lower (t(10.763) = 2.296, p = .042). A desire for positive personal or governmental action to address disadvantage and a higher test score is common to entering and exiting students. The mean score for entering students is 14% points higher (t(407.102) = -7.286, p < .001) for those who chose "It makes me want to address disadvantage" and also 14% points higher (t(321.052) = -6.929, p < .001) for those who selected "I feel the Canadian government should address disadvantage." For the exiting students, the mean test score for those who selected "It makes me want to address disadvantage" was 24% higher (t(292.319) = -10.046, p = .001) and for those who selected "I feel the Canadian government should address disadvantage" it was 26% higher (t(172.112) = -9.615, p < .001) than the mean score for those who did not select this option.

Identity and Test Score (Entering)

There are strong variations between identity and test performance. For the entering students, the average test score was 51%. The non-Indigenous test score (domestic students only) was 57%. International students (excluded from most of the entering student analysis) performed 21% points below the average. Students who declared themselves part of a racially marginalized group [n = 16] performed 8% points better than those who did not so declare. Students who declared themselves Immigrants to Canada (not born in Canada) [n = 23] performed 7% points less well than those who did not so declare. Those who declared as Indigenous [n = 71] performed only slightly more than a percentage point better than domestic non-Indigenous students. However, those Indigenous students who declared themselves to be citizens of my First Nations, Métis, or Inuit community [n = 27] performed 10% points higher than those who did not so declare, and 7% points better than all students who declared themselves Indigenous, suggesting a significant difference between Indigenous students who identify strongly with their communities and those who do not. It is important to remember that the entering and exiting students did not take the same test. So, their test scores are not comparable beyond the analysis in Table 3 and the associated discussion. The average test score for the exiting domestic students was 59% (n = 196). The average test score for international students was 32% points below that of domestic students (n = 30). Students who declared Indigenous identity had an average score of 61%.

Reported Current Grades and Test Score (Entering and Exiting)

Reported grades were good predictors of better performance on the test for both entering and exiting students. Overall performance for entering students was statistically significantly higher for respondents reporting grades mostly in the As (62.5 $\pm$ 19.0%) compared to those who reported mixed Bs and Cs (52.6 $\pm$ 20.8%, p = .029, Cohen's d = 0.50) and mostly Cs (40.4 $\pm$ 23.1%, p = .004) (F(5,409) = 4.627, p < .001). For exiting students, overall performance on the multiple-choice test was statistically significantly higher for respondents reporting grades mostly in the As (63 $\pm$ 21.3%) compared to those who reported mixed As and Bs (52.8 $\pm$ 25.6%, p = .003) (F(4,332) = 4.618, p = .001).

Growing Up Near a Community and Test Score (Entering and Exiting)

Awareness of growing up near a First Nations community had a positive effect on test score, education, and social attitude for entering students. Those who said they felt that growing up near a First Nations, Métis, or Inuit community influenced their understanding [n = 224] performed 10% points better than those who said no, it did not influence their understanding [n = 119]. These students were also significantly more likely to have taken courses with significant Indigenous content, compared to those that did not (X^2 (1, N = 431) = 22.991, p < .001). They were more likely to have said they took high school courses with Indigenous content (X^2 (1, N = 431) = 14.142, p < .001) and that quite a bit/a lot of their knowledge came from personal experience (X^2 (2, N = 364) = 28.963, p < .001) and personal initiative (X^2 (2, N = 364) = 21.840, p < .001). They seem to have learned more from their formal education (X^2 (2, N = 360) = 40.551, p < .001) and from First Nations, Métis, or Inuit persons (X^2 (2, N = 364) = 44.272, p <.001). Finally, those who said they felt that growing up near a First Nations, Métis, or Inuit community influenced their understanding were significantly more likely to indicate that they cared a great deal about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people (X^2 (2, N = 422) = 18.884, p < .001). These effects are muted or not present in the exiting-student data, perhaps because there are so many other factors influencing their knowledge by the end of their time at VIU.

Views of Family Members and Test Score (Entering and Exiting)

Family attitudes still seem to play a role in the performance of entering and exiting students. The mean test score for entering students who said “It just never came up as a topic of conversation” was 8% points lower than the mean score for those who did not select this option (t(429) = 3.123, p = .002). For the exiting students, it is no surprise that the mean test score for those who selected “My immediate family members are First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit people” was 10% higher than the mean score for those who did not select this option (t(172.865) = -3.662, p < .001). Similarly, the mean for those who selected their families “are concerned about First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Canada” was 12% higher than the mean score for those who did not select this option (t(340) = -4.352, p < .001). Yet the mean test score for those whose families “hold conflicting views over First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Canada” was 16% higher than the mean score for those who did not select this option (t(302.721) = -6.432, p < .001). Further, the exiting students whose families “feel that First Nations, Métis and Inuit people receive privileges that others do not” was 9% higher than the mean score for those who did not select this option (t(220.975) = -3.240, p = .001) and those whose families “feel it is all in the past and does not matter anymore” was 8% higher than the mean score for those who did not select this option. (t(76.978) = -2.460, p = .016). Only “It just never came up as a topic of conversation” lowered the mean score for exiting students by 9% below those who did not select this option (t(340) = 2.518, p = .012).

Personal Interaction and Social Attitudes (Exiting)

We were interested in the impact interaction with First Nations, Métis, or Inuit people might have for entering and exiting students with respect to test scores and social attitudes. There were no significant results for the entering students. There were social attitude results, but no test score results for exiting students. For exiting students, those who selected “I feel there was inadequate coverage of these matters in school, college or university” were significantly more likely to indicate that they have occasionally had significant personal interaction with First Nations, Métis, or Inuit people (X^2 (1, N = 342) = 9.567, p = .002). Those students who said they had occasional but significant contact with Indigenous peoples were also more likely to have taken a course with Indigenous content at college (X^2 (1, N = 342)

= 4.715, p = .030). They were more likely to want to address disadvantage afflicting Indigenous people (X^2 (1, N = 342) = 7.079, p = .008) and to see the Canadian government address disadvantage (X^2 (1, N = 342) = 8.944, p = .003). Those who said I have had "Sustained engagement (close colleagues, friends, family or people I see a lot)" with Indigenous people were significantly more likely to indicate that a lot of their knowledge about First Nations came from friends compared to those who did not (X^2 (2, N = 311) = 18.800, p < .001). These students are also more likely to indicate that they care a great deal about the wellbeing of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in Canada today (X^2 (2, N = 336) = 8.118, p = .017). They too are more likely to want to address disadvantage afflicting Indigenous people (X^2 (1, N = 342) = 10.944, p = .001) and to see the Canadian government address disadvantage (X^2 (1, N = 342) = 8.218, p = .004).

Do Exiting Students Who Feel More Informed, Do Better?

We asked exiting students before and after the test how informed they felt about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit topics. There were no statistically significant results between how informed students were before taking the test and test performance. However, for the assessment students made of their knowledge after taking the test, overall performance was significantly higher for respondents who reported that they felt very informed about First Nations (62.6 $\pm$ 24%) compared to those who reported they were not very informed (43.5 $\pm$ 23.7%, p < .001). Also, there was a significant difference between those who indicated they were somewhat informed (58.8 $\pm$ 21.8%) and those who reported they were not very informed (43.5 $\pm$ 23.7%, p < .001) (F(2, 324) = 8.125, p < .001). However, with respect to knowledge about Métis, the results were weaker and a little bizarre: overall performance on the multiple choice test was statistically significantly higher for respondents who reported that they felt somewhat informed about Métis (59.5 $\pm$ 22.9%) compared to those who reported very informed (43 $\pm$ 27.8%, p = .037) (F(2,324) = 3.167, p = .043). There were no significant results for the same questions on the entering survey.

Declared Faculty and Test Score (Exiting)

As is clear from Figure 21, there are differences in score between Faculties (F(6, 142) = 3.547, p = .003). In terms of statistically significant results, overall performance on the multiple-choice test was higher for exiting students pursuing Health and Human Services (60.1 $\pm$ 17.8%, p = .013) and Social Sciences (62.1 $\pm$ 20.2%, p = .021) compared with respondents that did not so declare (33.9 $\pm$ 21.5%). Toward the end of the questionnaire, we asked students to describe their grades at VIU. Figure 22 reflects their response.

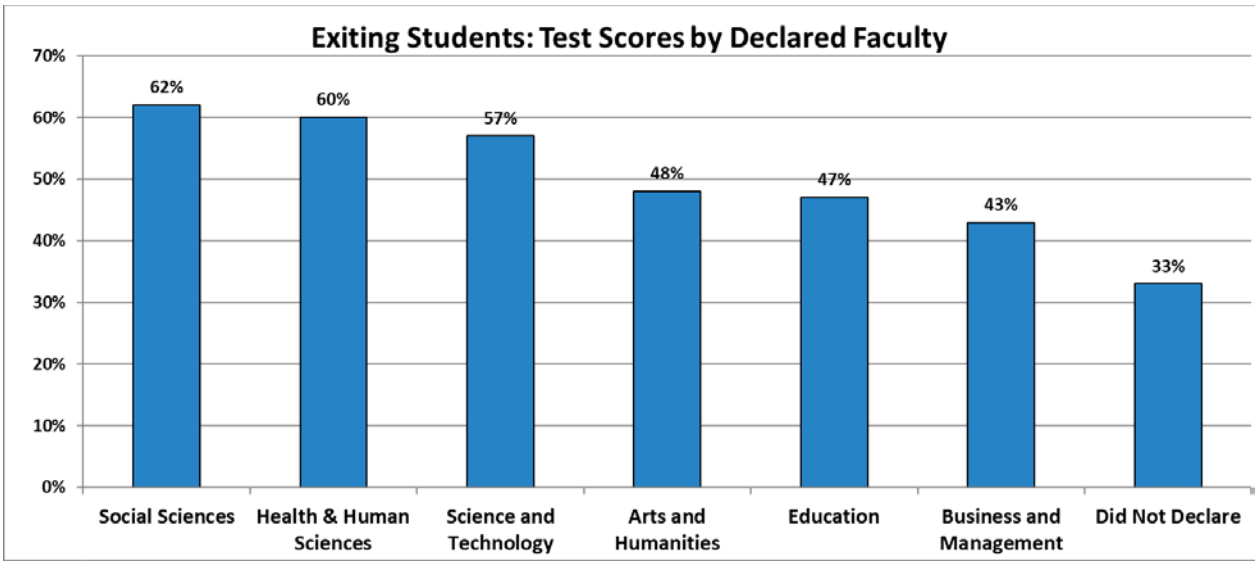

Figure 21. The average student score by Faculty.

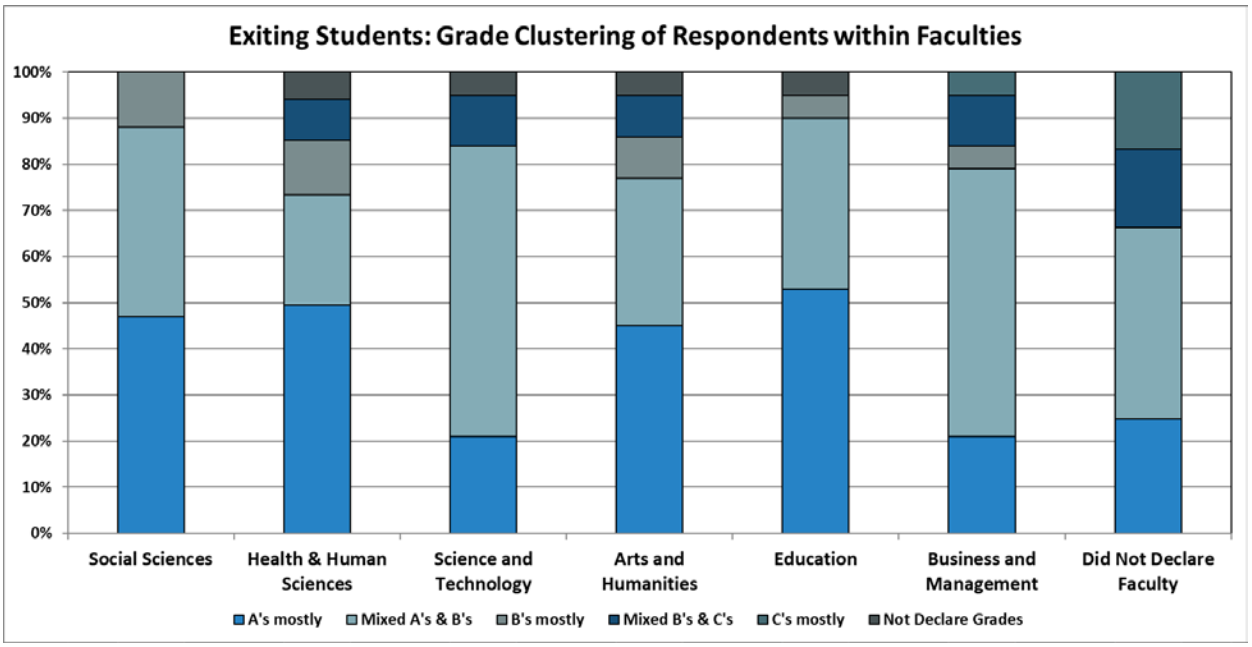

Figure 22. Student declared grades by Faculty.

Test "Good" or "Bad" and Test Score

At the end of each of our questionnaires, we gave the students a chance to give us feedback on the questionnaire. We asked them "Did these questions give you an opportunity to show what you know about First Nations, Métis and Inuit people?" We follow that up with an invitation: "Please explain why the questionnaire was/was not a good assessment of what you know about First Nations, Métis and Inuit people." The mean test score for students who selected "Yes," it gave me an opportunity to show what I know about First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, was 18% higher than those who selected no. We examine the text responses to "was" and "was not" a good assessment in Part 5: Questionnaire as an Assessment of Knowledge.

Conclusion

This section has provided an exhaustive quantitative analysis of the results of the Awareness Survey conducted at Vancouver Island University in 2018. It reveals, amongst other things, that too many international students enter and leave VIU unaware of Indigenous realities in Canada. We have seen that domestic students are most unaware of issues related to Indigenous-settler relations in Canada about land, rights, and identity both past and present. It is clear that while exiting students on average perform better than entering students, they do so by too small a margin. It is sad and a concern that too many students have not thought about or cannot answer a question on systemic racism. Unfortunately, the majority of students do not seem to be aware of historic and continuing appropriation of reserve lands. While students can often identify episodes of attack on Indigenous cultures, they are less able to understand these as part of larger system of values such as the imposition of Western values of individual accumulation and commercialization. In British Columbia and at VIU, it seems that entering and exiting students learn little about Métis people and almost nothing about Inuit. There are signs that education on Indigenous topics being offered in high school is still not good enough and the students know this.

Clearly, teaching students in high school is important to their knowledge and perhaps also important to stimulating interest, but post-secondary education and especially what is taught at VIU is even more important in terms of the depth and sophistication of their knowledge. With respect to familial influences, although colonial thinking embedded in families does tend to get picked up by some students, any discussion of Indigenous topics at home is better than none. Predictably, the desire to learn and dissatisfaction with the education provided by institutions are powerful predictors of better performance on the test. The powerful and harmful emotions of guilt and shame, discomfort, and anger are all associated with limited knowledge attributed to inadequate coverage of Indigenous topics in school, college, or university. While there is no statistically significant relationship between test performance and gender among entering students, there is an important and statistically significant relationship between gender and social attitude with females more critical of the education system and males more deeply in denial. Caring about Indigenous peoples and social justice does predict better scores. Finally, in terms of student performance by faculty, it seems that the Social Sciences, Health and Human Sciences are doing the best job of educating their students about Indigenous topics.

Part 5: Qualitative Analysis

In addition to 19 multiple-choice questions, we asked exiting students 9 open-ended questions designed to allow them to respond in greater depth to key topics. We felt that after two to four years of university education, most students would be able to express themselves clearly and would find an exclusively multiple-choice series of questions too constraining. Their responses provide a significant opportunity to hear student voices and to plumb the depth of their understanding. The key topics were: land acknowledgements and their importance, awareness of Indigenous presence and land awareness, racism and colonialism, Canada's manipulation of Indigenous identity, the positive changes Indigenous people are driving, and thoughts on Indigenous sovereignty. We also asked students what evidence they see that VIU is a welcoming environment, their suggestions on changes that VIU might implement, whether they feel they should have been taught more, and what they have learned from participating in the survey. We ended with a question about the value of the questionnaire as an assessment of their knowledge. This question gives students room to comment on our work, provides us with valuable feedback on the survey, and gives us an anecdotal sense of the survey's effectiveness. In contrast to our quantitative analysis, in this qualitative analysis, we include the voices of international students.

Land Acknowledgements

We asked students this question about land acknowledgements:

> "Making a land acknowledgement should be the most important thing Canadians do before starting any event… It is a fundamental analysis of who we are, where we're standing, and how we should proceed." - *Niigan Sinclair, assistant professor and head of University of Manitoba's Native Studies department, quoted in CBC news Jan 14 2017.*
>
> Sports teams, arts organisations and educational institutions across Canada are making land acknowledgements. What does this mean to you?

Within the last decade, land acknowledgements have become more frequent at universities across the country (Wilkes et al., 2017). The practice has emerged from the ongoing work of Indigenous activists within and beyond the academic realm, including in movements such as Idle No More and Standing Rock, dialogues from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and academic efforts largely driven by Indigenous Studies departments and centres (Asher et al., 2018; Erasmus & Dussault, 1996; TRCC, 2015b; Wilkes et al., 2017). The popularity of land acknowledgements has grown rapidly and advocates and researchers are beginning to question their impact as an institutional practice and to consider how they are being interpreted by listeners and speakers (Asher et al., 2018; Bundale, 2019; Unreserved, 2019; Khelsilem, 2014; Vowel, 2016; Wilkes et al., 2017). We asked students what land acknowledgements mean to them to explore how and what they think about the intent, purpose, and impact of these statements. Students' responses to this question outline the pedagogical and conciliatory possibilities and limitations of institutional land acknowledgements. Most of the students who responded emphasized the educational and reconciliatory potential of land acknowledgements and their importance in demonstrating respect for Indigenous peoples and their lands. Some of these students, and others too, recognized some of the limitations of land acknowledgements, arguing that they must also be accompanied by deeper understanding and meaningful action amongst speakers and listeners to avoid tokenism and symbolic gesturing. Some students demonstrated ambivalence, ignorance, and/or outright opposition to land acknowledgements. A collective and thematic reading of the responses to this question allows us to offer VIU insight into how their land acknowledgements are received by students. How might this institution navigate the pedagogical parameters of land acknowledgements in conjunction with the wider process of enhancing students' awareness of Indigenous land rights and sovereignty and responsible participation in their communities and across the province and country?

Students who see land acknowledgements as important (238/342, 70%) tend to see them as "a great sign of respect,"[152] of "honouring the First Nations where you live,"[153] and an important part of

[152] #174; no courses; 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/Métis; Natural Resource Protection
[153] #190; First Nations minor; 57 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; working with people with barriers

the "journey"[154] to "truth and reconciliation"[155] in Canada. Some considered land acknowledgements important because they can be educational, informative, and awareness-raising opportunities in themselves, where listeners can learn about Indigenous peoples, territories, and colonialism. For a Business Administration student, land acknowledgements can prompt non-Indigenous Canadians to confront settler colonialism in Canada and challenge colonial epistemologies:

> Eventually if it is said and heard enough there will be a greater understanding and consideration for the position that Canada has with its indigenous First Nations. Instilling the emphasis of change in the mindset of colonialists. Reminding everyone of the indigenous peoples of Canada and bringing awareness[156]

In a similar vein, other students considered land acknowledgements prompt the recognition that "we do not own this land…we are guests,"[157] and that "it's not my 'right' to live here, but a 'privilege'."[158] Land acknowledgements provide these students with opportunities to reflect on colonial wrongs and "to feel the discomfort at hearing these greetings and ask why there is discomfort."[159] For a Child and Youth Care student, land acknowledgements allow guests to territories to show their respect, appreciation, and consideration to the Indigenous peoples and their lands and to work towards reconciliation:

> It means to me that we are being respectful and thankful of the territory we are on especially if we are on the territory as guests. We are showing appreciation for having the opportunity to learn, laugh work and love in that community. We are acknowledging the history of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people by being respectful of the traditional territory we are on. It also means we are taking into consideration the long history of contact and colonization in Canada and recognizing the land that colonizers have taken from Indigenous peoples and working collectively towards reconciliation[160]

These students' collective focus captures much of the meaning of *acknowledgement* hoped for by its proponents including "a recognition of truth or existence" sometimes "implying gratitude or appreciation" (Wilkes et al., 2017, p. 91). On deeper cultural and political levels, land

[154] #88; in college (First Nations Literature), at VIU (Indigenous Peoples Knowledge), in my community (Safety for Indigenous Peoples - VIHA); 27 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Counsellor
[155] #333; no courses; 35 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada (Mother is an immigrant, father is Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry); Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Tourism/Recreation Management/Community Development or conservation with Indigenous populations in Canada and international
[156] #205; First Nations studies at VIU; 40 years; male; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations; Business Administration/First Nations leader and business owner
[157] #129; at VIU; 27; male; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Social Services Diploma/First Nations Family Advocate
[158] #206; no courses; age not given; male; international student; Business Administration/educator, post-secondary, consultant perhaps, social reform in some way
[159] #58; no courses; 32; non-binary; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Métis, Non-status Indigenous person; Creative Writing and Journalism; hopefully writing, but probably working a minimum wage service job.
[160] #264; at VIU (A third year mandatory cyc contact and colonization course); no age given; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Child and Youth Care/Child protection

acknowledgements prompt many students to reflect on and recognize Indigenous existence, autonomy, and rights to self-determination (Wilkes et al., 2017).

A significant number of students (51) who considered land acknowledgements important were also critical of how they are at times delivered and received. These students considered that land acknowledgements are a "good first step,"[161] but that they "shouldn't be just about checking a box."[162] For some students, land acknowledgements must be accompanied by deeper understanding and action on the part of speakers and listeners so as to avoid "token" or "empty gestures." Some students who called for deeper understanding argued that educational land acknowledgements that have an impact should be "teaching moments" that address, challenge, and impel speakers and listeners to take reconciliation to heart.[163] Others recognized the educational capacity of land acknowledgements but emphasized that better education must also be provided beyond these statements. Much public education in Canada, and in British Columbia, continues to reinforce the colonial ignorance that sustains unequal relations of power between settlers and Indigenous peoples (Schaefli et al., 2018; Schaefli et al., 2019). Colonial ignorance is "not a neutral or incidental absence of knowledge" (Schaefli et al., 2018, p. 3) but the product of ongoing strategies to sustain an unawareness that maintains the privilege and domination required to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their territories and governance structures (Kuokkanen, 2008; Mills, 2007; Schaefli et al., 2018; Sullivan & Tuana, 2007). For a Social Work student, land acknowledgements alone cannot address the prevailing depth of colonial ignorance produced by the silences, omissions, and misinformation in public education about key settler-colonial issues like the Indian Act and the colonial nature of the Federal Government:

> I think it is important to acknowledge the colonial history of Canada. But more needs to be done in our education system to understand the Indian Act and the federal government's relationship to Indigenous people. I understand the devastation of residential schools. But I find myself needing to research more about the Indian Act and how the current status quo came to be. That's something that I find Canadians I meet are misinformed about. They have false notions about Indigenous people having it easy or getting a lot of money. I tell them that they don't know the history or the political or economic reasons why some Indigenous people struggle. It is an ongoing battle, and I wish that the education system helped to explain what happened in the process of colonialism more thoroughly.[164]

[161] #102; in high school and at VIU (First Nations studies); 27; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Business Administration/Accountant
[162] #187; at VIU; 37; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Education/Teacher
[163] #18; in high school (Many socials studies courses brought in topics of indigenous peoples in Canada), at Vancouver Island University (An introductory english class included First Nations elements; many political studies classes take time to delve into the relevant issues that Indigenous peoples face in Canada and elsewhere globally); 22 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Indigenous but not necessarily a known citizen of my First Nations community; First Nations, non-status Indigenous person, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Political Studies/Politician; Advisor; Indigenous Lawyer
[164] #68; in courses at VIU (Indigenous literature, Indigenous peoples and social work); 37 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Social Work

She also highlighted another aspect of colonial ignorance by pointing to assumptions, attitudes, and stereotypes that prevent students from understanding Indigenous peoples' experiences. A First Nations Studies student emphasized that to reclaim the significance of land acknowledgements, pervasive ignorance about Indigenous protocols for recognizing connections, affiliations, and relationships with and in traditional territory must be addressed through better education:

> Acknowledging where I come from is important for remembering the people I belong to and the families I come from. When this action is made mandatory for people who do not understand the significance of recognizing and acknowledging traditional territory it becomes yet another empty gesture that they do not care about it can be insulting. More education must take place before these empty gestures[165]

For students concerned with fostering deeper understanding, land acknowledgements are just one part of the movement toward change. The university faces a difficult challenge if it seeks to use land acknowledgements as a primary educational tool in the face of unawareness resistant to challenge.

Other students considered that the awareness-raising and educational potential of land acknowledgements is "not a substitute for truth and reconciliation"[166] and "without action they are meaningless."[167] These students argued that "actually doing something makes a better and bigger impact"[168] so land acknowledgements must "include an impetus to act on clearly defined goals"[169] to be the "tip of the wedge in our consciousness and the first step in our acting on decolonizing."[170] For an Education student, supporting Indigenous sovereignty and land rights is key to acting on decolonization:

> I think the most important thing is for Canada and British Columbia to respect Indigenous Title, which starts by recognizing each Nation's legal system and governance system. Land and wealth must be transferred back. Control over Indigenous lands and peoples must end. Steps toward this matter, but only insofar as the end is achieved quickly[171]

[165] #198; in high school (First Nations Studies 12), at VIU (FNAT 101, 102, 203, 204, 303, 304, 300, Women's Studies First Nations 1); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; First Nations Studies/Community Development

[166] #105; no courses; 60 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Education/Teacher

[167] #287; at VIU (Undergraduate degree in history and English); 38 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/Métis; Education/Teacher

[168] #54; in high school (I am Metis, so did some research in high school for curiosity reasons), at VIU (Various gender studies classes, and Allyson Anderson's FNAT classes), and in my community (Working at Boys and Girls Club alongside the Indigenous drumming circle of Nanaimo); 24 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Métis; Women's Studies/Lawyer

[169] #263; at VIU (I am currently in a Practicum working with a First Nations Tribal council); 46 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Geoscience/working with a government agency

[170] #256; no courses; 30 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; community mental health worker

[171] #20; at VIU (all courses for m ed in ed leadership included indigenous perspectives as core to course) and in my community (I live in a community with strong indigenous leaders who share culture with community and expect non indigenous teachers (like me) to learn from the community); 45 years; no gender given; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Dual Citizen/US Resident; Education/Teacher

A few students condemned land acknowledgements, impatient with those they have experienced as "disingenuous,"[172] "insincere"[173] and "token"[174] efforts "performed in accordance to protocol,"[175] "before we go back to ignoring the real problems."[176] For a Child and Youth Care student, land acknowledgements are rendered meaningless when no time is devoted to engaging with the deeper meanings of acknowledgement of land:

> We do land acknowledgements all the time, but I do not think they are meaningful. This is because we have made them routine, and just memorized the words we are supposed to say. There is no time to reflect on what the words and the land really mean[177]

An Indigenous Studies student argued that reconciliation efforts are rendered meaningless when institutions fail to meaningfully engage with people in Indigenous communities to repatriate land:

> it is rendered redundant and meaningless if universities continue to take reconciliation funding moneys without engaging in respectful and reciprocal relationships with those on the grassroots in indigenous communities. if one wants to acknowledge territory, be a part of healing the land and giving it back[178]

These students are wary of how land acknowledgements can allow institutions to treat decolonization metaphorically or symbolically instead of making important social, political, and economic changes (Asher et al., 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2012). There is significant research addressing the pedagogical limitations and possibilities of land acknowledgements (Asher et al., 2018; Fellner, 2018) and many Indigenous advocates are critical of the decolonial potential of these gestures (Bundale, 2019; Unreserved, 2019; Vowel, 2016; Wiebe & Ho, 2014). There is growing scrutiny of the standardized form of land acknowledgements, which are considered performative, shallow, settler self-serving, and devoid of decolonial potential by many Indigenous critics (Asher et al., 2018; Khelsilem, 2014; Vowel, 2016).

The responses of students who self-identify as Indigenous are essential to understanding the role of land acknowledgements at VIU, particularly in understanding what benefit they offer for Indigenous peoples. 21% (71/342) of the students who completed the survey self-identified as Indigenous. Of these, most (47/71, 66%) considered land acknowledgements important ways of respecting Indigenous presence, sovereignty, land rights, and ways of being as well as opportunities to

[172] #267; at VIU (Several guest lectures in various classes by First Nations community members, mostly in a forestry context); 25 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Forest Resources Technology/Forestry
[173] #291; no courses, 19 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Tourism Management/community developer
[174] #37; in high school (First Nations 12 course), in my community (Tribal Journeys); 20 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; First Nations; Criminology/Lawyer
[175] #314; in college, at VIU (Elders coming into class to share their story in Phed 252 and Into 300); 32 years' female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Business Administration/HR
[176] #168; at VIU (Teaching Methods, the B.Ed course on indigenous education), in my community (The "Village" workshop.); 31 years; Female, Male, Other (Pulls off male role well, has testosterone); Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teaching
[177] #138; at VIU; no age given; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Psychology/student
[178] #63; Major Indigenous/Xwunulxw Studies at VIU; 29 years; female; decline to self-identify; Arts One-First Nations/As an educator

educate non-Indigenous audiences (Table 4). For many of these students, land acknowledgements are empowering: "Acknowledgement is everything, and I believe it's the highest form of respect;"[179] and there "is a sense of pride in this acknowledgment, indicating that we are a people and a nation. We are not what the media or stereotyping indicate as "savages" or "lazy". We do exist."[180]

Declared Indigenous Identity and Views on Land Acknowledgement						
Declared Identity	**Total**	**Positive**	**Critical**	**Against**	**Don't Know**	**Blank**
Total declared as Indigenous	71	66% (47)	15% (11)	5% (4)	5% (3)	8% (6)
Declared as First Nations	46	74% (34)	11% (5)	4% (2)	4% (2)	7% (3)
Declared as Métis	15	60% (9)	33% (5)	7% (1)	-	-
Declared as Non-Status First Nations	3	-	33% (1)	33% (1)	-	33% (1)
Declared as International Indigenous Person	7	57% (4)	-	-	14% (1)	29% (2)
NB: 17 students self-identified as "Canadian With Aboriginal Ancestry;" 13 were positive, 2 critical, 1 Don't Know, and 1 Blank.						

Table 4. Declared Identity and Views on Land Acknowledgement.

We found that the question on land acknowledgements prompted a quarter of the survey respondents (84/342, 25%) to reflect on the importance of Indigenous sovereignty and land rights. These students considered that land acknowledgements are opportunities to highlight the unceded status of land in British Columbia, Indigenous peoples' land rights, and the complicated nature of the BC Treaty process. For many, land acknowledgements are ways of "recognizing the sovereignty of those that own the land,"[181] and are important because they "show respect for the people the land belongs to,"[182] "land we stole and are now calling our own."[183] For a Social Work student, land acknowledgements demonstrate that speakers understand Indigenous peoples' resistance and efforts to defend their lands, which remain unceded to the Crown:

> This means that they are acknowledging and understanding that First Nations have title or are fighting for title to their traditional territories. It also acknowledges they are on unceded traditional territories of each nation. It doesn't acknowledge the neighboring communities that have shared or overlapping traditional territories. Some First Nations will acknowledge the traditional territory of the nation they are on and the neighboring First Nations. An acknowledgment to me also marks our territory and makes a claim or understanding that First

[179] #201; at VIU; 31 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Social Work/Artist
[180] #64; history class at VIU; 53 years; female; First Nations, Native American (U.S.); Criminology/First Nations probation officer
[181] #311; no courses; 33 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Biology/environmental monitoring
[182] #12; in high school (First Nations Studies), at VIU (Aboriginal ecotourism training program); 39 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Tourism Management/Business owner
[183] #297; in high school (Social Sciences – basics), at VIU (Criminology & Sociology - many courses talk about First Nations (overrepresentation in courts, marginalized etc.); 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Psychology/Researcher

> Nations occupied the land in history or presently have a claim or treaty negotiation to the land. It is of utmost importance to acknowledge the land especially for newcomers to Canada.[184]

This student also emphasizes the complexities of Indigenous sovereignties and territories, pointing to how many institutional land acknowledgements do not address shared and overlapping territories. Still others pointed to how land acknowledgements can produce robust challenges to the very nature of Euro-Canadian conceptions of sovereignty, ownership, and property (Nichols, 2013). For these students, land acknowledgements are important ways of communicating Indigenous peoples' sovereignty as a "much deeper meaning of 'land'"[185] and "sense of place,"[186] which challenge "current western governments definitions of the space."[187] According to a Geography student:

> The acknowledgement of territory reminds me that these lands do not "belong" to us. Rather, as humans we are part of the land, and thus must manage 'ourselves' sustainably as part of a complex and interconnected ecosystem - just Indigenous peoples have done for generations[188]

For this student, land acknowledgements remind speakers and listeners that they are placed within the world – in relationships with human and non-human others – and emphasize the importance of coexistence (Larsen & Johnson, 2017). A key part of this coexistence is responsibility to human and non-human others; central to Indigenous sovereignty movements is the restoration and maintenance of Indigenous peoples' access to traditional territories and ways of life to fulfill their responsibilities toward the lands and waters (McGregor, 2012). A Business Administration student highlights how land acknowledgements can communicate this sense of sovereignty as responsibility to land:

> I believe land is very important to all Indigenous peoples across the world. We have a deep-rooted connection with every living thing we find on this earth. We are very respectful when it comes to our land. This concept aligns with the main reason we fight for protests like the pipeline. Having this understanding and respect for water (for example) we use for cultural purposes, drinking water, swimming during the summer, and harvesting fish from year after year. If people are open to understand this concept, it helps them figure out where we are coming from when we stand up and fight for the land. It is one of three main parts of who we are and where we come from. And even in class you can see that a lot of people who grew up with much different values do not understand this. I have talked many times with my brother,

[184] #225; At Vancouver Island University (First Nations History), In my community (Practicum Snuneymuxw First Nation); 50 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Social Work
[185] #33; At Vancouver Island University (San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Modules); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Nursing/Community Health nursing, maternity/pediatrics
[186] #77; In high school (First Nations Studies), At Vancouver Island University (Indigenous Literature, Archeology of the Pacific Northwest, Prehistory of the Americas); 34 years; Other/Woman (female is not a gender); Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Anthropology/Museums or government policy
[187] #4; At Vancouver Island University (Social Geography courses engage with concepts involving Indigenous including resource and government policy, history, sustainability, and urban planning, to name a few.); 27 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Geography/Urban Planner
[188] #166; in high school (Social Studies), at VIU (Social Studies), in my community (Through my work and volunteer experience in outdoor education); 24 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Geography/Education, Consultation, Negotiations

> and you can say things over and over again about our culture to non-Natives and they just do not understand. If you show that connection, it helps build that bridge for better understanding[189]

This kind of response recognizes that Indigenous sovereignty is political, cultural, and spiritual, and land acknowledgements can and should show these connections. In the same vein, some students recognize land acknowledgements as part of Indigenous peoples' protocols:

> I agree that acknowledging the traditional territory before events, welcoming, circles etc., is absolutely essential. This is not only a part of protocol, but is important in respecting and recognizing the land, an integral component across Aboriginal cultures. To me this would mean Canadians are making an effort to acknowledge Aboriginal people and is a way they are able to participate in Aboriginal ways of life. However, I think this is only a start[190]

Several students argue that land acknowledgements should be nation- and place-specific, where speakers "share a relevant traditional story that relates to the theme of a meeting or a word and meaning from the nation whose territory the meeting is being held on,"[191] and that language learning is an important part of meaningful participation as it "is best to be as specific as possible."[192] For a Horticultural Technician student, land acknowledgements should connect the listeners to the local nation as well as the land itself, and all the relationships that inhere within the place; abstracting from the local people and place furthers colonial dispossession:

> It means bringing an awareness and consciousness to people that they are on Indigenous land, that they are always on Indigenous land while in North America, as well as promoting specific cultural awareness of the local nation. Where we are is connected with how we act, the land on which we find ourselves, and choosing to ignore or not acknowledge the indigeneity of the land and it's connection to Indigenous people is a colonial act of sweeping people's culture, identity, and history under the proverbial rug…[193]

The support for Indigenous peoples' land rights and sovereignty in the responses of many students indicates their willingness to reject the colonial status quo and to unsettle themselves and the places where they live. These students demonstrate that to acknowledge is not necessarily to accept the world "as it is," but "instead, to act in the world, to make it our own by assessing or valuing it differently…To acknowledge the world, we must change it" (Jackson, 2016, p. 40). As these students' responses

[189] #156; at VIU (FNAT 101, 102, & 375) and in community – cultural dues; no age given; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/ First Nations; Business Administration/working to improve my community
[190] #10; In high school (First Nations Studies (alternative to Social Studies 11)), At VIU (Arts One First Nations Studies Program); 24 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Social Worker
[191] #104; no courses; 23 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business/carbon finance
[192] #324; at VIU (Multiple First Nations Studies including field schools), in my community (Snuneymuxw language course at Art Centre, Herbal Medicine elder teachings, sweat, etc.); 45 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Creative Writing and Journalism/I am a writer. I've published in book form, textbook, newspaper, etc.
[193] #145; at VIU (Previous degree with a minor in First Nations Studies); 24 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Horticultural Technician Foundation/Unclear, I might pursue landscaping/parks work. Potentially education as well. I am also interested in librarianship and Indigenous usage of plants.

demonstrate, support for Indigenous sovereignty and land rights expressed and learned through land acknowledgements may contribute to the process of altering the political and cultural landscape in the province and the country.

While some students pointed to colonial ignorance as a problem, a significant number of students (77/342) displayed colonial ignorance in their responses. One of the most important kinds of ignorance displayed in the students' responses is that Indigenous peoples and everything associated with them, including colonialism, is of the past. It is acceptable to refer to any peoples' past as important. However, the relegation of Indigenous peoples and colonialism to the past is a colonial strategy that, combined with an orientation towards a utopian future, elides Indigenous realities in the present and works to secure a settler future (Povinelli, 2011b; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2013). Some students who condemned the violence of dispossession still placed colonialism and oppression exclusively in the past. For example, a First Nations Studies student referred to colonial dispossession as "past histories,"[194] and a Business Administration student considered colonization to have been "terrible actions in the past from Europeans."[195] From this perspective, students considered land acknowledgements as "an important first step in acknowledging the past mistreatment and colonization of First Nations"[196] where, "in contrast to how the land was treated in the past by settlers"[197], settlers are now "paying respect to the past of forced assimilation."[198] Other students were explicitly opposed to land acknowledgements, considering them to be backward-looking and irrelevant in contemporary Canada:

> The acknowledgement of land seems like a pointless gesture few people would care about as it is tantamount in my mind to a pointless apology about things that happened too long ago for anyone alive to remember and is irrelevant to those who suffered in the modern millennia.[199]

And still others sanitized the violence of colonialism, referring to genocide and dispossession as "past mistakes"[200] "made by past colonizers."[201] Using passive and distancing language, these students

[194] #164; in high school (Hulquminum language, grade 9 indigenous social studies), at VIU (Hulquminum language complete. This term indigenous science and elders teaching); 36 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations, Racialized person (Visible minority), Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry, Native American (U.S.); First Nations Studies/Working with lands and governance

[195] #55; at VIU (I took an English course with an emphasis on First Nations); 25 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business Administration/HR manager

[196] #263; at VIU (I am currently in a Practicum working with a First Nations Tribal council); 46 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Geoscience/working with a government agency

[197] #57; in college (Cultural Studies as part of nursing); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Nursing/Nursing

[198] #307; In high school, At VIU (most criminology and sociology courses); 20 years; female; Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Criminology/Law

[199] #35; no courses; 27 years, male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Biology/ecologist or something, not decided yet.

[200] #185; in High School (Social Studies 8-11); 24 years, male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business Administration/Luxury Retail

[201] #245; no courses; 31 years; male; Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada), international student; Business Administration/Finance related

considered colonial dispossessions as "trials and tribulations that the original owners of the land went through" and "events that occurred."[202] For other students, the replacement of Indigenous peoples is now complete and forecloses contemporary Indigenous peoples' presence and ways of being in their lands: for these students, land acknowledgements are reminders that "the land being used once belonged to the Indigenous population,"[203] "communities that existed prior to colonization"[204] and "had a way of life, a culture and a history, thousands of years before us."[205] These students relegate Indigenous peoples to the role of historical "helpmates," and sanitize colonial dispossession and genocide as sacrifices made to settler Canada: land acknowledgements are opportunities to thank Indigenous people for "sustaining the land in the past,"[206] to "help us remember what happened on this territory and who lived and died here before us,"[207] to recognize the "sacrifices the people have gone through just to provide freedom and voice to Canadians"[208] and "choos[e] to not let it have been in vain."[209] A Forest Resources Technology student, recalling romantic-primitivist notions of Indigenous "wilderness," (Anderson, 1998; Friedel, 2011) considers land acknowledgements reminders of an unrecoverable past of spirits and ancestors who can have no place in the supposedly completely settled and colonized land in the present:

> The land has not always looked the way it does today, all settled and colonized. It was once a wild place where spirits and ancestors were acknowledged. It's important to acknowledge what has changed and to remember how we got here and who and how the lands were used and by whom[210]

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[202] #5; no courses; no age given; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Education/ESL Teacher

[203] #75; at VIU (Indigenous Perspectives); 44 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Social Work/mental health/addictions/corrections

[204] #76; in high school (Participated in a sweat lodge for a day in the Coast Mountain Academy program in 2015; There have been a variety of speakers, presentations, workshops, readings, and assignments throughout the 4 years I have been in the BSN program); 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing

[205] #300; in College (Research in varying courses with a First Nations focus), at VIU (Social Work practice with Indigenous Community/multiple focus areas), in my community (Blanket Exercise/Multiple Community gatherings and teachings/Big house invitations); 36 years; female; Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Social Work/working with DAA's or children and family services for Indigenous support or policy

[206] #269; at VIU (FNAT 101, Indigenous Identities and FNAT 204, Indigenous perspectives on the environment); 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Psychology/administrative assistant, researcher (or assistant), or some other job regarding scheduling, organizing, or dealing with data and people

[207] #322; history courses at VIU, social studies in high school; 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; History Program/teaching

[208] #163; no courses; 28 years; male; International student; Business Administration/I would like to work in banking sector as a financial adviser

[209] #182; At VIU (Cultural studies, heritage/interpretation, and grad seminar); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Tourism Management/Social Media Manager, artist/photographer, or Human Resource manager

[210] #321; At VIU (I took several fnat and history courses); 28 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Culturally aware; Forest Resources Technology/ I want to be a silviculture forester working on reconciliation and sharing the natural capital of this land with indigenous and non indigenous people alike yo make the world a better and ballanced place through a better approach to forestry and managing the natural capital this land has to offer.

Positioning all colonial violence in the past reflects profound ignorance of ongoing assaults on Indigenous identities and sovereignties by Canada through the predations of the Indian Act, court challenges to Indigenous land rights, land appropriation using a wide variety of mechanisms, the theft of children through excessive or aggressive adoptions, and inadequate funding of education, health care, and infrastructure needed by any community to thrive. Positioning Indigenous peoples' multiple and unique sovereignties and ways of being in the past reflects a profound ignorance of the presence and resurgence of Indigenous peoples today. Students' interpretation of land acknowledgements as a recognition of *past* realities is a common assumption and a major problem, particularly in British Columbia where the realities of unceded territories, Treaty negotiations, and land and title claims in the courts continue to challenge settler possession in the province. Universities still have important work to do in acknowledging the presence of Indigenous peoples and their relationships with and in their lands.

A small but significant number of the respondents (22) were ambivalent or outright opposed to land acknowledgements. Some did not want to see or hear them at VIU or elsewhere, claiming them to be "unnecessary!"[211] and "a waste of time."[212] Some students openly expressed settler self-interest in repudiating land acknowledgements. For an Education student, land acknowledgements prompt fear and anxiety about the precariousness of settler possession and privilege (Brown, 2013):

> This means that my forefathers that emigrated to Canada six generations ago have no title to anything.[213]

A History student conflated land acknowledgements with land claims, which he presumed to always be claims to property ownership in the style of the settler capitalist property regime (Nichols, 2013).

> This means the political establishment in canada caters to native grevance politics for votes. In reality, many native tribes themselves competed regularly to steal land from one another and to claim ownership at this point is ridiculous[214]

This student considered that conflicts between Indigenous Nations in the past justified colonial violence and dispossession and nullify Indigenous peoples' connections to land in the present. A Visual Art student expressed a complex of prejudices to reject land acknowledgements, criticizing Indigenous land claims and accepting Indigenous dispossession and settler possession as events of the past that were and are necessary and proper on a trajectory to utopic national unity (Povinelli, 2011a, 2011b):

> I struggle with this acknowledgment(s), as I think it has a potential to alienate non-First Nations persons that had no choice into where they were born (here in Canada). The horrible things that the governments of Canada shouldn't hold bias towards those that happen to be born here. When I personally hear the provided statement the first thing that comes to mind is, "So what do you want me to do? I can't change what the government has done or plans to do. Germany won't take me, France will not either, not to mention the Irish side of me." I'm not blind, I have seen what was done to your culture... I have lived in different countries across this planet; as a

[211] #22; no courses; no age given; male; international student; Hospitality Management
[212] #21; no courses; no age given; no gender given; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; no program or career information
[213] #24; In my community (I work at a FN immersion school); no age given; no gender given; Education
[214] #23; no courses; no age given; male; international student; Hospitality Management

> whole everyone has experienced (or currently experiencing) insane hardships. In that we all are one. The water, land, or air isn't owned by any one. To heal as humans I think that we can not have divides between us. segregating ourselves. As I write this, I look up from the computer do you know what I see? My peers from all over the world. Do you know what I hear? A wonderful variety of languages. Why? Cause VIU is open to all people, so saying that "this place/land is rightfully ours" projects guilt from those that happen to be both born here and chose to be here. Mini vent/rant over.[215]

This student expresses a common settler anxiety, imagining a trajectory from land acknowledgements to Indigenous retaliation and expulsion of settlers (Nichols, 2013; Pulido, 2017; Saranillio, 2013), and sanitizes settler colonial violence by comparing it to "hardships" experienced by "everyone." Here too there is a sense of limited responsibility for what happened in the past (even if it continues today) and what is done by governments, (though settler resistance is possible). By making the issue expulsion or nothing, this student absolves himself of responsibility. Ignorant of the importance of land to Indigenous languages and cultures (Battiste, 1998; Simpson, 2011), his liberal multicultural views celebrate the replacement of Indigenous peoples with a "wonderful variety" from "all over the world."

Other students were similarly concerned that land acknowledgements "alienate"[216] non-Indigenous peoples, making them feel "that I do not belong."[217] At heart, these students argue that the cost of reconciliation in Canada should be born by Indigenous peoples who must compromise and put their rights on hold (Woons, 2013). Perhaps unaware of the irony of expecting Indigenous peoples to keep their heads down so that non-Indigenous people don't feel uncomfortable, these students prioritized the feelings of settlers and required Indigenous peoples to compromise their rights for the sake of maintaining unity and the settler colonial status quo. A History student, centring a settler perspective, considered that repetition of land acknowledgements compromises efforts at reconciliation by making non-Indigenous peoples feel attacked:

> I think it is important to acknowledge that we are on their land but I also dont think that by constantly saying it at every single event that we are going to move closer to reconsiliation. Moreover, from what I have heard other people say, in some ways it makes generations who had nothing to do with colonization feel attacked.[218]

This student performs a double denial of responsibility by placing colonization in the past while attempting to disassociate himself from these sentiments by ventriloquizing what "other people say." In a similar vein, some students considered that land acknowledgements threaten their freedom. A Nursing student opposes institutional land acknowledgements forced upon children at school:

[215] #1; At VIU (History of Canadian Art), In my community (my immediate are unregistered metis); 47 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Visual Art/welder and visual artist
[216] #116; no courses; 53 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Motorcycle and Marine Technician/self employed
[217] #48; no courses; 30 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing/RN
[218] #31; at VIU (In most Canadian history classes and some of the events on campus); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; History

> I am not in favour of it. My kids are forced to say it in their schools and I don't like that. I was never consulted as a parent about it and don't like it forced upon kids[219]

For this parent, land acknowledgements fall within a category of school activities they would deem negotiable or even requiring the permission of parents. Reconciliation in Canada requires using the education system to effect social transformation, sometimes over the opposition of parents educated in a time less concerned with social justice. The irony of anger at forced cultural education is apparently lost on this Nursing student. For over a century, Indigenous children were stolen from their families and homes and forced into a state-sanctioned assimilation program in the Indian residential school system. The residential schools were designed to break Indigenous children's connections to their lands and families and train them for low-wage labour, and ultimately secure settler-state control over Indigenous territories and bodies. This parent is hostile to land acknowledgements even in the context of the highly publicized Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which shed light on the experiences of the Indigenous children who died in residential schools as well those who survived. For the following Education student, land acknowledgements are a culturally specific protocol that should not be prioritized over other cultural, and particularly religious, practices:

> I personally feel that it is a bit one-sided to say that it is the most important thing Canadians do. As a Christian, my personal belief is that honouring God is the most important thing we do, before special events. Others will have different beliefs that are most important to them. How do we move forward, respecting everyone's views of what is most important?[220]

This student presents a "reasonable" argument about respecting multiple beliefs, expressing a familiar multiculturalism that firmly places Indigenous peoples as another minority whose rights are to be managed and limited. This perspective denies Indigenous peoples' sovereignty and land rights and reaffirms the settler colonial status quo. In their own ways, all these students fundamentally rejected the premise of settler colonial dispossession and Indigenous elimination as exceptional violence. These students generally considered Indigenous peoples as just one minority in the fabric of Canada who should not be given "prominence" or "special treatment."

Over 15% of the survey's respondents (54/342) could not engage meaningfully or thoughtfully with land acknowledgements. Of these, whether unable or unwilling, 24 of the survey's respondents did not answer. 15 of the respondents either did not know what land acknowledgements are, were unsure of what they entail, or attempted but failed to guess what they mean. A further 15 described land acknowledgements as meaning "NOTHING"[221] to them, or that "it does not have much meaning for me."[222] Several students conceded that land acknowledgements may be "important to many individuals

[219] #46; At VIU (Nursing courses); 45 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing/RN
[220] #27; At VIU (education courses); 31 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teacher
[221] #327; no courses; 25 years; female; International student; Graphic Design
[222] #14; no courses; no age given; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident no program or career information

and groups," but they were "personally indifferent"[223] and "don't find myself effected in a truly impact-full way."[224] A student with no declared major denied any connection to Indigenous people:

> Although I understand the political importance of the land acknowledgement, it always seems like a mandatory formality during events and it loses its significance. As someone with no indigenous heritage, the local indigenous people do not affect my day to day life. In fact, the largest presence of the indigenous people in my life is typically the land acknowledgment in a ceremony, so even though I understand why it is included, to me it is just a few extra words. I am not necessarily opposed to including land acknowledgements, but I can not say that I would care if they were not included.[225]

Students who distance themselves in this way essentially deny land dispossession and Indigenous presence, absolve themselves of complicity in colonialism and its consequences, and are likely to join the ranks of those who resist challenge to the settler colonial status quo (Medina, 2013a; Schaefli et al., 2018; Whitt, 2016).

Our analysis of the responses to the land acknowledgement question suggests that land acknowledgements are an important, but limited, educational tool. Critical Indigenous theorists consider that land acknowledgements are too often used to relieve settler guilt and responsibility, and that they thus reinforce colonial dispossession through complacency; the question is often posed whether institutional land acknowledgements benefit Indigenous peoples or settlers (Asher et al., 2018; Wilkes et al., 2017). We found that the presence of colonial ignorance, reflected in many students' deep unawareness of Indigenous realities and the harmful assumptions and attitudes reinforced by this not-knowing, impede land acknowledgements' potential to educate and unsettle students. Some students consider land acknowledgements are at best meaningless and at worst cynical gestures. Land acknowledgements cannot replace ongoing, meaningful, and critical educational intervention at all levels and in all disciplines.

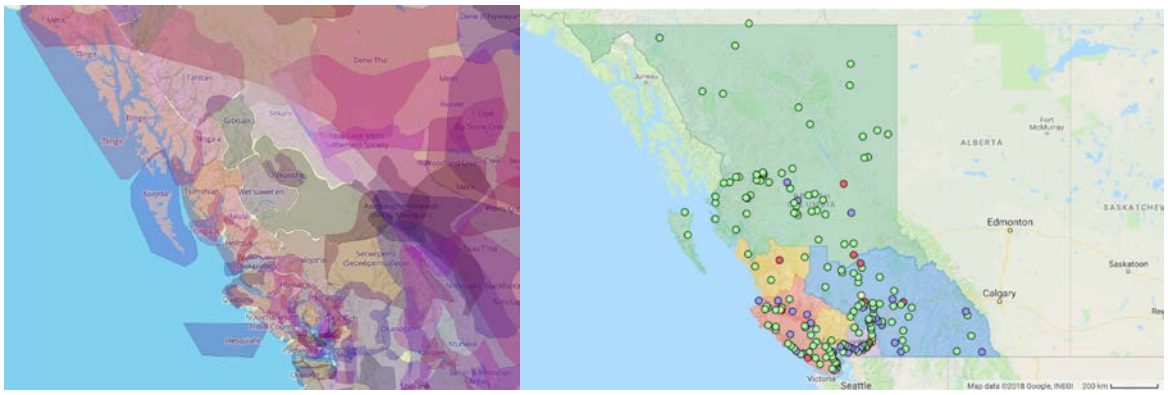
However, we have also learned that for many students these statements interrupt listeners' unawareness of where they are and contribute to their learning about Indigenous peoples. Institutional land acknowledgements have the potential to help disrupt the erasure of Indigenous presence and settler assumptions of entitlement to land, especially when coupled with learning and practices that deepen engagement in the process of decolonization (Fellner, 2018; Vowel, 2017). Many survey respondents, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, are keenly aware of, and make connections between, Indigenous sovereignty, land rights and land acknowledgements. In the context of British Columbia, where land is unceded and mostly un-treatied, land acknowledgements that unsettle expectations and understandings of land rights and sovereignty may have the potential to generate

[223] #149; At VIU (Several social geography and Anthropology courses incorporate some topics about aborigional people both in Canada and many other countries); 46 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Person that has a disability; Anthropology
[224] #239; In high school (lots of discussion about residential schools and increase basic awareness on the subject), At VIU (Not really any dedicated to the subject but the odd reiteration of earlier ideas about this knowledge); 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Criminology/Forensics or Investigations of some form
[225] #284; in high school (social studies classes, cultural safety training); 18 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; no faculty or career listed

support amongst non-Indigenous students for Indigenous land rights, sovereignty, and ultimately forms of decolonization. We think VIU can continue this trend by hosting workshops and formulating frameworks to further enhance deep understanding of the local significance and implications of acknowledging land (Koleszar-Green, 2019; Perreault & Lew, 2016). Most of the survey respondents who self-identified as Indigenous, emphasized the importance of land acknowledgements. VIU has a high proportion of students (11%) who self-identify as Indigenous (Office of University Planning and Analysis, 2018). We think that VIU should enhance their focus on providing a respectful and welcoming place for Indigenous students, in part through land acknowledgements that reflect and encourage a recognition of Indigenous existence, autonomy, and a right to self-determination (Wilkes et al., 2017).

Reserves and Traditional Territories

For this question we showed students two different maps of the same territories and asked them the following question.

> Below are two maps: one a living map of western Canada in which Indigenous peoples have described their traditional territories and one a map of British Columbia by Google based on Government of Canada information of First Nations reserves.
>
> 
>
>
> What is the difference between reserves and traditional territories?

In asking this question, we were interested in students' thinking around the fundamental issue of land and its theft from Indigenous peoples. What do students know about colonial strategies to erode Indigenous land bases? Students' responses reveal a number of important trends. Encouragingly, nearly a quarter of respondents (23%) showed deep understanding of the difference between reserves and traditional territories and its implications. Many students also stated their strong support for Indigenous land rights. However, a significant proportion of graduating students – about 10% – consider that traditional territories no longer exist. While over a third of students could describe some of the colonial aims of the reserve system, the majority are silent about the Indian Act. Some students are confused about the differences between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit and assume that all Indigenous people live on reserves. A smaller number believe that reserves are gifts from the government. Another small but vocal minority insist that that settlers today have no responsibilities to learn or engage. A further 13% of respondents could not answer the question.

The most critical and informed responses came from students who identify as Indigenous and/or took courses on Indigenous topics at VIU. As an Indigenous Education student stated, the creation of reserves is inseparable from a colonial strategy of land theft through disruption of community relationships:

> Reserves are where colonizers sent First Nations people to live when they stole the land in their traditional territories. For many years, they tried to keep First Nation's people apart from one another so they could not practice their culture such as the Potlatch. They needed to have a

> permit to leave and for a long time, if a First Nation's woman married a white man, she lost her identity. Today many Reservations in BC are under water advisory.[226]

Several students likewise emphasized the link between reserves' creation and settler desire for resources:

> Reserves are government ordered containment facilities for indigenous people to get them out of the way so that industry is able to take the resources.[227]

> Reserves are often small parcels of land that indigenous peoples were moved and confined to. The Canadian government made that decision in order to have access to the land and resources. Reserves were put in place solely to control indigenous peoples.[228]

> The difference is the reserve system was a means of keeping the Indigenous peoples from accessing and using their traditional territories. It allowed the settlers to take what was not theirs and disregard the original ownership of the lands inhabitants.[229]

> BC and Canadian lands were "claimed," by the crown, for the sake of empire and colonialism, to harvest resources and "civilize," non-christian peoples.[230]

Still other students highlighted the absurdity of settler self-justification:

> I think about this all the time. What were once called "reservations" or "reserves" have become segregated communities that still exist. The absurd relationship is like if someone stayed at my house and forced me to stay in my bedroom while they visited. And then they don't leave, and then they dictate how I have to live my life and pretend to know what is in my best interest. And they paint the house a different colour, cut down all the trees in my front yard, don't maintain the garden because they buy their groceries from the store. 200 years later they finally let me sign up for internet and maybe go outside sometimes, but just as soon as I start assessing the garden, they tell me that things are good, "our" neighbor down the street is making a lot of

[226] #172; At Vancouver Island University: Indigenous Understanding week. Some professors indicate how to integrate into our classrooms. In my community Through my own efforts at building relationship and inquiry; 35 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; international Indigenous person; Education/Educator
[227] #105; No courses; 60 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Education/Teacher
[228] #238; courses at VIU and learning in community, Aboriginal understandings and hul qimi num language course; 50 years; female; First Nations; Criminology/maybe education administration
[229] #152; At Vancouver Island University: FNAT 101; FNAT 102: SOCW 421 Social Work Practice with Indigenous Communities; In my community (Talk by Yvonne Rigsby Jones on what reconciliation is (and is not) at Nanaimo North Library); 50 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada), Social Work/social work
[230] #157; in high school (Yes, introduction with good public school teachers), at VIU (Anthropology: Inuit, Pacific Northwest. History: BC. Canada, Language class. Gatherings.); 34 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Anthropology/Farming Teacher/Permaculturalist/Farm Coach/Farm Consultant/VIU Anthropology-Agriculture Professor

> money and we are going to help them by allowing their pipeline to run through "our" front yard, right across my vegetable garden![231]

> Reserves are tiny, Joseph Trutch was basically against having any reserves, and made reserves smaller. He also didn't want to enter into any treaty agreements. BC has the least amount of treaties signed due to the mandates and beliefs set by "forefathers" of BC. Who was racist. HE didn't believe in aboriginal title, or First Nations having lands because "they didn't value them". Therefore the settlers "should" get first pick of the lands because they value the land.[232]

Many students also expressed outrage at the injustices of land theft and resource extraction:

> Reservations were forced upon First Nations and are still governed under the Indian Act which directly causes harm in communities. Traditional territories are all of the lands lived on by First Nations before colonialism. For me this is a huge difference and the government is withholding land that is rightfully, and should be, given back.[233]

> [The difference between reserves and traditional territories] needs to be addressed by those in power. There is more than just the land area size that needs to be addressed but also the current conditions and states of the land, much of which is in horrendous shape.[234]

> Reserves are allotted by the government, traditional land is sacred land, which means First Nations have a right to defend it from the petroleum industry.[235]

These students articulate powerfully the dynamics of colonialism in British Columbia and in Canada.

While many students who took part in the survey had a nuanced understanding of the relationship between reserves and traditional territories, other students express serious misconceptions. The most common consigns Indigenous peoples and territories to the past: traditional territories no longer exist (34 students, 10%). The following logical structure is typical of these responses: “Reserves are where First Nations communities were moved to by the Europeans.

[231] #279; at VIU (American history); 39 years; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Culinary Arts/cooking
[232] #285; at UVic (first two years at UVic and in the Indigenous program) and at VIU (the FNAT program and couple history courses had an Indigenous settler relations); Canadian citizen or permanent resident, citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community, Racialized person (visible minority); First Nations Studies/advocating for my community
[233] #289; Courses at VIU through Fnat courses such as, FNAT 101, Elders teaching class, and other social work classes; 27 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Social Services Diploma/I want to work alongside Indigenous communities
[234] #219; In high school: First Nations studies at Woodlands Secondary School; Vancouver Island University: Covered throughout several classes in the BScN program; 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Non-status Indigenous person; Nursing/Nurse Practitioner
[235] #67; In high school: Learned about the residential school system and assimilation in English classes; At Vancouver Island University: In cultural studies Coast Salish artist Jane Marston came to the last class in the course to talk about appropriation; 21 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Visual Art/A full time professional artist

Traditional territories are the lands in which these communities used to live."[236] For students writing in this vein, traditional territories are of the distant past, succeeded and superseded by the settler present. There is little sense of the vitality of Indigenous connection with traditional territories or of the fact that the vast majority of Indigenous territory in British Columbia remains unceded.

Troublingly, nearly 7% of respondents (24) consider that, in the words of a female Education Assistant student, "Reserves are the land given to Indigenous peoples by the Government of Canada."[237] Several students frame reserves as the product of government benevolence: "Reserves are small plots of land that the government has "given" to indigenous communities, for these people to live."[238] "Reserves are territories that the Government gave to Aboriginal people for ownership."[239] "Reserves are lands that we gave back to Indigenous people after their land was taken from them."[240] For these students, reserves were created through government largesse and First Nations people(s) are passive beneficiaries of settler generosity and direction. This perception not only completely denies colonialism, it is easily mobilized to frame Indigenous struggles for restitution and self-determination as ungrateful or taking advantage.

Although nearly 40% of respondents (132) demonstrate some understanding of the colonial aims of reserves, describing strategies of forced displacement (67), attacks on cultural continuity (42), and methods of social control (38), and assimilation (6), it is significant that out of 342 students, only 11 mention the Indian Act. The Indian Act is the most important, deliberate, cultivated, and sustained act of legislated racism in Canada. Although our question did not focus directly on the Indian Act, it is fundamental to reserve creation and governance and thus critical to any discussion of land in Canada, reserve or otherwise (Lawrence, 2004). Indeed, those students who discuss the Indian Act have a keen sense of how it functions to restrict First Nations' self-determination:

> Traditional territory refers to the land that was traditionally inhabited, taken care of and survived off of by a specific group/nation of Aboriginal people while reserves are a colonial construct created to assimilate Aboriginal people. More specifically, reserves are small pieces of land that are set aside (under the Indian Act and Treaty Agreements) for use of band members. Although band members occupy reserves, they do not have control over them…. Although this

[236] #150; at VIU (All the courses in the Post Bacc in Education for Elementary program have enhanced my knowledge and understanding of First Nations, I am currently taking a class "How to speak Hulqum'in'um" hosted by Adam Manson); 42 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Creative Writing and Journalism/teacher
[237] #277; At Vancouver Island University: No specific courses but First Nations perspectives are involved in the EACS program; 24 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Assistant and Community Support/EA
[238] #43; No courses; 28 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teacher
[239] #122; At Vancouver Island University: Nursing courses: Health and Healing, Relational Practice; 26 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Nursing/Registered nurse possible nurse educator in the future
[240] #203; At Vancouver Island University: Several social work courses; 29 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Social Work/Child Protection Social Worker

> land is beautiful and is apart of the traditional territory, it's not "freeing" when the nation is not at liberty to fully "control" it.[241]

> Reserves are small plots of land designated by the Government of Canada through the Indian Act, intended to force Indigenous people to convert from traditional subsistence lifestyles to sedentary, agrarian or industrial economic systems that rely on wages instead of natural sources for survival, with the intent to promoting assimilation by driving Indigenous peoples from their traditional territories to urban centres.[242]

In keeping with the overwhelming silence around the Indian Act, several students (30, 8%) are confused about identity terminology, often conflating Indigenous, Aboriginal, and First Nations or lumping together First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. “Reserves are places where the Canadian Government put First Nations, Metis and Inuit people.”[243] “A reserve is held by the crown and is where Aboriginal people were moved to.”[244]

Many students conflate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit experience while also assuming that all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people(s) live on reserves. Reserves are “where aboriginal peoples live today”[245]; they are “where First Nations people currently reside.”[246] Conflating Indigenous people with reserves denies the diversity of Indigenous people’s experience. For example, Métis and Inuit do not usually live on reserves and the majority of First Nations people in Canadian provinces live off reserve (Statistics Canada, 2017a). It also works to deny forms of governance and self-definition that exist beyond the Indian Act.

Some students work to distance themselves from colonial violence and dismiss settler responsibility. For a female Education student, “Things change, acceptance is vital....I do not own my ancestors land either.”[247] Dispossession is for this student inevitable, a natural outcome of the course of history. A male History student similarly absolves settlers of responsibility by dismissing Indigenous land rights: “I'm sure glad peoples who had a hazy sense of land ownership to begin with can now claim to own the entirety of Canada.”[248] Another student considers that as land theft occurred in the past, Canadians today cannot be held responsible: “… Canada is not two nations it is one. Regardless of the

[241] #10; In high school: First Nations Studies (alternative to Social Studies 11); at Vancouver Island University: Arts One First Nations Studies Program; 24 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; Social Work
[242] #166; In high school: Social Studies; at Vancouver Island University: Especially in my geography courses; In my community: Through my work and volunteer experience in outdoor education; 24 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Geography/Education, Consultation, Negotiations
[243] #341; took one course at UVic on Aboriginal Epistemology; 44 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Music Education
[244] #25; in high school (Aboriginal elective to learn about their historical culture); 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Hospitality Management/a general manager of a fairmont
[245] #115; At Vancouver Island University; Contact and colonization; 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Child and Youth Care/MCFD
[246] #5; No courses; no age given; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Education/ESL Teacher
[247] #253; No courses; 50 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education; Teacher
[248] #23; no courses; no age given; male; international student; Hospitality Management

past, we need to take initiative to move on from the past."[249] By rationalizing the status quo, these students can avoid engaging with the central issue of land dispossession and the consequences of that dispossession for all people living in Canada today.

In short, while many exiting students have an informed and nuanced sense of the differences between reserves and traditional territories, problematic misconceptions remain. For nearly 10% of students, traditional territories no longer exist. Many students also assume that reserves were created out of government benevolence, a misconception that is particularly troubling for its ignorance of colonialism. Very few students understand the importance of treaties and the Indian Act to the reserve system. Many conflate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit experience and assume, incorrectly, that all Indigenous people(s) live on reserves.

[249] #233; at VIU (none specified); 24 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Community mental health worker

Racism and Colonialism

For this question we showed the students an image and asked the following question.

> "Aboriginal women face rates of violence that indicate we are in a culture and a country that still has a lot of latent racism and colonialism."
>
> *- Jaime Black, artist, REDress project*
>
> What does this statement mean to you?

We framed this question to explore whether students understand the anti-Indigenous racism and colonialism structuring Canadian society. Our question includes the powerful imagery of the REDress Project and Métis artist Jaime Black's statement on violence against Indigenous women. Travelling to public spaces across Canada, the REDress art installation draws "attention to the gendered and racialized nature of violent crimes against Aboriginal women" "to evoke a presence through the marking of absence" (Black, 2014). Critical work around violence against Indigenous women seeks to understand and resist the erasure of Indigenous women and the oppression they face (Black, 2014; Culhane, 2019; Moeke-Pickering et al., 2018; O'Reilly & Fleming, 2016; Savarese, 2016). The use of the term *genocide* to characterize this racialized, gendered, and colonial violence has been debated in the media following the release of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Commission Report (2019a). These polarized responses have prompted many, especially Indigenous public figures, educators, and knowledge holders, to address the unawareness and active denial of the entwining of anti-Indigenous violence with the deliberate, destructive, and ongoing forces of colonialism in Canada. Understanding students' awareness of this violence will allow education institutions to consider how to challenge colonial and racist thinking. This survey question asks students what they know about violence against Indigenous women and how they feel about it. As an open-ended question, it invites a wide range of responses informed by the students' own experiences. Many respondents show an encouraging awareness of ongoing attitudes, perceptions, mechanisms, perpetrators, and enablers of this violence. Among these students are some who explicitly explore the complex racist and colonial character of Canadian culture and governance. While many students express who they think is

responsible for addressing anti-Indigenous violence, few of them situate themselves in this work. Nearly 13% (43/342) of the students surveyed cannot or do not engage with our question. Others reveal the assumptions, prejudices, and colonial thinking that undergirds their unawareness and denial of historical and contemporary colonialism and racism. Prejudices, especially disturbing coming from future educators and healthcare workers, and some students' limited engagement with the systemic and shared conditions of racism and colonialism in Canada, are important reminders for us all to continue introducing Indigenous perspectives and experiences, addressing settler responsibilities, and raising critical awareness.

A third of those who respond to this question (109/313) express theories on what systems and structures in Canada cause or maintain anti-Indigenous violence. Some see Canadian society as responsible for this violence. A small number of students, mention policies and legislation (17, 5%) that continue to marginalize Indigenous peoples, including the residential school system, the Sixties Scoop, child welfare, the Indian Act, and the reserve system in the context of this question, suggesting understanding of the systemic nature of colonial violence. Others specifically target institutional violence, naming the Canadian Government (16, 5%), the Justice System (15, 5%) and law enforcement agencies (14, 5%) as responsible. Importantly, 8% (26) of students emphasize the importance of the lack of investigation into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. This student recognizes systemic gendered and racialized neglect from law enforcement agencies and the transportation systems that make the lives of Indigenous women and girls precarious (Wilson, 2018):

> Not only do Aboriginal women and girls face more violence and crime than their white counterparts, those crimes are less likely to be investigated. This is evidenced by the Picton Farm, where Robert Picton kills many women, but as most [are] … First Nations the police did not investigate their disappearances. It is evidenced by the Highway of Tears, were many women have gone missing, but no one cares enough to look for them, investigate their disappearances, nor provide safe transportation in the region. Until all of Canada values all women and girls equally we are not a safe place for any women and girls.[250]

It is not surprising that of the respondents who mention infrastructure as a key issue (20, 6%), the majority point to Highway 16, ("Highway of Tears") as a notorious site of violence.

> Personally, the first thing that comes to mind is what I have heard about the "highway of tears". The extent of my knowledge is that this highway in northern BC is the only way out of a secluded reserve. Women often try to hitch hike on this highway, for whatever reasons, and the numbers of women abducted and raped on this stretch of road is completely unregulated. The number of women missing is unknown. This does not exist anywhere else in Canada as far as I know, which speaks volumes for the above statement of existing racism and colonialism.[251]

[250] #148; at VIU (Elders Teachings Across Disciplines at the Cowichan Campus); no age given; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, grandchild of immigrants; Business Administration/Providing financial advice and tax preparation services to marginal communities

[251] #278; course in high school: 12th grade First Nations Studies; 26 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Métis, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Graphic Design/working as an in-house designer for a large company

The Highway of Tears, a place of underserviced and remote roadways, is evidence of a national crisis (Morton, 2016, p. 300). Access to mobility and safe modes of transportation are deeply racialized and shaped by colonial attitudes and social inequalities, especially for Indigenous women (Morton, 2016). While it is encouraging that many students implicitly link different kinds of colonial violence, relatively few name this violence colonial or explore how they have worked in concert to realize colonial goals.

Eight percent (26) of respondents directly name colonialism in their response and 12% (36) explicitly discuss the continuity of colonial goals and practices. These two students speak of the longstanding colonial mentalities that drive the mistreatment of Indigenous peoples:

> From contact, First Nations women were made to be objects for colonizers. Sexual and physical abuse were often used. as well as harassment towards the community. the same mentalities I believe are still relevant today. First Nations women are at higher risks for violence and death caused by violence. and less likely to be looked for when they go missing, and less likely to get support by the police and other colonial places for support other than their families. the general idea or belief is that the missing women are prostitutes. dehumanizing them. First Nations are continually dehumanized, and thought of less than.[252]

> Society and justice have proven time and time again the blatant disregard for indigenous peoples. The statistic show that we are a small percentage of Canada's population Yet the most institutionalized and murdered. The deep rooted idealization of colonialism is still present in the generations of descendants from those first ships. The systemic policies and practises are still utilized to this day within the highest courts of Canada utilized against indigenous peoples where we continuously have to prove ourselves within those courts.[253]

This next student is one of four who frame colonialism in Canada as genocide:

> this population is one of the most marginalized and oppressed, and has been since the arrival of europeans to Canada. The residential school system in canada SHOULD be compared to the concentration camps of the World war as its main purpose was to erradicate a whole population of people and assimilate them into our 'culture'.[254]

While we surveyed students before the release of the report into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which explicitly describes gendered and anti-Indigenous violence as genocidal, fewer students mention genocide than we had expected. It is unclear from the answers to this question whether students recognize colonial structures, policies, and practices as persistent and deliberate attempts to destroy Indigenous peoples. Overall, students who discuss the continuity and logics of

[252] #285; at UVic (first two years at UVic and in the Indigenous program) and at VIU (the FNAT program and couple history courses had an Indigenous settler relations); Canadian citizen or permanent resident, citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community, Racialized person (visible minority); First Nations Studies/advocating for my community

[253] #205; First Nations studies at VIU; 40 years; male; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations; Business Administration/First Nations leader and business owner

[254] #219; in high school (First Nations studies at Woodlands Secondary School), at VIU (Covered throughout several classes in the BScN program); 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Non-status Indigenous person; Nursing/Nurse Practitioner

colonialism offer some of the most sophisticated and critical answers to our question. Encouraging this level of critical intellectual engagement with these continuing complex colonial structures and systems requires that Indigenous peoples, knowledge, and ways of being continue to be empowered in post-secondary learning (Battiste, 2013).

Over a quarter (27%, 83) of respondents name and engage directly with the nature of racism in Canada. Beyond those who acknowledge that racism exists but do not discuss its function in Canada are those, like this student, who show a sophisticated understanding of the systemic issue:

> Women, and especially Indigenous women are victims of a patriarchal, sexist, racist and dominant culture that holds little respect for their humanity and rights. This is a systemic issue that occurs at the macro, messo, and micro levels of Canadian society. A system of law and order that colludes in this human rights issue is at the very root of the problem.[255]

While there are relatively few students who discuss racism as solely an individual act, it does exist in some students' thinking and limits understanding of the systemic nature of anti-Indigenous racism in Canada. Other students argue that "People need to stop being racist,"[256] and that "there's still a bunch of crap people out there."[257]

> I would disagree on the basis that for the high rate of violence against indigenous women to be caused by racism and colonialism would mean that the violence must be predominately committed by white people with racist motives. This is not accurate therefore I would contest the presumption that our country still has a lot of racism and colonialism. Yes racist people exist but by and large our society is the least racist or colonialism its ever been.[258]

These responses reflect different distancing and disassociating strategies (Case & Hemmings, 2005; Whitt, 2016). In this strategy, serious racial and colonial inequality is relegated to the past, and present society is congratulated for being better. The same happens with a focus on individual and clearly outlier perpetrators which distracts from the colonial and racist system and society that is Canada. Although small in number, these responses demonstrate the continued need to foster deeper, more widespread learning about systemic anti-Indigenous racism in Canada. As Mi'kmaw scholar, knowledge keeper, and educator Marie Battiste argues in her work on decolonizing education, "Few Canadians understand the cognitive operation of racism, how it came to [be] a dominant force in the history of Canada, and how it justified policies, practices, and outcomes that Canadians have come to accept as neutral and even just" (2013, p. 130). Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators and scholars point out

[255] #152; at VIU (FNAT 101; FNAT 102: SOCW 421 Social Work Practice with Indigenous Communities), in my community (Talk by Yvonne Rigsby Jones on what reconciliation is (and is not) at Nanaimo North Library); 50 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada), Irish; Social Work/social work

[256] #197; in high school (History); 19 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Non-Visible Minority; Theatre/Acting/Event Management

[257] #294; in high school (Socials 8-11); 17 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Carpentry/Firefighter

[258] #120; in high school (Ive taken social studies 11 which documents various indigenous history); 20 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; International Indigenous person; Culinary Arts/many options including owning my own restaurant type establishment

the importance anti-oppressive pedagogies and discourses to help students understand and confront racism and settler positionalities, including learning about the role whiteness has played in establishing and maintaining Canada and addressing settler accountability (Battiste, 2013; Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002; Davis et al., 2017; Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018).

A quarter of respondents (78/313) emphasize that there is work to be done to address violence against Indigenous women. While many do not clarify who they think should do this work, some argue that it is the responsibility of the Canadian government and society. Only eight students (3%) take personal responsibility for helping to address these issues. Some of these students discuss what role they must play in their work and personal life:

> It is mind boggling that in 2019, Canada still has issues with racism. As a teacher, I know my duty is to inform the next generation, in order to abate racism towards Indigenous people and other cultures.[259]

> From a health care perspective, it means that aboriginal women are much more at risk for ill health and subsequently ill mental health. As part of the colonial culture, and as a health care provider, I must be sure to ensure cultural safety and respect be a part of my interactions with aboriginal women.[260]

> It means the truth to me. It's something that weighs heavily on me, and makes me feel like I need to do something to change the rates of violence and oppression that aboriginal women face and makes me want to make a difference and change in society, government, institutions and systems in Canada. I wish I could talk to more of my friends and get them exposed and involved in indigenous topics especially with issues such as this one. Some of my childhood friends that are like family to me, just don't understand why these things mean a lot to me for people to be made aware of. It means to me I guess ; something we as a society needs to pay attention to.[261]

Overall, the question of what work can be done to address racism and colonialism in Canada is under-discussed in students' responses. Learning about colonialism as a shared condition is part of cultivating settlers' sense of social responsibility to contribute to efforts of resistance and calls for institutional accountability (Schaefli, 2018). This critical learning and sense of responsibility can be encouraged at all levels of education.

By using descriptive language or discussing their own experiences, a fifth (21%, 65) of respondents describe how they feel about racism, colonialism, and violence against Indigenous women.

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[259] #306; In college (Indigenous art course at UBC, Art history at UBC), at VIU (All courses in the year of my Master of Education, especially a course taught by Denise Augustine), in my community (The Blanket exercise); 32 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teacher

[260] #57; in college (Cultural Studies as part of nursing); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Nursing/Nursing

[261] #220; at VIU (We learn a bit about FN's, and Metis in the social services diploma); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Social Services Diploma/Well I was told by a psychic I'm going straight into changing things systemically with my social work degree. But I see me in a holistic career of some sort... not sure haha confused

Indigenous respondents (9%, 29) refer to the constant struggle against colonial and racial violence, expressing fear, sadness, and the constant need to be alert:

> If I went missing, would anyone notice? What about my half First Nations, half European daughter? Or my sister? Nieces? As a First Nations women, this means that I need to live every day in fear. It means that I protect my daughter 10X more than the average mother that has a NON-Indigenous child. My aunt is a missing and murdered Indigenous woman. I worked with a young boy, and his mother is a missing and murdered Indigenous woman. The harsh reality is that we live in fear.[262]

> Breaks my heart that these women who are central to our culture and teachings will never come home and the justice they deserve for what has occurred is denied to them.[263]

A significant number of non-Indigenous students respond to racial and colonial violence with shock, disgust, surprise, fear, anger, and sadness.

> The red dresses represent the missing and murdered Indigenous women across Canada. It makes me angry. Angry that nothing is being done to find or help these women. That things like this still exist today. It breaks my heart.[264]

> I am a woman, I feel sad and angry at the same time whenever I learn more about the many cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women across Canada. I wish that I knew more about them, and how to help. I saw these dresses on my way to school one day and had no idea what it was about until I asked someone about them. They told me what it was for, but they too felt the same feeling of helplessness and ignorance that I feel whenever I think about them. It makes me sad.[265]

It is notable that while the non-Indigenous students above express strong emotions and say that something should be done, they fall short of suggesting ways forward, indicating an educational gap that VIU might address.

Nearly 16% (49) of students discuss how ignorance and denial contribute to the violence Indigenous peoples face. Those who discuss contemporary denial of colonialism and racism in Canada are especially critical of how ignorance is willful, deliberate, and operates on a collective level to maintain the status quo (Cohen, 2001; May, 2006; Mills, 2007). This student writes about settler's willfulness to not know: "We should not have to justify our injustices. Despite the studies, statistics and

[262] #320; in high school (Social Studies and First Nations 12 - did not learn the "right" history... and it was taught by people that didn't know anything about Indigenous topics.), at VIU (FNAT 102, 204, 300, 380! I loved every course that I have taken here. We have (for the most part) very passionate instructors!), in my community (Elders teachings, Kwakwala language, cultural song and dance...); 27 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Tourism/Recreation Management/Indigenous Scholar
[263] #338; no courses; 35 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Education/I am an English Language Learner Teacher
[264] #177; Canadian history after 1946 course at VIU; 35 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/teacher
[265] #322; history courses at VIU, social studies in high school; 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; History Program/teaching

communities speaking out non-Indigenous populations still live in a state of willful ignorance and complete disregard."[266]

It is encouraging to see students engage with the concept of awareness in relation to Indigenous-settler relations, as it shows a recognition of how the Canadian public's denial and ignorance continues to shape Indigenous realities. Sometimes this awareness also involves linking a critical approach to society's values to one's own thinking and values.

> All women face violence but Aboriginal women face more as they deal with racism and the detrimental effects of colonialism and the continued denial that that is not the case. It means we have so much work to do, to access something that most of us carry, racism, and we don't even know it. A long standing conditioning that's not questioned, acknowledged, refuted and challenged and therefore cannot change at the root of where it needs to. It means sadness and hopelessness.[267]

While she feels daunted by the challenge of transforming a deeply racist and colonial society, others are hopeful that fostering awareness can help disrupt the ignorance maintaining the violence. For this First Nations student and 19 others (6%), the REDress Project is an important awareness-raising tool, as it disrupts silence around the issue:

> The red dress project to me hits hard as a First Nation woman, I want to be found. If I were missing and blamed for being First Nation so I am not priority. My children deserve to know what happened to their mom. I am a person just like the next female. We are not First Nation trash like media portrays. This project made a stand for us as women, also us as First Nation women. More power to opening eyes to see realities minority women of race face.[268]

Importantly, some students believe that hosting the REDress Project at VIU played an important role in spreading awareness on campus. Awareness-raising initiatives within and beyond the classroom are central to unsettling ignorance in post-secondary environments.

Of the 13% of respondents we surveyed at VIU who did not or could not engage with colonialism and racism, approximately 9% (29/342) did not attempt to answer and nearly 5% (14/313) said that they are not sure or do not know how to answer the question. Some explain that they "have never heard of [the issue]"[269] or that they are too uninformed. This next student recognizes that while they are unaware, they do not condone violence, yet do not recognize that they are living in a racist colonialist society: "I lack the knowledge on this topic to make an informed opinion, although obviously I

[266] #198; in high school (First Nations Studies 12), at VIU (FNAT 101, 102, 203, 204, 303, 304, 300, Women's Studies First Nations 1); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; First Nations Studies/Community Development

[267] #342; no courses; 49 years; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; education assistant and community support

[268] #164; in high school (Hulquminum language, grade 9 indigenous social studies), at VIU (Hulquminum language complete. This term indigenous science and elders teaching); 36 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations, Racialized person (Visible minority), Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry, Native American (U.S.); First Nations Studies/Working with lands and governance

[269] #82; no courses; 24 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Geography/Forester

am opposed to creating a racist and colonialiste culture."[270] Half of those in the don't know category are immigrants to Canada or international students. As this international student in Business Administration explains: "Okay, that might be true but I haven't seen anything about this. So I'll not be able to discuss."[271] Post-secondary institutions may find that, across disciplines, students new to Canada in particular may benefit from education addressing the Indigenous and colonial realities that fundamentally influence the political, social, economic, and geographic contexts they have entered. Beyond not knowing, some students say that they simply don't care. This non-Indigenous Canadian Biology student is one of two students to say that the issues raised in this question mean nothing to him: "None of this means anything to me as it doesn't affect me directly in any way."[272] Although not expressed by many students, such indifference actively distances some from colonialism and racism. Projecting these realities in the past is another distancing strategy used by a minority of respondents to this question (7, 2%). There is a crucial need for further post-secondary education to challenge assumptions and ignorance that allow non-Indigenous students to disassociate from settler colonial realities or project it as an issue of the past.

It is alarming that nearly 8% (24) of respondents either show prejudice, delegitimize the question's focus on anti-Indigenous racism and colonialism, or reject the premise of our question. Some students focus on Indigenous peoples, specifically men, as the perpetrators of violence.

> Violence and harm is very present in Indigenous societies, especially towards their women. As I have learned, Indigenous women face vast amounts of abuse and harm. The missing and murdered Indigenous Women movement is happening today, recognizing the amount of Indigenous women who are missed and have been harmed. Colonialism has instilled its ways of life among Indigenous societies, with many women within communities in need of help.[273]

The focus on Indigenous men rather than colonialism and anti-Indigenous racism is normalized in the media, by Canadian politicians, and colonial law enforcement agencies (Innes, 2015; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019c). Innes argues that positioning Indigenous men as the main perpetrators of violence against Indigenous women rests on the misguided belief that "if Indigenous men acknowledge and address the physical and sexual harm they inflict on Indigenous women, then the level of violence those women endure will decrease greatly" (2015, p. 46). As Fast & Richardson argue in their work examining victim-blaming rhetoric, Canada has "difficulty in naming and addressing white male supremacy" and continues to point fingers at racialized peoples (2019, p. 6). Some students blame Indigenous peoples for the violence they face (5%, 16), claiming they are "Curious to know how much violence against First Nations women is perpetrated by First Nations

[270] #284; in high school (social studies classes, cultural safety training); 18 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; no faculty or career listed
[271] #154; at VIU (We had a session to know about first nations, in which they helped us to know about what they are and who they are and what all they have been through); 24 years; male; International student; decline to self-identify; Business Administration/Professional manager in marketing
[272] #35; no courses; 27 years, male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Biology/ecologist or something, not decided yet
[273] #170; in college (At Langara College, many Aboriginal law and history courses.), at VIU (History of Indigenous Peoples); 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Criminology/Elementary School Teacher

men?,"[274] or arguing that "gender inequality still exists in the aboriginal people"[275] and that "Most [violence] happens within their own community."[276] This thinking rejects the colonial, gendered, and racialized nature of anti-Indigenous violence (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019b). Respondents who blame Indigenous peoples are in denial of the main tenet of Jaime Black's quote: that racism and colonialism are the root of violence against Indigenous women. Focusing on Indigenous male violence works to obscure the systems that maintain settler colonial violence (Holmes & Hunt, 2017). Similar to this assumption, some students say reserves are violent spaces: "It means more aboriginal men are murdering aboriginal women on reserves, and rather than face up to these problems liberal activists would prefer to blame white people."[277] This student wonders if the government should be "gifting" such spaces to First Nations:

> I believe there is a lot a violence against abroiginal women. I do not know much about the subject but from what I have heard and seen that many "reserves" are the sketchy areas that you dont want to be. I think that alot of these reserves have they're issues. I wish this was not the case but I dont think that giving incentives to live on reserves are beneficial in the long run.[278]

These responses represent a pervasive colonial devaluing of the lives of those living on reserves (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019b). Disturbingly, this Education student argues that "reverse" racism is the real issue here: "No. FN have reverse racism against whites. Leave past deal with real dis function and stop placing blame."[279] It is truly alarming that the person expressing these white supremacist and anti-Indigenous sentiments is a future teacher. All post-secondary institutions must continue to challenge and transform such deeply problematic beliefs. Some students hide reluctance to imagine Canada as racist and colonial behind science and statistics and demand proof of the disproportionate violence against Indigenous women from the survey designers. Yet this information is readily available at the click of a mouse and much discussed in highly reputable sources. There is here, then, a refusal to take any responsibility for their own education on this topic.

> I would like to see the statistics to understand better the quantitative amount or percentage of violence that is happening to Aboriginal women, and the statistics that tell us of the violence towards Aboriginal women from non-aboriginies and also the Aboriginal population. In no way do I support violence against women and think that it is sad that these things have happened. But I want to have numbers to substantiate that claim before I make an informed response on that.[280]

[274] #114; at VIU (Medl); 34 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Professor
[275] #158; at VIU (TOUR 153 Inclusion and diversity); 29 years; male; International student; English/Consultant
[276] #48; no courses; 30 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing/RN
[277] #23; no courses; no age given; male; international student; Hospitality Management
[278] #84; no courses; 22 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business/Unsure as of right now
[279] #253; no courses; 50 years; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teacher
[280] #90; at VIU (Applied Leadership course in the SHAPE program - we participated in the Kairos blanket exercise); 23 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Physical Education/Ministry work within the Christian faith

Other students hide the racism aimed at Indigenous people behind a bizarre multicultural shield: "Either white or not, any violence should be stopped"[281] or "I think the statement can be true of all races, not just aboriginal. For example, Asians and Africans."[282] It is especially disturbing that nearly a third (7/24) of these respondents are future educators. While Education students may offer some of the most informed responses about racism and colonialism in Canada, amongst them are students who appear to have had very little critical social science education. Post-secondary institutions must continue to consider how they can disrupt racist and colonial assumptions that are so clearly entrenched in some students' thinking.

Overall, students display encouraging recognition that racial and colonial violence against Indigenous peoples persists and many express deep understanding. It is clear that students at VIU are considerably better informed about Indigenous and settler realities than learners at other institutions the Awareness Project has surveyed. Encouragingly, some students are critical of Canadian governments and the justice system and discuss systemic institutional violence, including the lack of investigation into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. There are responses that remind us of the continued need for deeper engagement with how racism and colonialism function in Canadian society. While a considerable number of students suggest that there is work to do to address anti-Indigenous violence, very few situate themselves in this work. We are hopeful that this critical education will erode the colonial and racist attitudes and assumptions present in some students' responses. Students who deny colonialism and racism and who place blame on Indigenous peoples for the violence they face, contrast starkly with Indigenous students who endure in spite of Canada's anti-Indigenous environment. It is crucial that post-secondary institutions continue to create the space for pedagogies that unsettle deeply entrenched colonial thinking and foster settler responsibility and critical consciousness.

[281] #234; at VIU (At HIST111 and HIST112); 22 years; female; International student; International Indigenous person; History/Not sure yet, but I would like to use my English skills to keep them.
[282] #147; at VIU (FNAT & Aboriginal Issues In Education); 46 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teaching

Government Manipulation of Indigenous Identity

Q2.4 "Identity for Indigenous people can never be a neutral issue. With definitions of Indianness deeply embedded within systems of colonial power, Indigenous identity is inevitably highly political, with ramifications for how contemporary and historical collective experience is understood. For Indigenous people, individual identity is always being negotiated in relation to collective identity, and in the face of an external, colonizing society. In both Canada and the United States, bodies of law defining and controlling Indianness have for years distorted and disrupted older Indigenous ways of identifying the self in relation not only to collective identity, but to the land."
- *Bonita Lawrence 2004, p.1*

"What proves I am Indigenous is that I cannot prove to the government that I am Indigenous" - *Ted Meyers*

What effects do you think government definition of identity and repeated changes in the way identity is defined might have on a community?

This open-ended question was focused on Indigenous identity and the impacts on that identity of prolonged colonial assault. Without mentioning the Indian Act, we began the question with a quotation from Bonita Lawrence, one of the outstanding interpreters of the Indian Act and of Indigenous, particularly urban Indigenous, identity in Canada. Her quotation speaks of the complexity of Indigenous identity and its relationship to historical and contemporary government policies. Students could reveal knowledge of colonial strategies, including the Indian Act, and the way they function to reduce the Indian population and divide First Nations communities. Or they might have views on government policing of identity. To illustrate how such policing might be felt by First Nations and Indigenous people in general, we added an ironic comment from the father of one of our co-designers at VIU, though we heard frustration at exclusionary government definitions across the country. We then asked the students to imagine the impacts on a community of repeated changes in government definition of identity.

We were delighted to see the performance of the majority of VIU students who answered this question. The question is challenging as it requires understanding of the complex history and continuing assault on Indigenous identity in its many forms. It is, then, not surprising that 21% (73/343) of students did not answer this question and a further 11% (37/343) answered I don't know. Of this latter group, most said they did not know enough about government definitions and so could not answer, some said they did not know because they were international students and one declared the question too hard. Fully 37% (99/269) of students who did answer described the constant changes in ways that suggest familiarity with the different faces of colonialism: abuse of power; assimilation; population reduction or genocide; social hierarchies and racism; and the argument that, given the governments' reflexes, sovereignty is the best solution.

The greatest number (28) talked about the abuse of power involved in government changes to identity: "This gives too much power to a small number of people in power within a society."[283] For a

[283] #30; has taken three VIU courses with significant Indigenous content; 73 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Fisheries and Aquaculture/undecided

mature student who worked for the Common Experience Program which managed a $1.9-billion compensation package for all former Indian residential school survivors, "How degrading is it that we require people to prove who they are, especially when our government has made a long standing effort to keep them less educated?"[284] The definitions are an act of oppression that work through "a mystification process"[285] as they allow "continuous and unabashed discrimination."[286] These students understand the power being wielded in Canada's identification games: "having one group define another group's identity means they can skew it to gain power. If First Nations were seen as powerful and respected across the country, it would be more difficult for the government to do whatever they please..."[287] and "I think the government prefers our people to be fighting each other instead of focussing on the paternalistic policies that continue to divide our people and keep our people down."[288] All these students agree that "The effects are devastating."[289]

15 students considered government definitions of Indigenous identity simultaneously assimilationist and colonial: "I think government definitions of identity start with the premise that their own identity defines others' identities."[290] It is through such culturally myopic definitions that "the assimilation and racism took hold."[291] Canadian government definitions "force… identities into a box"[292] restricting Indigenous people's abilities to define themselves. This is a major problem as "Indigenous Peoples don't self identify as just themselves. Their identity is part [of] a bigger whole."[293] Externally imposed systems of identity set up "a system of stripping identity, alienating the self from ones' self, the self from culture, community, cosmology, land and language."[294] All this so that the government can "control communities and make them fit into their boxes so they can be managed rather than promoting community self determination."[295] This is tragic as these definitions have "been used to control and devalue the uniqueness within the variety of Aboriginal groups"[296] with the result that "The continuing

[284] #341; took one course at UVic on Aboriginal Epistemology; 44 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Music Education
[285] #190; First Nations minor; 57 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; working with people with barriers
[286] #272; no courses; 30 years; male; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/Métis; Teacher
[287] #135; no courses; 41 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; educational assistant
[288] #238; courses at VIU and learning in community, Aboriginal understandings and hul qimi num language course; 50 years; female; First Nations; Criminology/maybe education administration
[289] #61; First Nations studies courses at VIU; 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations; Criminology/addictions counsellor
[290] #342; no courses; 49 years; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; education assistant and community support
[291] #322; history courses at VIU, social studies in high school; 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; History Program/teaching
[292] #127; women's studies course at VIU; 24 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Fisheries and Aquaculture Technology/climate change biologist
[293] #177; Canadian history after 1946 course at VIU; 35 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/teacher
[294] #256; no courses; 30 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; community mental health worker
[295] #311; no courses; 33 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Biology/environmental monitoring
[296] #271; courses at VIU especially in politics and "Municipal and First Nations Government"; 28 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Psychology/politics and legislative policy

reverberation of colonization is a steady rhythm that makes it impossible to hear all the voices of Indigenous people."[297]

Fifteen students consider Canadian government manipulation of Indigenous identity a deliberate strategy to reduce population or simply genocide: "The long-term goal of eliminating the Indian through policy has been the primary objective. The constant changing of definition is like the little kid changing the rules as the rules keep being overcome."[298] This reduction works in multiple ways: "It discourages people from identifying as Indigenous,"[299] "it diminishes identity within a community. Unless I marry and have children with an Aboriginal man, I am the last recognized fraction amount of Metis in my family…"[300] and negatively impacts "those who may have to move away from their nation in order to find work etc."[301] Government definitions "may not recognize some people who consider themselves First Nation."[302] Really, such legislation all "revolves around the numbers."[303] It "perpetuates the old colonial government approach of destroying the identity of the First Nations peoples"[304] because "White people want to wipe them out, pretend they don't exist."[305] And how could First Nations, Métis, and Inuit not resist these definitions as they are "literally destroying community identities through targeted policies, it's no surprise that there would still be hostility at this behaviour."[306] These students recognize that communities do "feel that they are being erased"[307] and that the policies are "cultural genocide."[308] Two students are more pointed, stating "I feel like what is happening now is a form of

[297] #13; many course in BEd Post-Bac at VIU; 50; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Education/high school teacher, theatre artist
[298] #205; First Nations studies at VIU; 40 years; male; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations; Business Administration/First Nations leader and business owner
[299] #214; FNAT101, CYC 321 at VIU; 54 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Computing Science/Child & Youth Care. I want to work with Indigenous youth, to create pride and resiliency
[300] #278; course in high school: 12th grade First Nations Studies; 26 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Métis, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Graphic Design/working as an in-house designer for a large company
[301] #104; no courses; 23 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business/carbon finance
[302] #103; no courses; 23 years; female; international student; Psychology/clinical psychologist
[303] #64; history class at VIU; 53 years; female; First Nations, Native American (U.S.); Criminology/First Nations probation officer
[304] #202; High school history course; Canadian literature at VIU; 23; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of immigrant(s) to Canada; English/teacher
[305] #133; in high school and at VIU; 24; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; librarian
[306] #92; in high school (Social Studies had a strong focus on First Nations communities on Vancouver Island) and ENGL 222/ENGL 335 at VIU; 20 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; English/I'd like to be a secondary school teacher of English and French, writing novels on the side.
[307] #229; in high school (FNS 12 and history of Canada pre and post Confederation), at VIU (Principles of Teaching and Learning); 27 years, male; Education/ K-12 Teacher
[308] #318; in high school (social studies and English) at VIU; 28 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing

modern-day genocide"[309] where "the ultimate goal is the assimilation and genocide of indigenous peoples. Period."[310]

Students who responded to the identity question with conviction that it was part of a colonial strategy also worried that it created hierarchies of identities and racism, and that it segregated Indigenous peoples. Some of these observations were a little more problematic and reflected a consciousness troubled by the implications of government definition and changes in that definition but also imbued with an historically and socially ill-informed nationalist stance:

> I am not sure at all about this question. Government should identify Indigenous people in the same way as other individuals. Defining them as "different" or "other" will have a segregating effect on a community, individual. It makes them "less than" and is quite demeaning. Repeated changes in the way the identity is defined is actually insulting. We all are who we are. I'm Canadian, always have been. Hands down. Is it not the same for the Indigenous?[311]

Or, in subtler terms, some were still unwilling to embrace Indigenous sovereignties:

> I think that the hierarchy of identities is the problem. What is a Canadian? And how is it opposed to being Indian? There is a hierarchy of identity in which the English or French are the real Canadians (or white-skinned)... somehow Indigenous people and newcomers to Canada that are people of colour are always struggling to be a part of the mainstream... always feared as taking too much. It is an identity imposed upon as opposed to a distinct identity alongside...[312]

The responses that described Canadian government definition of identity a colonial strategy, are among the most informed and sophisticated answers to this question. Another 15 students, none of whom are Indigenous, thought that government definition of identity must stop and be replaced by self-government. Again, they expressed this in a variety of ways. The government definitions have lessened "self-governance and the right to identify one's own culture."[313] The Canadian government has its own interests and given how those have played out historically and continue to play out, some students "can see why many Indigenous communities want self-government, as the Canadian government clearly does not have their interests at heart."[314] "[I]ndigenous people should be the ones defining how they

[309] #289; Courses at VIU through Fnat courses such as, FNAT 101, Elders teaching class, and other social work classes; 27 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Social Services Diploma/I want to work alongside Indigenous communities.
[310] #63; Major Indigenous/Xwunulxw Studies at VIU; 29 years; female; decline to self-identify; Arts One-First Nations/As an educator
[311] #325; no courses; 49 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Not sure. Something in the area of psychology.
[312] #68; in courses at VIU (Indigenous literature, Indigenous peoples and social work); 37 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Social Work
[313] #226; courses at VIU (cultural safety in nursing courses); 31 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Nursing
[314] #101; courses at VIU (Canadian Literature Part 1 and Part 2 - the readings were divided into half settler voices and half Indigenous voices; BC History - again, covered a mixture of settler and Indigenous voices); 28 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education

identify"[315], because, as some students argue, the government does not even seem to know the people it is seeking to define: "There are so many Indigenous cultures and one definition isn't correct.[316] Lack of Canadian government respect for Indigenous self-identity and governance creates havoc repeatedly capitalized upon by the self-interested, a point well-made by several students:

> A)-"your band chief said we can bulldoze here"
> B)-"but our council of elders said no"
> A)-"but we deal with the chief and legally got the ok in our courts"
> B)-"well our courts (elders) said no"
> B)-"and your courts said that you have to recognize our nation, and thus, our courts"
> A)- "sorry, I wasn't listening, what was that?"[317]

> I think at this point, First Nations are done with governments enforcing their ideals, values and morals on any particular community.[318]

> Identity should be part of self governance. FN people should be allowed to define what their "definition," of identity is. Part of reconciliation is empowerment. We need to return/gift/honor FN culture by giving them freedom and space to self govern.[319]

These students' voices are very clear. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples should be allowed to define and govern themselves.

Our question asked what impact the changing definitions might have on a community? Most Queen's students, perhaps significantly less aware of Indigenous communities and cultures, disregarded this focus and answered the question in terms of the impact on individuals. At VIU, a much large percent of the responses, 31% (82/269), addressed the harm to communities. Overwhelmingly they described the effects of government-imposed definitions as divisive and corrosive. And they brought their own stories and experiences to bear on the topic.

Most of these students have a deep, and sometimes personal, sense of the impact of government-imposed definitions. They recognize that these impositions create instability in the community; "internal

[315] #213; course at VIU (Health Healing (year one) we did a cultural sensitivity training program); 31 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing/I would like to be a nurse in palliative care
[316] #311; no courses; 33 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Biology/environmental monitoring
[317] #279; at VIU (American history); 39 years; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Culinary Arts/cooking
[318] #150; at VIU (All the courses in the Post Bacc in Education for Elementary program have enhanced my knowledge and understanding of First Nations, I am currently taking a class "How to speak Hulqum'in'um" hosted by Adam Manson); 42 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Creative Writing and Journalism/teacher
[319] #157; in high school (Yes, introduction with good public school teachers), at VIU (Anthropology: Inuit, Pacific Northwest. History: BC. Canada, Language class. Gatherings.); 34 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Anthropology/Farming Teacher/Permaculturalist/Farm Coach/Farm Consultant/VIU Anthropology-Agriculture Professor

battles of the have and have nots"[320] such that a community's cohesion and wholeness begins to falter. They create "a power imbalance as well as an overall unhealthy relationship"[321] that makes it impossible to find "the common ground to settle the issues"[322] and juggle resources such as land, money and government programs. Community members may be more collectivist or individualist and there may be tension over out-marriage. Yet it will inevitably happen. These controversies in turn attract the attention of "mass media coverage and biased 'facts' (false facts based merely on the opinion of people on the news and bias[ed] news coverage and stories/perspectives)"[323] and a social rift is created and within the community "the continuation of cultural knowledge and practice" is disrupted.[324] It even creates rifts between communities as "Communities are looked down on and it is shameful as some think they are better then others."[325] It foments hatred.[326] It has done all this for a long time: "it has fucked up many generations of people"[327] and it is heartbreaking as it does not allow people "to live in the same community as family and friends."[328] Some students very generously share their own stories to illustrate the tragedy. Division within families is deeply painful as these three participants attest:

> The government definition has a massive impact on a community, in particular, it divides entire communities based on who is "status" and who is non-status. I can particularly attest to this being that my mother is status but for my whole life, the government definition has prevented me from attaining a status card and being treated as an equal in that matter.[329]

[320] #285; at UVic (first two years at UVic and in the Indigenous program) and at VIU (the FNAT program and couple history courses had an Indigenous settler relations); Canadian citizen or permanent resident, citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community, Racialized person (visible minority); First Nations Studies/advocating for my community

[321] #291; no courses, 19 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Tourism Management/community developer

[322] #87; in social studies in high school in Calgary; 24; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Hospitality Management/human resources manager in international hotel chains

[323] #220; at VIU (We learn a bit about FN's, and Metis in the social services diploma); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Social Services Diploma/Well I was told by a psychic I'm going straight into changing things systemically with my social work degree. But I see me in a holistic career of some sort... not sure haha confused

[324] #319; courses at VIU (MEDL 500/580/650; MEDL 600) and in my community (Blanket Exercise, Library Workshops, Film Screenings, Professional Development Workshops); 30 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Principal, Vice Principal, Superintendent

[325] #179; at VIU (elders class in my diploma program); 40 years; female; citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/ First Nations; Child and Youth Care/social worker

[326] #259; at VIU (Socw -indigenous practice); 38; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Social work

[327] #165; at VIU (First Nations Women's Studies, Elder's Teaching, The First People of Canada, Archeology of the Pacific northwest coast, Indigenous literature); 32 years; decline to answer; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Anthropology/Midwife

[328] #145; at VIU (Previous degree with a minor in First Nations Studies); 24 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Horticultural Technician Foundation/Unclear, I might pursue landscaping/parks work. Potentially education as well. I am also interested in librarianship and Indigenous usage of plants.

[329] #299; at VIU (First Nations Studies course in my first year); 30 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Business Administration/accountant working at the Canada Revenue Agency

> We seem to talk about this topic lots in the school setting. I also have this conversation with family and friends. On one hand we have the Metis community that are constantly fighting for their "rights" as First Nations people. And during another discussion we have my parents/friends that are pushing me to have a full blooded Aboriginal baby to rightfully pass on my traditions to (in our long houses). Then you have the government saying what percentage is considered to be First Nations decedent according to a piece of paper or status card. Might I add the only culture that strips rights away when you bring in another nationality to the picture. As pointed out by my English teacher, her child is European heritage from her and Italian from the child's father. Never does this child get stripped of either European or Italian heritage.[330]

> I come from a family that was in foster care and had an ancestor change his legal name. There is strong internal racism in our family and I cannot prove my heritage on any legal documentation. Therefore, according to the government, I am not Metis. It causes huge strife, even in the point of conversation. Because I cannot trace my lineage I am garnered with suspicion and have even been accused of fraud. I want to be able to learn about my culture without fear of being too white or being accused of trying to garner benefits. I was forced to take on 43K in student debt because my family could not produce documentation of our indigenous heritage. My grandmother on her deathbed was not valid enough to be considered truth. I feel like a pretender both in predominantly white circles and Metis ones.[331]

Overwhelmingly, the students at VIU who focused on harm to the community do understand the harm being inflicted. Some Indigenous students understand it on a personal and visceral level.

Trauma, cultural loss, confusion, and compromised mental health constitute a powerful sub-theme of community harm but students also discuss it in the context of harm to individuals. Many students who talk about individual trauma seem less informed about the Indian Act and other mechanisms that assault First Nations, Métis, and Inuit identity, yet intuitively understand how deeply problematic government definition and redefinition of identity is. These students are likely to assert "Identity should never be political but instead something everyone finds for themselves. There should not be any control around how you identify and associate yourself."[332] This assertion relies on individualist definitions of identity and disregards the challenges of community and culture-based identity. Perhaps a little less problematic is the sentiment,

> I think that defining someone's identity for them is wrong to start. For a governing body to coming and tell you who you are is incredibly devastating and creates shame that you aren't accepted for who you are. I think this would have huge effects on the mental health of a community.[333]

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[330] #156; at VIU (FNAT 101, 102, & 375) and in community – cultural dues; no age given; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/ First Nations; Business Administration/working to improve my community
[331] #58; no courses; 32; non-binary; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Métis, Non-status Indigenous person; Creative Writing and Journalism; hopefully writing, but probably working a minimum wage service job.
[332] #55; at VIU (I took an English course with an emphasis on First Nations); 25 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business Administration/HR manager
[333] #262; at VIU (introduction to Indigenous gender); 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; human resources; Business Administration/human resources

Here identity is again understood as primarily individual but there is some sense of the traumatic impact on community. Another approach students take is similarly individualist, exemplified in one student's answer that "it would not be very nice to know that other people saw your identity as something define by another group or person,"[334] but with a fairly acute sense of the subtleties of social marginalisation in Canada. Many students (12/67) who, for the most part, confined their response to the impact of the governments' identity politics on individuals, wrote about the personal confusion it must cause. Trouble and isolation within families and across generations also emerged from those who wrote about the impact on individuals. For some of the students, this is clearly the first time they have heard or thought about the issue: "The constant change could possibly have people questioning or unsure of their identity"[335] or "I'm not sure if I fully understand the question, but to me, … It's like saying someone isn't Italian just because only their great great grandfather was born in Italy and they were born in Canada, they still have Italian blood."[336] Although they do not appear to understand the colonial nature of the issue, they have an innate sense of the injustice and personal pain of identity loss: "No other group in Canada faces rules and regulations like that." [337] Impact on mental health is something to which many students are sensitive: "lasting psychological effects,"[338] "It may not allow for a totally self-determined narrative and expression of identity to form,"[339] "If you hear something about yourself often enough, you will eventually begin to believe it,"[340] "lower self esteem and a ripple effect from there on."[341]

Twenty-five of 269 students recognized that the identity exclusion/inclusion is fundamentally about resources. Some consider just the consequences: "allowing the benefits, or not benefits."[342] "The resources which are available could become difficult to access"[343] "preventing them from benefits and land they are entitled to."[344] Others argue the consequences are the point: "If the only way to receive

[334] #284; in high school (social studies classes, cultural safety training); 18 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; no faculty or career listed
[335] #339; at VIU; 31 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; teacher
[336] #25; in high school (Aboriginal elective to learn about their historical culture); 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Hospitality Management/a general manager of a fairmont
[337] #138; at VIU; no age given; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Psychology/student
[338] #269; at VIU (FNAT 101, Indigenous Identities and FNAT 204, Indigenous perspectives on the environment); 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Psychology/administrative assistant, researcher (or assistant), or some other job regarding scheduling, organizing, or dealing with data and people
[339] #66; in college (Douglas College - Anthropology of BC First Nations - Taught by Tad McIlwraith); 26 years; male; child of immigrant(s) to Canada; Geography/NGO Planner
[340] #254; in high school (Social Studies 10, Civics 11), in college (Indigenous cultural safety course), at VIU (relational practice with classes on cultural competency, Indigenous history and experience in health care, etc.); 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing/community health nursing and remote community nursing
[341] #206; no courses; age not given; male; international student; Business Administration/educator, post-secondary, consultant perhaps, social reform in some way
[342] #316; in college (through North Island College. A course called Nursing 410 Aboriginal Health and Wellness); 41 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing
[343] #331; no courses; 27 years, gender not identified; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Fundamentals of Engineering Certificate Program/civil engineer
[344] #86; no courses; 25 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing

benefits and services is to fit some narrow definition, then it would severely limit the community members who might be interested, which might be by design."[345]

> Government definition of who is Indigenous and who is not has been used to deny some indigenous people the right to vote. It has also been used to deny Indigenous people the right to hunt and fish. It has also been used to deny grandchildren the right to live on reservation land with the grandparents.[346]

One student captured the catch-22: it "can be a challenge for those who … are not able to access recourses to claim their identity."[347] The tendency to see Indigenous people as benefitting from privileges was very common in Newfoundland and Labrador and common enough in Ontario. In this survey only one student focused on the question of resources with disrespect for Indigenous identities, and deep ignorance of the history of colonialism and treaty responsibilities: "None, nobody cares unless there's money involved. If a person has the opportunity to not pay taxes, simply by being born, you can bet that persons going to take it."[348] Fortunately, others expressed understanding of some of the challenges of claiming resources for their First Nations colleagues:

> in order to gain certain funding they are having to prove to be something all over again, and with that comes expectations and not much understanding of certain needs they may have. They may not be able to attain certain grades because they have families that need to be taken care of and they have to travel hours to reach their schools.[349]

Many of these students express understanding and sympathy. But many also lack the education to understand the issues in any depth. We believe that it is the deeper level of understanding that can motivate political support for significant social change.

Had the students been together in a room, a debate over the necessity and nature of definition might have ensued. Emerging from many comments, already quoted, is the view that identity is a cultural, not legal, matter. "Culture, not genetics, should define the community. If one has grown up in a community, been accepted by the community, integrated into its culture, living the traditions, and are willing members of that community then they should be allowed to be considered a part of that community"[350] And "Not all cultures view self and identity in the same way, and not all cultures box

[345] #263; at VIU (I am currently in a Practicum working with a First Nations Tribal council); 46 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Geoscience/working with a government agency
[346] #72; at VIU (Anthropology); 68 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing/retirement
[347] #199; at VIU (Contact and Colonization CYC 321); 23; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Child and Youth Care/school-based child and youth care worker
[348] #35; no courses; 27 years, male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Biology/ecologist or something, not decided yet.
[349] #268; in high school (FNAT) at VIU (FNAT first and second year classes); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Physical Education/teacher
[350] #76; in high school (Participated in a sweat lodge for a day in the Coast Mountain Academy program in 2015; There have been a variety of speakers, presentations, workshops, readings, and assignments throughout the 4 years I have been in the BSN program); 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing

their identity into convenient terms and conditions like many law-makers and government officials tend to do."[351]

Again, as we have already heard, some participants feel that the government has no place in determining Indigenous identity. They argue that "It is not the place of a government to impose the concept of identity on a community,"[352] and "the government should never be able to define a group I feel that this is a racist tactic that places harm on the community."[353] Or simply: "defining identity is a foolish idea."[354] Writing with little sense of the very social nature of science or the intertwined history of science and colonialism, one student suggests: "If a "scientific" method could be developed to decide who is indigenous, people could be more sure of their identity and feel that they were being justly treated."[355] Some students view the question of identity from a great distance and declare there should be no problem at all: "We are all people in the end and what we identify as should not matter"[356] or "Going to keep snowballing. People are going to continue making 8denties rather then identifying as 1 and infinite consciousness."[357] But, as we have already seen, a small number of students who answered the question, but perhaps a larger number of those who did not, consider that any definition of Indigeneity unacceptable because "Identity politics will ruin the whole country if allowed."[358]

> we can not expect this to stop unless we all come underneath one umbrella and call ALL Canadians just "Canadians". Regardless of who we are, where we come from, or how long we have been here, at the end of the day we are all Canadians. Society will be society, and no one has to like it, but it is the way it is. Both groups of people will be better off working together under one body instead of "Nation-to-Nation".[359]

To what "this" refers is unclear but what is clear is that for this student multiculturalism can exist only under the umbrella of the nation. In the end, assimilation is essential. "Unfortunately for canada, policy has only reinforced native non-integration into general society and inflated a ficitious class of creole chiefs who mishandled funds by claiming to be a mistreated and seperate people"[360]

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[351] #209; in high school (Social Studies course discussing Canada's history with First Nations people and the injustices made against them when founding Canada) at VIU (Anthropology course discussed residential schools and the effect on indigenous peoples culture); 24 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Biology/lab researcher or bioremediation technician

[352] #70; at VIU (CYC 321); 20 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Child and Youth Care/occupational therapist

[353] #131; in college (Indigenous studies Camosun college), at VIU (Required bsw course indigenous studies); 27 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Social Work

[354] #36; at VIU (Swag 211); no age given; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; no faculty given/not sure

[355] #137; no courses; 70 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; student

[356] #207; at VIU (Engl 115 with Dawn Thompson); 18; female; International student; Fundamentals of Engineering Certificate Program/engineer

[357] #22; no courses; no age given; male; international student; Hospitality Management

[358] #21; no courses; no age given; no gender given; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; no program or career information

[359] #233; at VIU (none specified); 24 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Community mental health worker

[360] #23; no courses; no age given; male; international student; Hospitality Management

Transforming the ugliness emerging from this ignorance remains the daunting task of dedicated Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators. There are clear signs that VIU is doing a good job in providing courses that enhanced their student's knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and topics.

A significant number of students chose not to answer this question, either because they could not or for other reasons. A slightly higher percent of these students declared they had not had any courses that enhanced their knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and topics, suggesting the importance of especially VIU's courses. That almost 70% of students who responded to this question have taken courses at VIU and even a little over 40% of students who did not answer the question have taken at least one course with *some* Indigenous content at VIU again suggests how effectively VIU is training its students. This level of education is reflected in the 37% of the answers that addressed government abuse of power; assimilation; population reduction or genocide; social hierarchies and racism; and need for Indigenous sovereignty. That 31% of responses addressed the harm to communities suggests a far higher awareness of the collective nature of Indigenous cultures than in other jurisdictions in Canada we have surveyed. The tendency to speculate on what Indigenous people might be feeling without much understanding of the colonial structures at play was more common amongst those who answered with a focus on the individual. Also, in other jurisdictions in Canada, it was common to use discussion about resources to suggest Indigenous privilege and advantage. In the answer to this question we saw little of that. Instead, students focused on the difficult circumstance from which people cannot escape due to mutually conflicting or dependent conditions. Students' views varied about the value, nature, and desirability of definition of First Nations identity through the Indian Act but most questioned whether such definition is ethical and the government's role in it.

Thoughts on Indigenous Sovereignty

We asked the students two questions to get a sense of whether and how students in British Columbia are thinking about Indigenous sovereignty, territory and land rights, and nationhood.

> What are your thoughts about Indigenous sovereignty and land rights in Canada today? (open-ended)
>
> Do you consider that First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples are distinct from all other diversity in Canada? - Selected Choice – Yes, No, Decline to answer

Throughout our work with universities and colleges across the country, we have encountered students' expressions of liberal multiculturalism and cultural recognition – framing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples as "another minority" to be managed within the liberal state – and a sense that sovereignty begins and ends with the Canadian government (Povinelli, 2011a; 2011b; Coulthard, 2014), but very little awareness or engagement with Indigenous peoples as sovereign nations. The vast majority of British Columbia is situated on traditional Indigenous territories unceded through treaty, war, or surrender. Indigenous peoples continue to assert and defend their title, rights, and responsibilities to these lands in the courts, treaty negotiations, and land-based acts of resistance and resurgence. Students graduating from institutions like VIU will be responsible for forming mutual and respectful relationships with and in these lands, so we were interested in their thinking around Indigenous sovereignty, rights, nationhood, and interpersonal and government-to-government relations. The analysis presented here helps to contextualize students' responses to the test questions about identity and land acknowledgements by exploring their beliefs, perspectives, and attitudes.

More than a third of students (127/342, 37%) expressed some form of support for Indigenous peoples' sovereignty and/or rights, demonstrating a variety of understandings and perspectives. Several directly expressed their support for "self-governance,"[361] considering that settlers' and the state's responsibilities are to acknowledge rather than bestow rights and sovereignty and that "indigenous sovereignty should have been accepted from first settlement and mandatory in the drafting of the Canadian constitution."[362] These students argue that the "way forward is through mutual respect and a nation to nation relationship on the path to reconciliation."[363] In particular, students who self-identified as First Nations made connections between sovereignty, land rights, and Indigenous survivance:

[361] #270; no courses; 29 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada, Racialized person (Visible minority); Anthropology/Museum Professional and Cultural Centre Manager

[362] #4; At Vancouver Island University (Social Geography courses engage with concepts involving Indigenous including resource and government policy, history, sustainability, and urban planning, to name a few.); 27 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Geography/Urban Planner

[363] #321; At VIU (I took several fnat and history courses); 28 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Culturally aware; Forest Resources Technology/ I want to be a silviculture forester working on reconciliation and sharing the natural capital of this land with indigenous and non indigenous people alike yo make the world a better and ballanced place through a better approach to forestry and managing the natural capital this land has to offer.

> It is everything. We are resilient People. We have survived a lot - cultural genocide, attempted assimilation... We may be a little broken, but we are working on our communities.[364]

> I think Indigenous self-governance is crucial for Indigenous people and communities to develop/protect their lands and to improve the health and well-being of their people.[365]

Some students connected Indigenous rights and sovereignty with greater control over state and private land use and resource development projects, arguing that "all resource management decisions, whether private or crown should have a mandated amount of collaboration with any First Nation it could affect…especially in the cases of Nations with no signed treaty."[366] Several were supportive of Indigenous "sovereignty against large corporations and government when concerning their land,"[367] particularly in opposition to pipeline development. For an Education student, Indigenous peoples' sovereignty and land rights presumably align with their own ethical and environmental stance:

> I want to support both in whatever ways I can. I am often skeptical of pipelines and dam projects, especially when they go through Indigenous territory. I feel like my interests in sustainability align with Indigenous groups, so it is very important to support them on not only a moral, but practical level. Our current capitalist society is not sustainable, and we would be wise to give Indigenous people sovereignty and control over their resources.[368]

Several students argued that land should be returned because they consider Indigenous peoples to be environmental "stewards"[369] who "have a very positive history with the environment and the land."[370]

A significant number of students (53) recognized settler colonialism as a structural problem and focused on the responsibilities of the Canadian government regarding Indigenous sovereignty and

[364] #320; in high school (Social Studies and First Nations 12 - did not learn the "right" history... and it was taught by people that didn't know anything about Indigenous topics.), at VIU (FNAT 102, 204, 300, 380! I loved every course that I have taken here. We have (for the most part) very passionate instructors!), in my community (Elders teachings, Kwakwala language, cultural song and dance...); 27 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Tourism/Recreation Management/Indigenous Scholar

[365] #10; In high school (First Nations Studies (alternative to Social Studies 11)), At VIU (Arts One First Nations Studies Program); 24 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Social Worker

[366] #161; At VIU (3 or 4 First Nation Classes, and some Canadian History classes); 31 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Geography/ Environmental Protection/ Policy management

[367] #226; courses at VIU (cultural safety in nursing courses); 31 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Nursing

[368] #101; courses at VIU (Canadian Literature Part 1 and Part 2 - the readings were divided into half settler voices and half Indigenous voices; BC History - again, covered a mixture of settler and Indigenous voices); 28 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education

[369] #66; in college (Douglas College - Anthropology of BC First Nations - Taught by Tad McIlwraith); 26 years; male; child of immigrant(s) to Canada; Geography/NGO Planner

[370] #333; no courses; 35 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada (Mother is an immigrant, father is Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry); Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Tourism/Recreation Management/Community Development or conservation with Indigenous populations in Canada and international

rights. Some of these argued that Canada is built on colonialism and is fundamentally at opposition to Indigenous peoples:

> there was never any relinquishment of land or title; BC is funded on lies and deceit. And all Canada's wealth and debt is a fraction of what is owed to the indigenous people of Canada.[371]

> Canada continues to fail our indigenous populations in all issues of land rights and in service provision. Canada supports a society in which there are two water fountains. One for colonists and one for Aboriginal peoples. In doing this we continue to fail at providing communities with the ability to be self-governed and to have equitable access to basic health and human services.[372]

Others considered that "colonization has created great barriers that would prevent sovereignty and reclaiming traditional territory,"[373] and "Canada will never surrender the legal colonial fictions of terra nullius or the doctrine of discovery."[374] They argued that the "system is still broken and unjust,"[375] that Indigenous peoples' rights are "manipulated by the government,"[376] and "bureaucratic and legal hurdles can really set things back."[377] Several students pointed to the cynicism of politics, stating that "the government of Canada still doesn't give a sh*t about the well-being of First Nations, Métis or Inuit peoples in the country unless it loses them money or votes."[378] An Education student expresses cynicism about the Canadian governments' role in land rights:

> I think that the government will do what they want to get what they want regardless of who has land rights. I believe that Indigenous people should have sovereignty over their land and what can and cannot be done to it. If the government 'gives' or acknowledges a land treaty designating Indigenous land than the Indigenous people should have sovereignty over that land,

[371] #205; First Nations studies at VIU; 40 years; male; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations; Business Administration/First Nations leader and business owner
[372] #71; at VIU (Aboriginal Film Studies); 26 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Social Work/Public and Community Health Nurse
[373] #198; in high school (First Nations Studies 12), at VIU (FNAT 101, 102, 203, 204, 303, 304, 300, Women's Studies First Nations 1); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; First Nations Studies/Community Development
[374] #63; Major Indigenous/Xwunulxw Studies at VIU; 29 years; female; decline to self-identify; Arts One-First Nations/As an educator
[375] #70; at VIU (CYC 321); 20 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Child and Youth Care/occupational therapist
[376] #200; in high school (Social Studies), in college (Uvic Indigenous studies), at VIU (FNAT); 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teacher
[377] #67; In high school (Learned about the residential school system and assimilation in English classes), At VIU (In cultural studies Coast Salish artist Jane Marston came to the last class in the course to talk about appropriation), In my community (please describe); 21 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Visual Art/A full time professional artist
[378] #112; In my community (courses seem broad, I have been invited to visit and participate in the culture of some of the Inuit People of Baffin Island, as well as some of the Siksika Nation of southern Alberta); 33 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teacher

> otherwise it is just like the government saying "yes this land is yours but I'll use it and do with it as I please" which completely defeats the purpose of land rights[379]

Some were more hopeful, arguing that "we (as a nation) need to do more (and better) work;"[380] and the Canadian government can and should act "to help reestablish land rights for First Nations,"[381] because "it is a major issue that should be forefront in public discussions and governance."[382]

Encouragingly, 11% of the students (37/342) recognized individual Canadians' responsibility. Several argued that though "Canada likes to pretend it is not racist,"[383] "uneducated racist attitudes are powerful in obstructing sovereignty and land rights,"[384] and that "racism towards indigenous people [needs] to be stopped."[385] A Creative Writing and Journalism student highlighted specific injustice:

> They are being treated like absolute garbage. There are groups in Canada waving Nazi flags and asking for removals of First Nations rights for pipelines. Government and corporations have spent billions in advertising to oppose and First Nations who have stood up for themselves. Today, a Conservative MP said he wanted the truck convoys to run over the "Liberal" protestors, who were really First Nations protestors. A member of parliament publicly calling for the murder of FN people and no one will do anything about it[386]

[379] #177; Canadian history after 1946 course at VIU; 35 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/teacher
[380] #302; no courses; 46 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Tourism/Recreation Management/Recreation Specialist/Disability Management Coordinator or Community Development Specialist
[381] #139; At VIU (I have participated in two Blanket Exercises); 42 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada/First Nations , Non-status Indigenous person, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Education Assistant and Community Support/Psychology or counseling
[382] #13; many course in BEd Post-Bac at VIU; 50; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Education/high school teacher, theatre artist
[383] #180; at VIU (SWAG course about indigenous women activists); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Global Studies/Teaching English in Japan
[384] #246; At VIU (The entire social work program carries an Indigenous focus. Specifically, SOCW421 Indigenous Practice in First Nations Communities, SOCW 362 Child Abuse and Neglect, and SOCW 350A Law and Social Services have significant First Nations elements.); 37 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada, Racialized person (Visible minority); English; Social Worker - Mental Health and Substance Use
[385] #60; no courses; 22 years; female; International student; Biology/Researcher
[386] #324; at VIU (Multiple First Nations Studies including field schools), in my community (Snuneymuxw language course at Art Centre, Herbal Medicine elder teachings, sweat, etc.); 45 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Creative Writing and Journalism/I am a writer. I've published in book form, textbook, newspaper, etc.

Several others called for "more advocates, other than the Indigenous peoples themselves"[387] to fight for Indigenous sovereignty and land-rights to be "recognized by both the government and non-indigenous Canadians."[388]

A small but significant number of students (~6%) recognized the role of education in addressing the challenges to Indigenous sovereignty and rights. They argue that "there is a lot to be done including the education of colonizers,"[389] and that "we need to teach others about rights to that everyone is more aware."[390] An Indigenous Studies student pointed to the importance of land and place-based pedagogy (Semken, 2005; Simpson, 2014; Somerville et al., 2011; Somerville et al., 2009; Tuck & MacKenzie, 2015):

> Land-based education is essential to build the resilience of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students facing catastrophic climate change. VIU needs to act on this in a way that respects their faculty, it's not happening currently.[391]

This response alludes to how "building strong relationships of reciprocity with the land [can result] in the crumbling of settler capitalism" (Freeland Ballantyne, 2014, pp. 76-77). A Music student demonstrated weariness with what they considered to be colonial Euro-Canadian governance and education:

> I do not know how to solve it, but I wish I did. I hope the leaders of communities have more ability to make the rules that our Government has to follow. I, being of European decent, would be fine with living in a country run by leaders of first nations communities 100%. Their beliefs, spirituality and traditions seem much healthier than our bankrupt health care and military style education.[392]

Some students argued that "the government needs to return what they have stolen"[393] because "land belongs to Indigenous people"[394] and that "it is their human right and consitutional rights to own their

[387] #285; at UVic (first two years at UVic and in the Indigenous program) and at VIU (the FNAT program and couple history courses had an Indigenous settler relations); Canadian citizen or permanent resident, citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community, Racialized person (visible minority); First Nations Studies/advocating for my community
[388] #181; At VIU (One of my majors is the Indigenous Studies program); 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Arts One-First Nations/no clue
[389] #131; in college (Indigenous studies Camosun college), at VIU (Required bsw course indigenous studies); 27 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Social Work
[390] #311; no courses; 33 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Biology/environmental monitoring
[391] #63; Major Indigenous/Xwunulxw Studies at VIU; 29 years; female; decline to self-identify; Arts One-First Nations/As an educator
[392] #341; took one course at UVic on Aboriginal Epistemology; 44 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Music Education
[393] #129; at VIU; 27; male; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Social Services Diploma/First Nations Family Advocate
[394] #41; In high school (Théorie de la connaissance); 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Hospitality Management/Accounting

territories, their lands were unceded."[395] Yet, these students' conceptions still limit self-government and sovereignty to property and occupation alone. They, and many others, were unable to recognize that Indigenous peoples' claims to sovereignty and self-government are often more robust claims that challenge the very nature of Euro-Canadian conceptions of sovereignty and property (Nichols, 2013).

A significant number of students (62/342, 18%) expressed some form of liberal multiculturalism, ultimately finding the Canadian state to be neutral and responsible for tempering Indigenous claims to sovereignty and rights. Many of these, while expressing their support, still considered Indigenous rights to be limited gifts from the state. They presumed that Indigenous peoples have lost their rights and claimed that the government "should give them special privileges"[396] and that "we should give back the land rights to them."[397] Other students expressed concern for compromise when confronted with questions of Indigenous sovereignty and rights, unsure how to reconcile them with a unified Canadian nationhood. An Education student considered that only partial Indigenous sovereignty is possible:

> I feel that due to the complicated history between both that an immediate resolution that is achievable and acceptable is not possible in the immediate future, but with more awareness on the matter gained and with strong steps in terms of doing what is just, that First Nations peoples will be able to be sovereign of their lands, if only partly and peaceably with the persons who reside there currently.[398]

Another Education student considered reconciliation is the path to Indigenous sovereignty, but believed that Indigenous assimilation is still the ultimate goal and conflated reserves with land rights, demonstrating a fundamental lack of understanding:

> I feel that reconciliation is a positive step towards regaining this sovereignty. I also think that if we should all live as one in this country and encourage assimilation of all cultures, I don't see why reserves are still necessary.[399]

Several students were concerned to restrict Indigenous sovereignty while extending land rights to non-Indigenous peoples who demonstrate "responsible" connections to the land, arguing that "Everyone deserves land rights if they are respectful about it."[400] A Geography student privileges global citizenship and a sense of global community:

> We need a collaborative approach to governance that honours the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples, their cultures, values, and ways of life, while acknowledging the fact that we are all

[395] #190; First Nations minor; 57 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; working with people with barriers
[396] #163; no courses; 28 years; male; International student; Business Administration/I would like to work in banking sector as a financial adviser
[397] #136; In high school (Social Studies), At VIU (Not Indigenous studies but I have learned about the culture throughout many of my classes); 25 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident/First Nations/I don't call myself FN because I am uneducated on the culture but I do have FN genes in my blood; Creative Writing and Journalism/Editor or writer
[398] #5; no courses; no age given; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Education/ESL Teacher
[399] #147; at VIU (FNAT & Aboriginal Issues In Education); 46 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teaching
[400] #80; no courses; no age given; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Physical Education

> global citizens in a global community and that non-Indigenous Canadians have the capacity for connection to these lands too (without degrading them).[401]

The liberal-multicultural responses of these students highlight the sway of the politics of recognition that casts Indigenous peoples as another minority to be managed and the settler state as the arbiter and giver of rights (Blackburn, 2005, 2007; Coulthard, 2007, 2014).

Fifteen percent of the students surveyed (50/342) were opposed to Indigenous sovereignty and land rights, through their responses absolving themselves and the Canadian government and society from responsibility, and in some cases expressing anti-Indigenous and prejudicial perspectives. Some distanced themselves, claiming "that's an uphill battle I wouldn't want to be involved with"[402] and "I didn't experience any of it, therefore no specific feelings towards it."[403] Others demonstrated the perspective that the cost of a common and unified Canada is one-sided: only Indigenous peoples must compromise and put their rights on hold (Woons, 2013). A student who did not declare their major expressed anxiety that Indigenous sovereignty could be a potential threat to the freedom of non-Indigenous Canadians and argued for limitations on Indigenous sovereignty and rights:

> I will preface this by saying that I think the government of Canada has committed terrible atrocities against First Nations people, and we need to make amends for that. That being said, I do have some constructive points pertaining to land use and sovereignty. I think that First Nations should be able to use their land for traditional hunting and fishing, however, I think we should think carefully about restricting land use for all Canadians in order to grant land sovereignty to First Nations. Some First Nations are restricting the use of their land, and other Canadians now cannot enjoy the use of it. Some First Nations have barred people from using their lands for recreational purposes such as hunting, camping, and fishing. I realize that First Nations wish to protect their land, and I can understand their position and feelings surrounding this issue, but I do not believe this is right. Every citizen of Canada matters, whether they are First Nations or not, and taking away the land use privileges of a good majority Canadians for the sake of a few is a step backward. Everyone should be able to enjoy the beautiful landscapes and wilderness that Canada has to offer. I think we need to continue to work with First Nations to develop a solution that is equitable and takes into account the rights and of all Canadians.[404]

This student, and many others, employed liberal multicultural logic to prioritize the equality of "all Canadians," arguing that justice and equal opportunity in Canada requires only Indigenous peoples to

[401] #166; in high school (Social Studies), at VIU (Social Studies), in my community (Through my work and volunteer experience in outdoor education); 24 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Geography/Education, Consultation, Negotiations
[402] #2; in college (Ethics Classes); 28 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Straight White Man; Economics/Data Analysis
[403] #87; in social studies in high school in Calgary; 24; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Hospitality Management/human resources manager in international hotel chains
[404] #14; no courses; no age given; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident no program or career information

forego their rights. For these students, "all Canadians are equal,"[405] so "the government of Canada must protect the rights of all Canadian persons"[406] and "look at what is best [f]or ALL Canadians."[407]

Indigenous sovereignty and rights pose a dilemma to settler colonial states and raise questions about the potential precariousness of settler possession (Brown, 2013). These questions frequently prompt fear and anxiety among non-Indigenous people who assume Indigenous sovereignty and rights will necessarily lead to retribution and expulsion (Nichols, 2013; Pulido, 2017; Saranillio, 2013). Some students demonstrated anxiety and felt threatened by Indigenous sovereignty and land rights: "I want to say I am in favour, but at the same time I am afraid of what I may have to give up;"[408] "I won't give up my house."[409] Two students were rather more direct in their opposition, reducing Indigenous peoples' movements for sovereignty and rights to an argument about expulsion:

> I believe that what has happened, has happened. We cannot change it unless we would like to go back to the European countries that the invaders came from. I know that is harsh but it is true. We need to come to an agreement of some sorts and move forward.[410]

> I think it is difficult because although I agree they have traditional lands and lived here much longer than Europeans, there needs to be a balance. All Canadians of European descent can't go back to Europe.[411]

Others argued that it is "unrealistic to give back the land that was taken from the indigenous peoples with growing populations,"[412] restricting Indigenous sovereignty and rights by pointing to the relatively small Indigenous population in Canada, (perhaps unintentionally) leaving aside that the decline in Indigenous populations was perpetrated by the genocidal efforts of settler Canada through war, the spread of disease and famine, and assimilation (Nichols, 2013):

> I believe in indigenous land rights and sovereignty. It is just a difficult issue because the majority of the people now living in Canada are from all over the world. Only approximately 5% of Canadians are Aboriginal, so they will never be able to get back everything that was taken from them because of the generations of immigrants and colonizers that have now developed Canada in their own way.[413]

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[405] #259; at VIU (Socw -indigenous practice); 38; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Social work
[406] #185; in High School (Social Studies 8-11); 24 years, male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business Administration/Luxury Retail
[407] #114; at VIU (MedI); 34 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Professor
[408] #77; In high school (First Nations Studies), At Vancouver Island University (Indigenous Literature, Archeology of the Pacific Northwest, Prehistory of the Americas); 34 years; Other/Woman (female is not a gender); Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Anthropology/Museums or government policy
[409] #46; At VIU (Nursing courses); 45 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing/RN
[410] #197; in high school (History); 19 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Non-Visible Minority; Theatre/Acting/Event Management
[411] #55; at VIU (I took an English course with an emphasis on First Nations); 25 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business Administration/HR manager
[412] #284; in high school (social studies classes, cultural safety training); 18 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; no faculty or career listed
[413] #323; In high school (Grade 9-10 Social Studies educated me on the history of colonization and Aboriginal people in Canada. We covered topics involving Luis Riel, the fur trade, residential schools, the white paper, and

Other responses limited Indigenous sovereignty and rights according to a common settler prejudice that emphasizes the passage of time and contemporary cultural and economic interdependence (Nichols, 2013; Woons, 2013):

> Seems like a hard issue to address. Their land was taken from them but now people have been occupying that land for so long. You can't just give it all back. How would that work?[414]

> I am not sure because it is a very complicated issue considering that Canadian land was developed with other nations. If the Government were to give all the land back how would it deal with all the infrastructures included with it? Also, this could create a huge split in the society.[415]

For these students, and several others, "finger pointing must stop in order to move forward,"[416] because "there are more pressing issues."[417] They were unable to make connections between dispossession and the other "issues" they identified like language loss and living conditions. The Theatre student who framed Indigenous sovereignty in terms of non-Indigenous expulsion demonstrated an ignorance of the intimate connection between land and language (Basso, 1996; Battiste, 1998; Simpson, 2011):

> Setup museums of language, of the travesties that the aboriginal people have gone through, set up more funding for kids who are willing to put EFFORT into their free education. Get more programs setup where kids are getting taught their native language. just do something and let's move forward with even more issues.[418]

A Business student who was unable to make connections between land rights and living conditions highlighted the passage of time, contemporary presence of non-Indigenous populations, and a universalizing sense of environmentalism as issues that trump Indigenous sovereignty and rights:

> I think living conditions on reserves (that I have seen) are deplorable and segregation is not the answer. Land rights aren't easily reinstated when other people are now living on the land. Negotiations should continue and Land preservation is important. Recreational space and land reserves to preserve natural habitat for species is important. Sustainable practices by all humans should be practiced. I am personally not to blame for past authorities' decisions and we are all on this earth together. Health of people, spiritualism and environmental protection for

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cultural practices of Aboriginals), At VIU (Natural Resources and Aboriginal Relations - Course focused on the need and the processes involved consultation and accommodation); 23 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Resource Management Officer/Police Officer

[414] #267; at VIU (Several guest lectures in various classes by First Nations community members, mostly in a forestry context); 25 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Forest Resources Technology/Forestry

[415] #122; At VIU (Nursing courses: Health and Healing, Relational Practice); 26 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Nursing/Registered nurse possible nurse educator in the future

[416] #30; has taken three VIU courses with significant Indigenous content; 73 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Fisheries and Aquaculture/undecided

[417] #233; at VIU (none specified); 24 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Community mental health worker

[418] #197; in high school (History); 19 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Non-Visible Minority; Theatre/Acting/Event Management

> the earth are more important to me than land rights. Land rights seem to be a argument on who get to benefit from the economical advantages some landscapes offer.[419]

Several students were particularly concerned about Indigenous peoples' capacity to govern themselves, demonstrating the pernicious paternalism that accuses Indigenous governments of fiscal incompetence and blames Indigenous peoples for the poverty that settler colonial dispossession continues to cause (Pasternak, 2015). These students considered that Indigenous peoples "should be run by government especially monetary,"[420] and that there is a need to "Teach them to manage their own lands and peoples. They need a bridge to understand the system and how to operate in it."[421] An Education student demonstrated a common lack of understanding of Indigenous governance and ignorance of the impact of the Indian Act's imposition of electoral governance on Indigenous Nations:

> They need to have the rights, but also need to be taught how to monitor their leaders that they elect as some do not take care of the people that elect them. Self -government is possible and needed but as in our own politics, not all elected people are working for the people.[422]

A Vehicle Technician student demonstrated this kind of paternalism, while further restricting Indigenous sovereignty and rights. He erroneously portrayed dispossession of Indigenous land as the legitimate result of conquest and surrender and claimed that the colonial violence his ancestors experienced justifies contemporary settler colonial violence:

> Efforts should be made to make sure that indigenous peoples have the sovereignty they wish, if they get it on an equal playing field and can govern themselves well. There should be some involvement in land rights issues to acknowledge the losses and abuse they suffered, but they lost the war. I can't go to the British govt and demand compensation or privileges for the abuse my Irish ancestors suffered.[423]

A Biology student effectively denied the existence of Indigenous peoples, absolving wholesale centuries of colonial violence and dispossession:

> Scrap it all, get a fresh start and simply have everyone born in Canada be Canadian. Personal family histories should have no sway in an individual's basic human rights and should give no opportunities other people wouldn't receive based on their birth.[424]

Some students were outright hostile to Indigenous people and their sovereignty and rights, stating that "I do not think that they should have the rights to the land" because "it causes more

[419] #243; At VIU (geography and history courses); 38 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business/Accounting
[420] #48; no courses; 30 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing/RN
[421] #144; no courses; no age given; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Psychology/Teaching
[422] #305; no courses; 54 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education
[423] #116; no courses; 53 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Motorcycle and Marine Technician/self employed
[424] #35; no courses; 27 years, male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Biology/ecologist or something, not decided yet.

problems than good,"[425] and that "we should have instituted the White Paper."[426] An Education student belittles Indigenous governance:

> I'm confused. How can such decisions be made in the context of a government that operates on a system that does not work. Indigenous people shouldn't be fighting for their sovereignty and land rights.[427]

Engaging thoughtfully with Indigenous sovereignty and land rights was not possible or worthwhile for over a third of the students we surveyed. Over 20% of the students (73/342) did not provide any thoughts about Indigenous sovereignty or land rights. A further 8% (28/342) said they did not know or didn't want to say, and 4% (13/342) merely responded that "it's complicated." Six students answered the question generically, demonstrating little understanding or perspective on the topic: "they are the main inheritance of the nation;"[428] "there are truly helpful and good by Nature;"[429] "they are amazing;"[430] "I love it."[431] Colonial assaults on Indigenous sovereignty and land are foundational to Canada. Had these students much knowledge of the importance of land and self-government to First Peoples, they may have framed their answers very differently.

The second question in this section asks students whether they consider First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples distinct from all other diversity in Canada. Nearly two-thirds of the students (63%) considered that that they are, while 74 (22%) did not and 54 (16%) declined to answer. However, only 67 students elaborated on their answers to this question: engaging thoughtfully with Indigeneity was not possible or worthwhile for over four fifths of the students we surveyed. Of the students (52) who elaborated on why they think Indigenous peoples are distinct from other diversity in Canada, most (20) focused on the priorness of Indigenous peoples: Indigenous peoples "were here first"[432] and "are not immigrants, everyone else are immigrants;"[433] "we were the first people of this great country and now we are treated worse than immigrants that showed up here yesterday."[434] Eleven students considered that settler colonial oppression grounds the relationship between Indigenous peoples, non-Indigenous people, and the Canadian government. These students consider Indigenous people are "Distinct because there is a different history involved with our interactions with them in the past…and

[425] #84; no courses; 22 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business/Unsure as of right now
[426] #23; no courses; no age given; male; international student; Hospitality Management
[427] #342; no courses; 49 years; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; education assistant and community support
[428] #100; no courses; 25 years; female; International student; Wine Business/Marketing
[429] #193; no courses; 27 years; male; International student; Business Adminstration/I want to become a financial analyst
[430] #260; in college; 22 years; female; International student, International Indigenous person; no program information given
[431] #235; In high school, In college (child and youth care first nations and fnat courses), At VIU (child and youth care first nations and fnat courses), In my community (works with indigenous poeople); 28 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Social Work/Youth Cousellor
[432] #96; at VIU (the education program incorportes indigenous topics into many classes. Also studied some in ENG - Canadian Literature); 25 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/teacher, school counsellor
[433] #296; no courses; 48 years; male; International student; Business Administration
[434] #299; at VIU (First Nations Studies course in my first year); 30 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Business Administration/accountant working at the Canada Revenue Agency

currently,"[435] "due to the past history with the gov,"[436] and because "the colonization of Canada assimilated them and tried to push down their culture."[437] These student's responses point to an Indigenous-settler binary and, in some cases cast Indigenous distinctiveness as a by-product of settlement by tying it to the history of settler colonialism (Macoun & Strakosch, 2013; Wolfe, 2013). For 6 students, Indigenous peoples are distinct because they "are the most discriminated against in this country"[438] and "are the worst off or most demographic and are disproportionately represented in prison."[439]

Although students came across this question after they had answered the previous question on sovereignty and land rights, only 5 students made any mention of land rights. For these, Indigenous peoples "are different from other diversities in Canada because of their initial land claim,"[440] "this land should belong to the indigenous peoples"[441] and they "deserve to have the rights of their lands."[442] 4 students thought Indigenous peoples are "a little bit" distinct and that "this distinction is decreasing every year,"[443] pointing to the deep and well documented settler myth of the "vanishing Indian" whose disappearance is inevitable (Bird, 1996; Dunbar-Ortiz & Gilio-Whitaker, 2016; Hutchings & Miller, 2016; Riley, 1998). Resonating with the liberal multicultural sentiments expressed in the question on sovereignty and land rights, 10 students who answered yes to the question still elaborated that "all diversity is distinct," countermanding that very distinctness. In the same vein, most students (14/15) who explained why they do not consider that Indigenous peoples are distinct from other diversity in Canada argued that Indigenous peoples are "a visible minority like every other one,"[444] and "no section of Canada's culture or diversity is more important than the others,"[445] because "every person is just a person."[446]

Overall, deep thinking about Indigenous sovereignty, land rights, nationhood and distinctiveness was limited. An alarming number of students were unable or unwilling to engage thoughtfully with these two questions. We found that there is a wide range of understanding amongst those who did

[435] #127; women's studies course at VIU; 24 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Fisheries and Aquaculture Technology/climate change biologist
[436] #91; At VIU (Aboriginal Education); 25 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Education/Teacher
[437] #65; In high school (Part of the Aboriginal Education group); 19 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident/Métis; Criminology/RCMP
[438] #135; no courses; 41 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; educational assistant
[439] #191; In high school, In college, At VIU; 26 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Criminology/Correctional Officer
[440] #272; no courses; 30 years; male; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/Métis; Teacher
[441] #97; no courses; 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Music/Hopefully a music teacher in the public school system
[442] #83; In high school (Aboriginal Studies), At VIU (Aboriginal Tourism, Cultural Diversity, Fieldschool to Whitehorse), In my community (Running Heritage Interpretation programs); 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Tourism/Recreation Management/Dog Sledding Company
[443] #233; at VIU (none specified); 24 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Community mental health worker
[444] #23; no courses; no age given; male; international student; Hospitality Management
[445] #197; in high school (History); 19 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Non-Visible Minority; Theatre/Acting/Event Management
[446] #86; no courses; 25 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing

respond. Many students apparently lack any knowledge of Indigenous sovereignty and land rights and the history and continuity of Canada's attempts to undermine these. Many more students are confused as to what sovereignty means. While this is a possibly difficult term, a quick dictionary search brings up two key meanings: one based on jurisdiction, dominion, and power, and the other on independence, self-government, and self-determination, whose antonym is given as colonialism (Oxford University Press, 2020). A significant number of students have accepted liberal multicultural values to the point of denying or limiting Indigenous rights and nationhood. Encouragingly, many of the respondents were sympathetic in expressing their support for sovereignty and land rights, with some even recognizing settler colonialism in Canada as a structural problem and emphasizing the responsibilities of non-Indigenous Canadians and the government. However, very few students were able to recognize Indigenous peoples as distinct and multiple – each with their own cultural, legal, and ontological life ways – or that Indigenous peoples' claims to sovereignty and self-government are often robust challenges to the very nature of Euro-Canadian conceptions of sovereignty and property. That 15% of the students we surveyed outright denied Indigenous peoples' rights and sovereignty is troubling, but perhaps not surprising given the current political climate around Treaties, Indigenous sovereignty and rights, and resource development in British Columbia. A small yet encouraging number of students recognize the need for more and better education for themselves and their peers. Universities are in an especially crucial position to enhance critical thinking about Indigenous sovereignty, rights, and nationhood.

Positive Changes

Alongside the following image of Tribal Journeys, a significant annual multi-community cultural experience, we asked students:

What positive changes are being driven by First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples?

In asking this question, we wanted to encourage students to reflect on Indigenous vitality in the face of colonial violence and assess awareness of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit strength and resurgence. As an educational tool designed to confront widespread ignorance, this survey touches on some of the destructive forces of settler colonialism in Canada. Discourses of colonial harm often position Indigenous peoples in the public's imaginary as in inevitable decline — a belief that enables settler interests to persist unperturbed (Million, 2012; Tuck, 2009). The co-designers recognize that it is crucial to counter this myth by highlighting narratives of Indigenous resilience and vibrancy. Through our question, we wanted to know: What are students' perceptions about Indigenous peoples and communities' powerful, dynamic, and heroic undertakings to subvert and challenge colonial domination and harm? Nearly a third of students saw learning opportunities and improvements to Indigenous and non-Indigenous education and public awareness as evidence of significant, Indigenous-led positive change. Over a quarter of students point to the important contributions of Indigenous work around the environment and land. Put together, a third of students focus on other types of advocacy work and Indigenous-led social movements, which suggests student support of many Indigenous efforts to transform and challenge society and governance structures. Some students demonstrate recognition of Indigenous efforts to cultivate and foster cultural existence around community (18%, 56/308) and language (16%, 49/308). Fourteen percent of respondents see Indigenous peoples as actively influencing Canadian society for the better. While the majority of responses reflect an encouraging depth of recognition, those who do not answer the question and those who say they do not know or are

not sure what positive changes are being driven by Indigenous peoples represent 24% of respondents. Vague, terse, and prejudiced responses show romanticized and negative understandings of Indigenous peoples and Indigeneity. What students know and don't know about Indigenous-led positive changes, and how they view these changes, speaks to the narratives about Indigenous peoples prevailing in families, communities, school, and beyond, and point to the importance of education-led interventions to combat pervasive colonial narratives about Indigenous peoples.

Over a third of students (111, 36%) note that Indigenous peoples are driving positive changes in education, teaching, and learning for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in institutional and other settings. Some students point to an increased general awareness of Indigenous peoples (31, 10%), while others specify Indigenous cultures (20, 7%) and history (19, 6%) as topics gaining recognition. For many students, most important is the unsettling of settler learning by Indigenous educators and their allies (17, 6%). This student shares this perspective on increasingly unsettling learning:

> So many [positive changes] to think of off the top of my head right now… One that comes to mind is the resilience they have and how many are now educating people like me who did not grow up near or about the communities. Now, there are many positive changes being driven by indigenous people's because more standing up for their rights towards equality, raising more awareness than ever about their culture, history and personal effects that colonialism and racism has had on communities. Furthermore, i think an important change that's happening is that more people are understanding HOW intergenerational trauma and impacts caused by Canada's history has had on indigenous people's, and WHY and HOW people are still being impacted by it and WHY all these issues are still relevant in today's society. I know there are so much more but the above is what came to mind.[447]

This student argues that Indigenous educational efforts reject colonialism as past and forgotten. Students recognize that Indigenous peoples are unsettling colonial ideologies by "pointing out racism to the general public to force us to take a deep look at our culture"[448] and by "rewriting Eurocentric 'truths' about contact and colonization."[449]

As to where this Indigenous-led learning and awareness raising is taking place, a fourth of respondents (26%, 79) point to institutional settings. This student focuses on the transformative work taking place in British Columbia's public-school education system:

> Indigenous peoples are claiming and preserving their languages; they are celebrating who they are and are finding ways to share their passion and culture with non-Indigenous people; they have and are contributing towards the new BC education curriculum; they are getting involved in public schools to teach children the rich history and current culture of the Indigenous people;

[447] #220; at VIU (We learn a bit about FN's, and Metis in the social services diploma); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Social Services Diploma/Well I was told by a psychic I'm going straight into changing things systemically with my social work degree. But I see me in a holistic career of some sort... not sure haha confused

[448] #293; at VIU (I am a FNAT minor); 35 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Anthropology/An Environmental Educator/Non-profit head/Uni teacher of ethnobotany

[449] #81; no courses; 33 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Child and Youth Care/Child protection

> organizations like FNESC and Strong Nations are working hard to find and create authentic resources for teachers[450]

Other students discussed shifting institutional content and teaching practices in post-secondary education. Some see a "greater presence at universities … to promote cultural awareness"[451] and "more education programs being offered such as courses/degrees in Indigenous language and culture."[452] Among others, this student recognizes the challenge for "Aboriginal teachers" who "fight to have indigenous content added."[453] In a similar vein, this student recognizes that despite Indigenous education work and efforts at shifting relations, non-Indigenous peoples can be unreceptive or just absent:

> Love the photo of Tribal Journeys. I attended the Elders Gathering in Cowichan as a volunteer last summer. It was an incredible event and although the greater community was invited few non-native people attended. I see Indigenous people opening their community to outsiders, but I see little uptake by the community. VIU is lucky to have Elders in Residence to bring their perspective to the school[454]

While community events that centre Indigenous peoples are a rich source of learning for non-Indigenous people, the time and effort demands on Indigenous people is high, especially when settlers remain reluctant to take responsibility for their own education and unlearning process (Davis et al., 2017). Settler assumption of responsibility is a worthy focus of post-secondary institutions. While students certainly notice the experiential learning at "community events",[455] they also see Indigenous-led teaching and learning taking place elsewhere:

> increased education about culture and identity in communities to raise awareness; use of media and social media in the form of movies, biographies and traditional historical accounts from the perspective of Indigenous Peoples; pursuing their cultural traditions within "mainstream" society; being open to sharing their culture with others, taking back control over their art[456]

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[450] #242; at VIU (we had a few specialty seminars to increase our knowledge); 46 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teacher

[451] #185; in High School (Social Studies 8-11); 24 years, male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business Administration/Luxury Retail

[452] #298; in high school (briefly in social studies), at VIU (Indigenous specific courses and all other courses in the BSW program); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Social Work/Unsure

[453] #165; at VIU (First Nations Women's Studies, Elder's Teaching, The First People of Canada, Archeology of the Pacific northwest coast, Indigenous literature); 32 years; decline to answer; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Anthropology/Midwife

[454] #148; at VIU (Elders Teachings Across Disciplines at the Cowichan Campus); no age given; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, grandchild of immigrants; Business Administration/Providing financial advice and tax preparation services to marginal communities

[455] #332; at VIU (Aboriginal Education Course in BEd Program); 44 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teacher

[456] #300; in College (Research in varying courses with a First Nations focus), at VIU (Social Work practice with Indigenous Community/multiple focus areas), in my community (Blanket Exercise/Multiple Community gatherings and teachings/Big house invitations); 36 years; female; Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Social Work/working with DAA's or children and family services for Indigenous support or policy

Many students (17%, 53) consider that Indigenous people are the prime beneficiaries of these Indigenous-led educational initiatives. Indigenous peoples are providing "education for their community",[457] "educating their youth",[458] and "obtaining higher education."[459] They note and approve the presence of "Elders at universities for Indigenous students"[460] and "support services at VIU for First Nations"[461] that make the educational environment more culturally appropriate for Indigenous learners. According to some students, Indigenous presence in educational institutions advances Indigenous peoples' economic well being, community interests, and equity. Indigenous students particularly express this:

> Getting a higher education, whether that be grade school, high school diploma or college/university level is a huge step for our people. Giving the opportunity for a better, higher paying job in all sections of the workforce.[462]

> Indigenous people are also rising up to educate our people to help our own communities.[463]

> Indigenous people at VIU are having conversations about Indigenous laws, land, education etc. Gaining knowledge and sharing stories is important for equity and understanding.[464]

Eleven percent of respondents speak of Indigenous efforts to educate non-Indigenous people. This student sees widespread consciousness-raising resulting from Indigenous efforts:

[457] #142; in college (during B.Ed. at UBC took First Nations Course); 27 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Learning Assistance Teacher

[458] #88; in college (First Nations Literature), at VIU (Indigenous Peoples Knowledge), in my community (Safety for Indigenous Peoples - VIHA); 27 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Counsellor AND #150; at VIU (All the courses in the Post Bacc in Education for Elementary program have enhanced my knowledge and understanding of First Nations, I am currently taking a class "How to speak Hulqum'in'um" hosted by Adam Manson); 42 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Creative Writing and Journalism/teacher

[459] #285; at UVic (first two years at UVic and in the Indigenous program) and at VIU (the FNAT program and couple history courses had an Indigenous settler relations); Canadian citizen or permanent resident, citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community, Racialized person (visible minority); First Nations Studies/advocating for my community

[460] #324; at VIU (Multiple First Nations Studies including field schools), in my community (Snuneymuxw language course at Art Centre, Herbal Medicine elder teachings, sweat, etc.); 45 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Creative Writing and Journalism/I am a writer. I've published in book form, textbook, newspaper, etc.

[461] #125; at VIU (English 116); 48 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Business Administration/Accounting

[462] #156; at VIU (FNAT 101, 102, & 375) and in community – cultural dues; no age given; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/ First Nations; Business Administration/working to improve my community

[463] #201; at VIU; 31 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Social Work/Artist

[464] #333; no courses; 35 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada (Mother is an immigrant, father is Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry); Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Tourism/Recreation Management/Community Development or conservation with Indigenous populations in Canada and international

> Some people (including foreigners) in Canada are now more aware about Indigenous communities and their land. With the Orange Shirt Day event, the term Residential school, is now more clear to others who had miss beliefs on residential schools and Indigenous people.[465]

Some non-Indigenous students express their appreciation for these learning opportunities and recognize how challenging this work must be: "They are kindly helping to educate our ignorant white asses..."[466] It is encouraging that students recognize educational efforts, as they are essential to challenging unawareness and nurturing Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies (Davis et al., 2017).

Nearly a third of students (28%, 86) highlight the positive work Indigenous peoples engage in around land and the environment. Most of these note the active protection of land, water, and the environment (19%, 57). Not many students provide detail on the nature of these efforts. But those that do are very clear, as is this First Nations student: "Defending the land from assault. Colonization continues pollute Mother Earth. Neoliberalist government thinks far too heavily in the now, and not for the future generations."[467] These students see Indigenous activism as continuing "to reclaim who they are and resist colonization as land and water protectors".[468] Or, Indigenous people are "protecting the lands from industry that will destroy it",[469] and are "fighting against corporations stripping the land for profit".[470] This student pointed to Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies as aligning with sustainable practices and better futures for all:

> Indigenous peoples' traditional ecological knowledge has incredible value in the sustainable resource management context. Furthermore, Indigenous perspectives that favour maximizing quality of life and connection to the land over maximizing production and resource extraction have the potential to improve the lives of all Canadians in the long term.[471]

The view that Indigenous peoples and institutions play a crucial role in reframing human relationships, rights, and obligations with the environment is not new. Two decades ago, John Borrows noted that "Indigenous knowledge has often been delegitimated and thus concealed from wider public view" (1997, p. 425). It is encouraging to see students recognize and value Indigenous coexistence with and respect for the environment. Indigenous peoples are often the first to face the impact of environmental degradation. It is positive that students are beginning to appreciate their efforts, in spite of governmental and industry suppression of Indigenous perspectives (Borrows, 1997).

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[465] #240; no courses; 23 years; male; international student; Hospitality Management/Manager and owner of my own sustainable resort

[466] #256; no courses; 30 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; community mental health worker

[467] #201; at VIU; 31 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Social Work/Artist

[468] #63; Major Indigenous/Xwunulxw Studies at VIU; 29 years; female; decline to self-identify; Arts One-First Nations/As an educator

[469] #75; at VIU (Indigenous Perspectives); 44 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Social Work/mental health/addictions/corrections

[470] #123; at VIU (I took a first year English course wherein we studied several books focusing on residential schools); 24 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Criminology/Law enforcement

[471] #166; in high school (Social Studies), at VIU (Social Studies), in my community (Through my work and volunteer experience in outdoor education); 24 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Geography/Education, Consultation, Negotiations

Ten percent (29/308) of the students emphasized land rights in their responses, noting how Indigenous peoples "are working to resolve land and treaty issues".[472] While few students elaborate on what they know about land rights and the pertinence of treaties to positive change, one student connects the role of land rights with struggles for environmental protection:

> Their land rights have the ability to stop resource development and protect this planet. Unfortunately, this makes their struggle for existence and freedom much more difficult as they are going up against a hostile government AND industry.[473]

This student associates land rights with environmentalism, positioning Indigenous peoples as against resource extraction projects. Some students (4%, 13) mention Indigenous protest as a means to address and resist environmental destruction, with some recognizing that Indigenous peoples are on the "front lines of pipeline protests",[474] "leaders in climate justice",[475] and the "driving force behind environmental protection efforts in Canada".[476] Who Indigenous peoples are resisting is seldom mentioned. Under 5% (15) of students point to Indigenous resistance to various forms of colonial incursion, including from the government, police, corporations, and industry. Although students consider Indigenous environmentalism positive, they are silent about many Indigenous communities' efforts to secure resource development projects on their land. Perhaps students see Indigenous sovereignty and land rights as positive when tied to environmental activism and not when used to propel economic projects that can support their communities at some environmental cost. To cultivate non-Indigenous people's respect for Indigenous political authority within a territory, regardless of how Indigenous peoples exercise sovereign authority over their lands and resources, settler colonial expectations and entitlement need to be challenged (Mackey, 2016). Disrupting longstanding expectations grounded in Western concepts of authority is a complex endeavor. However, educational institutions may help shift these assumptions by approaching history critically, centring Indigenous entitlement to land, and encouraging settler reflexivity and recognition of Indigenous self-governance without colonial intervention.

Due to Indigenous-led environmental efforts and knowledge, 6% (18) of respondents say that Indigenous people have positively contributed to Canadian society's understanding of nature and society. This includes cultivating an "Awareness of environmental issues [and an] Awareness of the damage that oil pipelines can do",[477] "the relationship humans should have with nature [and] the

[472] #242; at VIU (we had a few specialty seminars to increase our knowledge); 46 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teacher
[473] #311; no courses; 33 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Biology/environmental monitoring
[474] #104; no courses; 23 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business/carbon finance
[475] #96; at VIU (the education program incorporates indigenous topics into many classes. Also studied some in ENG - Canadian Literature); 25 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/teacher, school counsellor
[476] #218; no courses; 35 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Liberal Studies/Community Planner or Occupational Therapist
[477] #325; no courses; 49 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Not sure. Something in the area of psychology.

awareness of environmental racism in the public sphere because of the pipeline".[478] This student sees settlers as actively and personally unsettled through Indigenous ways of knowing and being:

> Indigenous peoples have brought forth a cultural connection to the land that many settler cultures have not had, which has allowed for students and the greater public to find their own connection to a land not necessarily always lived on by their ancestors.[479]

A significant number of students consider other non-educational and environmental Indigenous-led advocacy work (19%, 59). Some make vague allusions to these efforts, noting for example that they are aware of a "fight for rights that are rightfully theirs",[480] that they are "not sure, but [Indigenous peoples] might be […] pushing the government to make rights more even",[481] or that there are simply "So many social justice movements".[482] Others demonstrate a familiarity with actions to influence decisions at the local and national levels:

> Language revitalization, cultural revitalization (e.x. Tribal Journeys, Cultural Events for All), sustainable land use practices, Reconciliation Education, Inquiries into Missing & Murdered Women, Moosehide Campaign, movement towards independent governance, land claims, Have a Heart Day, Promotion of Indigenous Arts (Authors, Artists, Performers, etc.), Inclusive practices[483]

> Environmental activism, new approaches to health care delivery (for example: mother's story for high risk women who are pregnant), traditional knowledge about the earth, food practices, changes to service delivery, changes to political structure, awareness/advocacy for high rates of aboriginal youth in care and missing/murdered indigenous women and girls.[484]

Sixteen percent (50) mention movements such as Truth and Reconciliation (10%, 30) and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (14, 5%). This First Nations student is one of few to point to work being done around the Indian Act or any other rights related framework or policy:

> The drive to find what happened to our murdered and missing Indigenous sisters.

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[478] #31; at VIU (In most Canadian history classes and some of the events on campus); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; History

[479] #18; in high school (Many socials studies courses brought in topics of indigenous peoples in Canada), at Vancouver Island University (An introductory english class included First Nations elements; many political studies classes take time to delve into the relevant issues that Indigenous peoples face in Canada and elsewhere globally); 22 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Indigenous but not necessarily a known citizen of my First Nations community; First Nations, non-status Indigenous person, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Political Studies/Politician; Advisor; Indigenous Lawyer

[480] #200; in high school (Social Studies), in college (Uvic Indigenous studies), at VIU (FNAT); 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teacher

[481] #245; no courses; 31 years; male; Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada), international student; Business Administration/Finance related

[482] #132; in college (Camosun college); 27 years; non-binary; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Child and Youth Care/Counselling

[483] #319; courses at VIU (MEDL 500/580/650; MEDL 600) and in my community (Blanket Exercise, Library Workshops, Film Screenings, Professional Development Workshops); 30 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Principal, Vice Principal, Superintendent

[484] #71; at VIU (Aboriginal Film Studies); 26 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Social Work/Public and Community Health Nurse

> The drive to have proper First Nation history taught in schools.
> The drive to have residential schools recognized as cultural genocide so that future generations can learn to prevent tragedies like it.
> The drive to have First Nations truly treated equally.
> And the drive to abolish the Indian Act.[485]

The language of "rights" is employed by 39 students, but only four students mention the Indian Act and/or the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

A small number of students comment on how Indigenous-led advocacy is communicated. Some point to the "use of media and social media in the form of movies, biographies and traditional historical accounts from the perspective of Indigenous Peoples."[486] This First Nations student notes the power of social media: "through the use of social media, we are able to connect and communicate our issues with others and gaining an audience and people on our side to know the full truth."[487] It is perhaps social media that is helping Indigenous peoples' to "speak… their story",[488] to "speak… out publicly",[489] and to "voice… social issues."[490] Nearly 13% (39) of students mention Indigenous voices and representation as part of ongoing positive change, in general and specifically by elders, artists, authors, educators, and scholars. This student illustrates how this work continues to unsettle her own perceptions:

> People are talking, creating, communicating, speaking out, making their voices heard, and not giving up. I can only imagine how exhausting it must be to constantly have to stand up for yourself, but slowly I think people may be starting to listen. There's a long long ways to go, but I am thankful for every piece of art work, news broadcast, written poem or book, song, interview and more that raises awareness and challenges us settlers to think outside ourselves.[491]

Students, then, have noticed the impact of social media on the presence of Indigenous voices in discourse.

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[485] #299; at VIU (First Nations Studies course in my first year); 30 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Business Administration/accountant working at the Canada Revenue Agency

[486] #300; in College (Research in varying courses with a First Nations focus), at VIU (Social Work practice with Indigenous Community/multiple focus areas), in my community (Blanket Exercise/Multiple Community gatherings and teachings/Big house invitations); 36 years; female; Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Social Work/working with DAA's or children and family services for Indigenous support or policy

[487] #37; in high school (First Nations 12 course), in my community (Tribal Journeys); 20 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; First Nations; Criminology/Lawyer

[488] #258; at VIU (Indigenous peoples and the Law); no age given; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; History/Teaching

[489] #333; no courses; 35 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada (Mother is an immigrant, father is Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry); Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Tourism/Recreation Management/Community Development or conservation with Indigenous populations in Canada and international

[490] #180; at VIU (SWAG course about indigenous women activists); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Global Studies/Teaching English in Japan

[491] #340; in college (At UVic around 2007, a course called "Aboriginal Epistemology"); 35 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Education/I am an English Language Learner Teacher

Often accompanying students' focus on advocacy is a recognition of how Indigenous peoples sustain cultural and communal existence and continuity. Some, like this First Nations student, draw on the Tribal Journeys image used in our question to discuss cultural continuity, community engagement, and resilience:

> Tribal Journeys is huge part of healing and coming together as a community. Bringing old values back to life. Living a drug & alcohol free environment. Being on the water and land with our neighboring villages. Working together as one to get things done. Watching out for one another on the land and on the waters that our ancestors have traveled for thousands upon thousands of years. Providing a safe environment for the youngest to the eldest participant.[492]

Students use terms such as "revitalization," "resurgence," and "reclamation" to describe the transformative practices and initiatives that cultivate continuity of Indigenous cultural practices and ways of knowing, community relations and identity, language, and self-governance. Encouragingly, language is mentioned in 16% (49) of responses. Beyond noting that Indigenous peoples are "Learning their languages",[493] some specify certain "language revitalization"[494] and reclamation efforts, such as "changing the name of a place to its traditional Indigenous name"[495] and "language immersion programs"[496] in schools and communities. For this student, the dynamism and innovation of Indigenous ways of being and knowing are intertwined with cultural continuity:

> Challenging the law and pursuing land rights in the courts system.
> Gaining autonomy over education, social services and health
> Pursuing self-determination through creation of economic, social and cultural practices
> Re-connection with cultural and traditional ways
> Engaging in the truth and reconciliation to promote understanding, reveal historical narratives that have been suppressed, change policy and laws, help indigenous people to reclaim a pride and respect for who they are and where they are from
> Empower, educate, resist, reclaim
> Engage in political action and social justice endevours
> Finding a voice, social action campaigns like idle no more[497]

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[492] #156; at VIU (FNAT 101, 102, & 375) and in community – cultural dues; no age given; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/ First Nations; Business Administration/working to improve my community

[493] #150; at VIU (All the courses in the Post Bacc in Education for Elementary program have enhanced my knowledge and understanding of First Nations, I am currently taking a class "How to speak Hulqum'in'um" hosted by Adam Manson); 42 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Creative Writing and Journalism/teacher

[494] #198; in high school (First Nations Studies 12), at VIU (FNAT 101, 102, 203, 204, 303, 304, 300, Women's Studies First Nations 1); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; First Nations Studies/Community Development

[495] #101; courses at VIU (Canadian Literature Part 1 and Part 2 - the readings were divided into half settler voices and half Indigenous voices; BC History - again, covered a mixture of settler and Indigenous voices); 28 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education

[496] #306; In college (Indigenous art course at UBC, Art history at UBC), at VIU (All courses in the year of my Master of Education, especially a course taught by Denise Augustine), in my community (The Blanket exercise); 32 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teacher

[497] #152; at VIU (FNAT 101; FNAT 102: SOCW 421 Social Work Practice with Indigenous Communities), in my community (Talk by Yvonne Rigsby Jones on what reconciliation is (and is not) at Nanaimo North Library); 50 years;

In noting the processes of "creation" and "re-connection," she frames Indigeneity as dynamic and changing. She sees positive changes as grounded in place (land and territory), culture (traditional and dynamic), teaching and learning, resistance and justice, and solidarities and pride. Only 8% (24/308) of students mention self-determination and self-governance as part of cultural continuity. This student ties Indigenous self-government to self-determination of culture and identity, directly in opposition the constrictions and constructions of the Canadian government: "Owning their culture again, educating others and being strong in their desire for self-governance and self-identity ... not Government identity."[498] In their responses, students often mention or highlight positive changes on a community level (56, 18%). Not many of these respondents offer insight into what community means or does.

At times, respondents discuss the roles of community members in effecting positive changes or who is the primary beneficiary of change, including Elders, leaders, and youth. The positive changes helping Indigenous youth are addressed by 7% (20) of respondents. This next student makes clear that positive changes are fundamentally about youth's connection with community:

> The positive impact that the First nations people have been able to rein-store within their community and society have been the culture events and the positive sports and taken care of their own children and raising them and showing the children the practices and principals of the ways of the first nations people.[499]

Indigenous senses of community are, for some students, lessons to Canadian society. This student sees Indigenous peoples as driving "Social change around the ways we view the meaning of community".[500]

Alarmingly, 9% (27) of respondents say that they don't know or are not sure what positive changes Indigenous peoples are driving. Over a third (10) of these respondents were born outside Canada, having either immigrated to Canada or are studying from abroad. Some say that they "do not have any idea about them"[501] or that they "have no experience of what the Indigenous people are doing here."[502] Or simply, "I am not from Canada, therefore, I can evaluate that".[503] Implied in this response is the sense that as a student not from here, they have no responsibility to learn about here. This may be a sentiment to address in the education of international students. It is important that education institutions teach newcomers about colonial and Indigenous realities that fundamentally influence the political, social, economic, and geographic contexts they have entered into. Without this education, new

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female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada), Irish; Social Work/social work

[498] #111; at VIU (FNAT 101 and Land is Life); 38 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Child and Youth Care/CYC in school district, First Nations Liaison for school district

[499] #232; at VIU; 24 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; no program information/Community mental health worker

[500] #290; no courses, Through FNAT courses such as, FNAT 101, Elders teaching class, and other social work classes; 23 years; male; International student; decline to self-identify; Business/Government job

[501] #40; no courses; 29 years; female; International student; Education

[502] #143; no courses; 39 years; female; Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Education/May have many chance to contact and work with Indigenous

[503] #241; no courses; 27 years; female; International student; declines to self-identify; Business Administration/Investment banker

arrivals are often left unaware and risk carrying negative and uncritical understandings of Indigenous people (Yu, 2011). One student in the I don't know category wrote:

> I don't know exactly. I support the Red Dress movement, that's the only one I know of. I believe indigenous peoples have been treated unfairly. However the speaker that came to my class called white people "land rapists" and told us to go back to Europe. As that's not really an option for me, it made me unsure of how I could help, other than voting for those who respect indigenous rights. I am sure there are positive indigenous led movements, I just don't have much knowledge of them.[504]

In spite of being enrolled in a critical social science program at VIU, this student seems to have gained limited understanding of Indigenous political thought and social movements, such that she is easily shocked by activists who take hard positions. Her confusion about being a settler in a colonial country reflects the confusion of many Canadians only now emerging from a long dark winter of ignorance. How to create the space for settler discomfort while equipping students to move forward more responsibly and encouraging their unsettling learning journey is a challenge post-secondary institutions must actively consider. This student says I don't know but uses the opportunity to question Indigenous commitment to reconciliation: "I don't know. I'd like to think that they have a greater hand in the practice of reconciliation, but I have no evidence of that."[505] Here First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people are being held to an undefined standard of an undefined practice and one senses that his finding of an absence of evidence is a condemnation.

While there are relatively few students (3%, 10) who express prejudice in response to this question, negative attitudes towards Indigenous peoples are still present. Some students see Indigenous efforts to raise awareness through education as a challenge to nationalist multicultural values.

> Not much. There seems to be a growing tribalism that is not healthy for anyone in Canadian society. It is enforced by progressive educators who do not seem to understand the damage they are doing. Education for all members of society is the only positive way Indigenous peoples can advance.[506]

A settler and colonial status quo is being defended here (Castagno, 2013). A student observes that although Indigenous peoples are including non-Indigenous peoples in learning "about another culture and group of thinking" "some of these events are also used to push First Nations agenda."[507] What this student means about a "First Nations agenda" is unclear. However the notion that First Nations are "pushing" for things implies that they are too demanding; a belief supported by official multiculturalism discourse, which promotes Canadian state interests by silencing competing claims for sovereignty and inherent rights under the guise of serving culturally diverse citizens equally (St. Denis, 2011). This

[504] #223; no courses; 30 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Global Studies/Hopefully policy writing or maybe an economics professor
[505] #2; in college (Ethics Classes); 28 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Straight White Man; Economics/Data Analysis
[506] #30; has taken three VIU courses with significant Indigenous content; 73 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Fisheries and Aquaculture/undecided
[507] #272; no courses; 30 years; male; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/Métis; Teacher

sentiment is present in other responses. This student sees Indigenous peoples as too demanding, divisive, and negative:

> They want their voices to be heard. However, it seems to me that they engage with the community as them vs us and how the government is such a bad thing. It also seems like they are pushing for change and for a 'new treaty'. I also unfortunately see that they are asking for help and answers for all the missing aboriginal peoples. The sad thing is that I dont here any good news typically. I think that having good stories might help the relationship between non native Canadians and native Canadians.[508]

Here First Nations, principally, are being blamed for not telling good or positive stories. Similarly, and disturbingly, an Education student considers First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples are faking positive change: "None though they try to seem otherwise."[509] A student twists the question to focus less on positive changes for Indigenous people or Canada, than on her own community (undefined), implying that whether Indigenous people exist or not has little bearing on her life: "I do not notice any positive impact on my community from indigenous people."[510] This student also declared that she was uninterested in learning about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, and contemporary realities but has had occasional but significant contact with Indigenous people. How to deal with this 2-3% of closed-minded carriers of ignorance is a major challenge for all educational institutions. This student is from Alberta and claims to have had little education about First Nations, Métis, or Inuit in high school or at VIU. VIU accepts students from across Canada and around the world. Some of these students are simply unaware or actively uninterested in learning. That alone presents a significant educational challenge. We believe that the educational efforts of VIU including non-coercive exposure to other ways of seeing the world is most likely to succeed but perhaps these efforts have to reach deeply into all disciplines.

We see post-secondary institutions as central to the social change necessary to social justice for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples as well as for non-Indigenous peoples. Recognizing the effort Indigenous people are making to waken Canadians to their own history and responsibilities as they continue to assert their sovereignty, claim inherent rights, and support communities is vitally important. Many students have noticed and applaud the efforts. For some, Indigenous presence in formal and informal education cultivates a process of unlearning and unsettling pervasive Eurocentric "truths." It is important that some students recognize the difficulty of this work. Fostering a critical awareness of the systemic, institutional, and ideological barriers Indigenous peoples continue to face can promote non-Indigenous understanding of Indigenous actions that disrupt the status quo. A minority of students seek to maintain multicultural social norms, express prejudice, and resist Indigenous-led change. These norms, reinforced in historical, political, and educational practice, have erased and continue to erase and trivialize First Nations, Métis, and Inuit efforts to maintain their sovereignty and rights (Mackey, 2005; St. Denis, 2011). Challenging assumptions and attitudes anchored in multiculturalism is crucial to transforming relationships between Indigenous peoples and settlers. While it seems that many students support Indigenous efforts around protecting the environment, it is unclear whether they also respect

[508] #84; no courses; 22 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business/Unsure as of right now
[509] #253; no courses; 50 years; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teacher
[510] #291; no courses, 19 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Tourism Management/community developer

Indigenous sovereignty and rights over land and resources when used for reasons that appear antithetical to environmentalist goals. Throughout this report, we highlight the need to support better understanding of colonial policies, international instruments, treaties, and sovereignty which influence Indigenous approaches to their land, whether this involves protecting it from industrial incursions or securing development projects that support local economies and communities. Ensuring immigrants to Canada and international students have access to this learning, no matter their area of study, is important as they may have had even fewer opportunities to learn about Indigenous-settler realities. So overall, while responses show that a majority of students can name positive changes driven by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, educational institutions should continue to create space for narratives and initiatives that deepen awareness of conditions that shape Indigenous-led efforts.

VIU's Environment and Enhancing Education

> What evidence do you see that VIU is a welcoming environment for First Nations, Métis or Inuit people?
>
> What could VIU do to enhance the Indigenous content of its education (in courses, extra-curricular activities, the social environment)?

We asked students these two questions on the advice of administrators at partner universities who were interested in hearing from students. In 2016, the VIU Aboriginal Education Plan outlined 17 strategic priorities that would, among other things, deepen supports for Indigenous students, enhance opportunities and recognition for community-based learning, and support cross-cultural learning for students, faculty, and staff by reflecting Indigenous perspectives, histories, and ways of knowing within and beyond courses and degree programs (Vancouver Island University Senate, 2016). Since the publication of these recommendations in 2016, VIU has been tracking their implementation (Vancouver Island University, 2018). The analysis presented here offers administrators, faculty, and staff an opportunity to see what activities and initiatives students are noticing as well as what students want to see done at VIU. When asked what evidence they see that VIU is a welcoming environment for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, Indigenous students report a wide range of experience during their time at VIU, some positive and some negative. When asked what VIU could do to improve the Indigenous content of its education, the majority of students, Indigenous and not, discuss courses and whether they should be mandatory. Several students focus on instruction, pointing to the need to hire more Indigenous faculty, involve more Elders in courses, and improve awareness among non-Indigenous faculty and staff. Many students also see events and extra-curricular programming as valuable opportunities to learn.

The best indication of how welcoming an environment VIU is for Indigenous students is the experience of Indigenous students. Students who self-identify as Indigenous (62, 18%) report a wide range of experiences during their time at VIU, some positive and some negative. Several students highlight the value of the First Nations Studies program, the availability of Elders, and the Gathering Place. "The FNAT courses/program are phenomenal! I wish I would have realized this and taken more courses."[511] "The accessibility of elders, the acknowledgement of traditional territory, Elder guided courses, services for aboriginal students."[512] "The Gathering place offers a comfortable "home" feeling for our people."[513] "The Gathering Place and First Nations ambassadors (such as Rob Depriest) always reaching out and checking in via email."[514]

[511] #201; Course(s) at Vancouver Island University; 31 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations; Social Work; Artist
[512] #338; no courses; 35 years; female, Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations, Non-status Indigenous person, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Fisheries and Aquaculture/Working in home community as fisheries coordinator
[513] #156; Courses at VIU (FNAT 101, 102, & 375) and in community – cultural dues; no age given; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/ First Nations; Business Administration/working to improve my community
[514] #278; course in high school: 12th grade First Nations Studies; 26 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Métis, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Graphic Design/working as an in-house designer for a large company

Other students point to the persistence of racism on campus:

> I don't really [see any evidence of a welcoming environment], there is a lot of racism on campus and prejudice.[515]

> First Nations supports could be stronger, racism, privilege, and power still exist, not all teachers like acknowledging the traditional territory, some won't do it and some say it with little importance.[516]

> Outside of specific Indigenous led programming, I'm not certain it is. It's certainly MORE welcoming than other institutions, but the general lack of knowledge and respect that students and some faculty and staff have is obvious. You feel the audible eye roll when you discuss Indigenous heritage or issues in a classroom setting. And, it's not addressed by most instructors.[517]

They also point to a dearth of courses and supports for Métis and Inuit students: "I believe VIU is actually losing ground with a shrinking FNAT department."[518] "First nations yes but no evidence for Metis or Inuit."[519] That the Gathering Place, FNAT program, and Elders are all major positive factors for Indigenous students suggests the importance of continued administrative support for them. That racism and prejudice remain problems on campus suggests the importance of combatting them in all areas and across all levels of the university.

When asked what VIU could do to enhance the Indigenous content of its education, the largest proportion of students (72, 21%) call for more courses with Indigenous content across programs and disciplines.

> I really think the classroom content should be Indigenised more. I am in the Tourism Management program so there is a lot of leadership/business/management/recreation classes that are too euro-centric. We need way more Indigenous content, interactions with elders, visits to Indigenous sites. We are most likely going to have to collaborate or work with Aboriginal communities so we should be learning about them at school.[520]

[515] #187; Course(s) at Vancouver Island University; 37 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations; Education/Teacher
[516] #225; courses at Vancouver Island University: First Nations History; and in my community: Practicum Snuneymuxw First Nation; 50 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations; Social Work
[517] #58; no courses; 32; non-binary; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Métis, Non-status Indigenous person; Creative Writing and Journalism; hopefully writing, but probably working a minimum wage service job.
[518] #151; courses at Vancouver Island University: FNAT Major; 70 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Métis; First Nations Studies/Retired
[519] #37; courses in high school: First Nations 12 course, and in my community: Tribal Journeys; 20 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; First Nations; Criminology/lawyer
[520] #333; no courses; 35 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Tourism/Recreation Management, Community Development or conservation with Indigenous populations in Canada and international

> Because there is a movement towards Indigenous ways of knowing in the BC Curriculum, I would like to see a lot more education in the Education Programs.[521]

> Provide more opportunities for education on First Nations cultures related to different fields outside of social studies. For example, I have never had any education about first nations medicines/foods in my botany or science courses, as well as never hearing about aspects of First Nations culture related to science/discovery.[522]

Other students name specific courses they would like to see:

> Offer more courses for arts and cooking skills the people learnt and passed down from ancestors[523]

> Seeing as I'm currently trying to learn Michif from an app, which is a terribly inadequate way of picking up both language and the culture/influence behind it, extending the revival of Indigenous languages to actually cover a few courses on the topic would be great![524]

> For us history buffs, perhaps a course or lecture on local (Nanaimo/Parksville/Ladysmith) history. I've put together bits and pieces and what I've learned tends to be fascinating.[525]

> More FNAT classes, I could not get into any this semester.[526]

That FNAT courses in particular are in high demand suggests a strong appetite on the part of students to learn.

A smaller but significant number of students (44, 12%) consider that learning Indigenous topics should be mandatory for students across programs and faculties. Students have a wide range of suggestions for implementation:

> First Nations courses should be required for every program as it is all applicable to society[527]

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[521] #172; At Vancouver Island University: Indigenous Understanding week. Some professors indicate how to integrate into our classrooms. In my community Through my own efforts at building relationship and inquiry; 35 years; Female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; International Indigenous person; Education; Educator

[522] #209; in high school (Social Studies course discussing Canada's history with First Nations people and the injustices made against them when founding Canada) at VIU (Anthropology course discussed residential schools and the effect on indigenous peoples culture); 24 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Biology/lab researcher or bioremediation technician

[523] #169; In college: PHED 461 is a leadership course that had a component on the First Nations People; 21 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Physical Education/Teacher

[524] #92; in high school (Social Studies had a strong focus on First Nations communities on Vancouver Island) and ENGL 222/ENGL 335 at VIU; 20 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; English/I'd like to be a secondary school teacher of English and French, writing novels on the side.

[525] #168; courses at Vancouver Island University: Teaching Methods, the B.Ed course on indigenous education and in my community: The "Village" workshop; 31 years; female, male, other; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teaching

[526] #328; courses at Vancouver Island University: Elders Teaching Class HHS 274; 24 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Social Services Diploma/Social Worker

[527] #82; no courses; 24 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Geography/Forester

> Simple: create a MANDATORY first year course that focuses on Indigenous history. Introduce the TRC, Residential Schools, Cultural genocide, Assimilation... basic "Canadian" history![528]

> All VIU graduates to pass up to 6 hour of required classes in indigenous history[529]

> Make a required First Nations course (or a First Nations directed English course instead of 2 English courses... why isn't this already a thing?)[530]

> Prerequisite for programs so people who leave with a degree aren't denying residential schools even happened.[531]

Other students support mandatory content but caution against the risk of backlash:

> Create a specialized intro course for all students. It would be tricky to avoid resentment but it could improve the perspectives of many non-indigenous people.[532]

> I would like to say that there needs to be a mandatory requirement regarding a class surrounding indigenous studies however, from what I have heard about how the classes are taught in FNAT if there is someone there who does not want to be there then they will remain non receptive and inhibit the learning environment for the other students.[533]

As one student pointed out, "having more cross-listed courses"[534] may also help to enhance the availability of courses with Indigenous content across the disciplines.

A small but significant number of students (28, 8%) argue for fundamental shifts in the design, instruction, and delivery of courses. As these Nursing and Social Work students state, there needs to be: "More Indigenous-led curriculum development and courses."[535] "Land-based education/activities, lead

[528] #320; courses in high school: Social Studies and First Nations 12 - did not learn the "right" history... and it was taught by people that didn't know anything about Indigenous topics and at Vancouver Island University: FNAT 102, 204, 300, 380! I loved every course that I have taken here. We have (for the most part) very passionate instructors! ; and in my community: Elders teachings, Kwakwala language, cultural song and dance...; 27 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations; Tourism/Recreation Management/Indigenous Scholar

[529] #295; no courses; adult; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Community Mental Health Worker/Work in mental health institution

[530] #9; no courses; 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Biology/Health care

[531] #324; courses at Vancouver Island University: multiple First Nations Studies including field schools; and in my community Snuneymuxw language course at Art Centre, Herbal Medicine elder teachings, sweat, etc.; 45 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; First Nations, Creative Writing and Journalism/I am a writer. I've published in book form, textbook, newspaper, etc.

[532] #181; courses at Vancouver Island University: One of my majors is the Indigenous Studies program; 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations; Arts One-First Nations/No clue

[533] #180; courses at Vancouver Island University: SWAG course about indigenous women activists; 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Global Studies/Teaching English in Japan

[534] #183; courses at Vancouver Island University: Intro to women's studies: First Nations and Indigenous women's activism; 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Women's Studies/not sure. something with kids, maybe working for the government, don't know yet.

[535] #71; courses at Vancouver Island University: Aboriginal Film Studies, 26 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Nursing/Public/Community Health Nurse

and developed by Indigenous people themselves [that emphasize] oral tradition verses a westernized academic construct"[536]

Many students say that they would like to learn more from Elders: "Provide more chances for VIU students to hear from Elders and pay their respects."[537] "Create more connections and opportunities to gain knowledge firsthand from Elders"[538] Still other students point to the importance of instructors:

> Educate the educators. Some of our instructors don't even know what the appropriate language is to use. They read texts aloud in class that use the word "Indian." It's so uncomfortable!![539]
>
> Find teachers that embrace us as First Nation peoples. To have teachers that understand the history of First Nations people [and] have a relatable teaching experience to not feel judged.[540]
>
> [Involve] First Nations knowledge holders in the teaching of ALL of its courses, especially those in the humanities and health sciences[541]
>
> Hire more Indigenous peoples in specific programs.[542]
>
> They could call out/react to racist and colonist attitudes in classroom discussions.[543]

For one student, enhancing instructor awareness could be accomplished by supporting: "MEANINGFUL professional development opportunities for all staff members (tap into their hearts!) so that buy-in improves across campus."[544]

A little over 10% of respondents, predominantly non-Indigenous, point to events, workshops, and extra-curricular activities as key opportunities for learning. "VIU could continue inviting Indigenous

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[536] #10; In high school: First Nations Studies (alternative to Social Studies 11); at Vancouver Island University: Arts One First Nations Studies Program; 24 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations; Social Work/Social Worker

[537] #166; In high school: Social Studies; at Vancouver Island University: Especially in my geography courses; In my community: Through my work and volunteer experience in outdoor education; 24 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Geography/Education, Consultation, Negotiations

[538] #169; In college: PHED 461 is a leadership course that had a component on the First Nations People; 21 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Physical Education/Teacher

[539] #288; courses at Vancouver Island University: FNAT 350; 38 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Social Services Diploma; Support worker of some sort

[540] #164; courses in high school: Hulquminum language, grade 9 indigenous social studies; and at Vancouver Island University: Hulquminum language complete. This term indigenous science and elders teaching; 36 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community, Racialized person (Visible minority); First Nations, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry, Native American (U.S.); First Nations Studies/Working with lands and governance

[541] #256; no courses; 30 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; community mental health worker

[542] #172; At Vancouver Island University: Indigenous Understanding week. Some professors indicate how to integrate into our classrooms. In my community Through my own efforts at building relationship and inquiry; 35 years; Female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; International Indigenous person; Education; Educator

[543] #58; no courses; 32; non-binary; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Métis, Non-status Indigenous person; Creative Writing and Journalism; hopefully writing, but probably working a minimum wage service job

[544] #319; courses at VIU (MEDL 500/580/650; MEDL 600) and in my community (Blanket Exercise, Library Workshops, Film Screenings, Professional Development Workshops); 30 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Principal, Vice Principal, Superintendent

writers. I wonder about the "Indian" hospital that was near VIU property and whether this should be acknowledged more often."[545] "Offer more First Nations focused events (ie: highlighting or showcasing the Indigenous Games and First Nations athletes, etc.)."[546] "Bringing in speakers and elders and more indigenous leaders, writers, artists, poets to speak for themselves."[547] "Extra-curricular activities. I feel I know a certain amount in general but I'd like to know more about the local bands - traditions, issues, etc."[548]

> Sponsor many more events by the native studies program, and not necessarily focused around indigenous culture. But putting on events of any nature (sports rallies, concerts, food fests) it puts indigenous culture into a leadership role and opens avenues of communication.[549]

While extra-curricular activities are important avenues for learning, they are arguably most effective in combination with strong Indigenous-focused course content.

Overall, the vast majority of students, Indigenous and not, want to see more and better courses, taught by informed faculty. Many non-Indigenous students are also eager to take part in extra-curricular activities and events. While many Indigenous students feel welcome and supported at VIU, particularly by the Gathering Place, Elders, and the FNAT program, racism and prejudice remain a problem on campus.

[545] #101; courses at VIU (Canadian Literature Part 1 and Part 2 - the readings were divided into half settler voices and half Indigenous voices; BC History - again, covered a mixture of settler and Indigenous voices); 28 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education

[546] #302; no courses; 46 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; Tourism/Recreation Management/Recreation Specialist/Disability Management Coordinator or Community Development Specialist

[547] #300; courses in college: Research in varying courses with a First Nations focus (please describe),at Vancouver Island University: Social Work practice with Indigenous Community/multiple focus areas; and in my community: Blanket Exercise/Multiple Community gatherings and teachings/Big house invitations; 36 years; female; Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Social Work/working with DAA's or children and family services for Indigenous support or policy

[548] #214; FNAT101, CYC 321 at VIU; 54 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Computing Science/Child & Youth Care. I want to work with Indigenous youth, to create pride and resiliency

[549] #279; at VIU (American history); 39 years; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Culinary Arts/cooking

Do exiting students consider they should have been taught more?

Having answered these questions, do you think you should have been taught more about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples? Please explain using the textboxes. - Selected Choice

In asking this question we were interested in students' attitudes towards the education they have received. We also wanted to compare students' perception of their level of education with their performance on the test. The majority of students (71%) thought that they should have been taught more about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples throughout their education. 42 students (12%) were unsure, 27 students (8%) did not think they should have been taught more, and 31 students (9%) declined to answer. Students who told us they should have been taught more pointed to where, when, and how their education was deficient, highlighted some specific content they thought was lacking, and expressed a sense of responsibility to learn more. Students who did not think they should have been taught more or were unsure mostly considered that VIU is doing enough at present, but a small number of students express indifference, ambivalence, and hostility towards learning more.

A significant number of students (17%) provided more detailed comments on their dissatisfaction with the education they have received inside and outside of formal educational institutions. Many of these students felt that "High school could have done MUCH better, as well as in general VIU courses,"[550] and "School has failed us in all ways on this."[551] Forty students (12%) thought they should have been taught more in elementary, primary and secondary school, before they came to VIU. Troublingly, several said they had received "no education in elementary and high school"[552] about First Nations, Métis, or Inuit peoples, and a couple of students "didn't learn about residential schools till [they were] in college."[553] Others condemned the false history of their pre-university education: "I wasn't taught a single thing in school about the true history of Canada. Only by my parents and community to the best of their ability as non-first nations."[554] "I think it's sad we haven't been taught the real Canadian history in school."[555] "I wish I had been taught the true history of Canada in K-12 school. I felt stupid and ignorant when I first became aware of the history of Colonial Canada's relationship with its Indigenous peoples."[556]

[550] #269; at VIU (FNAT 101, Indigenous Identities and FNAT 204, Indigenous perspectives on the environment); 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Psychology/administrative assistant, researcher (or assistant), or some other job regarding scheduling, organizing, or dealing with data and people
[551] #61; First Nations studies courses at VIU; 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations; Criminology/addictions counsellor
[552] #212; At VIU (incorporated int my Education courses in indigenous studies); 41 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teacher
[553] #222; Camosun College History of BC, at UVIC Anthropology in Education; 46 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Vice Principal or Principal
[554] #135; no courses; 41 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; educational assistant
[555] #139; At VIU (I have participated in two Blanket Exercises); 42 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community, Child of Immigrant(s) to Canada/First Nations, Non-status Indigenous person, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Education Assistant and Community Support/Psychology or counseling
[556] #319; courses at VIU (MEDL 500/580/650; MEDL 600) and in my community (Blanket Exercise, Library Workshops, Film Screenings, Professional Development Workshops); 30 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Principal, Vice Principal, Superintendent

A small but significant number of students (5%) did not think they were taught enough at university and at VIU in particular, and suggest a need for Indigenizing curricula across courses and disciplines: "I have spent four years at VIU and barely know any of what has been asked in this survey and have been in school with several aboriginal classmates."[557] "Most of my information came through high school courses. It would be nice to see universities and colleges teach more about their cultures as well."[558] "I think I should have learned about the content discussed in this survey through courses outside of Indigenous-based courses."[559] And several students pointed to specific topics they think should receive more coverage at VIU, as they feel they "have learned nothing about Metis and Inuit peoples,"[560] and that considering how "K-12 did not teach or mention many positive Indigenous facts, a lot of text in university still appear to lack significant Indigenous contributions."[561] Some students also argued that as "right now it is more up to professors personal preference to mention land acknowledgment etc., I think it might be worth-while that staff at VIU are more encouraged to do so."[562]

Some students emphasize that they have learned on their own outside the formal education system. They consider that "there is a lot they don't teach you that's outside of the textbooks,"[563] so they have "learned outside of classes"[564] and "sought out the information I learned and will continue to do so."[565] Throughout the survey, a small but significant number of students point to the importance of personal experience and relationships for coming to understand the issues Indigenous peoples face in Canada. These students think they should have been taught more, but also call for more "practical" and "experiential" learning: "Much of the answers I provided throughout the survey were gleaned through personal education, through readings and conversations I have personally sought out. These should be core curriculum in all levels of education".[566]

> Personally I found it difficult to understand the extent of how this effected the day-to-day lives of so many people until I was placed in a community where I had to work with people who had

[557] #123; at VIU (I took a first year English course wherein we studied several books focusing on residential schools); 24 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Criminology/Law enforcement
[558] #174; no courses; 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/Métis; Natural Resource Protection
[559] #10; In high school (First Nations Studies (alternative to Social Studies 11)), At VIU (Arts One First Nations Studies Program); 24 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Social Worker
[560] #138; at VIU; no age given; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Psychology/student
[561] #280; no courses; 31 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing
[562] #278; course in high school: 12th grade First Nations Studies; 26 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Métis, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Graphic Design/working as an in-house designer for a large company
[563] #124; In high school, At VIU (FNAT 102 and FNAT 300); 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Physical Education/Physiotherapy
[564] #96; at VIU (the education program incorportes indigenous topics into many classes. Also studied some in ENG - Canadian Literature); 25 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/teacher, school counsellor
[565] #324; at VIU (Multiple First Nations Studies including field schools), in my community (Snuneymuxw language course at Art Centre, Herbal Medicine elder teachings, sweat, etc.); 45 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Creative Writing and Journalism/I am a writer. I've published in book form, textbook, newspaper, etc.
[566] #256; no courses; 30 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; community mental health worker

> experienced trauma and residential schools and horrible childhoods and addictions and all of that. If the teachings remain purely theoretical, then there is little to no emotionally driven reason for students to put in a long-term investment in their time and care towards learning more and caring more and striving to change things.[567]

> History rooted in the movements and actions of military colonial projects are too narrow. This is an opportunity to introduce experiential learning.[568]

Forty-eight students (14%) tell us why they think they should have been taught more. These students were struck that "after answering these questions I realize I don't nearly know enough,"[569] that "there is always more to learn,"[570] and that "this knowledge is valuable for everyone."[571] Many of these students express a sense of responsibility for learning more to be respectful and to combat their own and others' ignorance "so that more people get involved in making communities a better place to live:"[572] "I feel my knowledge is inadequate, I want to know more so that I can be supportive and respectful to first nations individuals and so I can advocate for their needs."[573] "While there are signs of improvement, ignorance on the topic is still prevalent and requires constant and consistent hubs of information to better inform individuals unaware of the details of the circumstances surrounding First Nations."[574]

> Most of what I have learned I learned through my own volition. It is shocking to me that the government is still actively trying to get rid of "their Indian problem" and I think the media doesn't step up enough. So the knowledge many people have is incorrect and contributes to systemic racism.[575]

A small number of students argue that learning is incumbent on them because they consider First Peoples' issues to be Canadian issues. These students argue that all Canadians share an obligation

[567] #76; in high school (Participated in a sweat lodge for a day in the Coast Mountain Academy program in 2015; There have been a variety of speakers, presentations, workshops, readings, and assignments throughout the 4 years I have been in the BSN program); 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing
[568] #66; in college (Douglas College - Anthropology of BC First Nations - Taught by Tad McIlwraith); 26 years; male; child of immigrant(s) to Canada; Geography/NGO Planner
[569] #82; no courses; 24 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Geography/Forester
[570] #131; in college (Indigenous studies Camosun college), at VIU (Required bsw course indigenous studies); 27 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Social Work
[571] #276; no courses; 28 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/Métis, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Biology/Researcher
[572] #299; at VIU (First Nations Studies course in my first year); 30 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community; First Nations, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Business Administration/accountant working at the Canada Revenue Agency
[573] #213; course at VIU (Health Healing (year one) we did a cultural sensitivity training program); 31 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing/I would like to be a nurse in palliative care
[574] #5; no courses; no age given; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Education/ESL Teacher
[575] #311; no courses; 33 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Biology/environmental monitoring

"to understand the dynamics of what happens in all political aspects."[576] For a student studying English and French literature:

> …People seem to consider Indigenous issues as separate Canadian ones, which is a real problem when you consider that one is built off of the back of the other, and I do get the sense that if I weren't specifically working on a novel with a Métis character, I wouldn't have been exposed to as much information as I have been.[577]

Several others made specific topical and pedagogical suggestions. They want to learn more about "laws and treaties,"[578] the "Indian Act,"[579] and "local history."[580] An education student called for more place-based education, suggesting that VIU teach more "information tied to place like the Chemainus sawmill being a stolen village site or the mountain visible from the Cowichan campus being a frog."[581] A Child and Youth Care student emphasized and demonstrated the importance of better education about colonialism:

> It's incredibly ignorant to presume we know Canadian history based on 200 years of occupying stolen land. I feel my education would have benefitted from learning early on what contact and colonization was, its effects and the rich and diverse culture that predated first contact.[582]

Several students also think they should have been taught more by Indigenous educators, community members, and elders, touching on the need for "education *with* First Peoples" rather than just "talking *about* First Peoples" (Tuck, 2011 italics added). These students "would like to learn more from being directly taught from indigenous people who likes to share their understandings and values,"[583] and

[576] #62; no courses; 26 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Fisheries and Aquaculture/ environmental/biological consulting business

[577] #92; in high school (Social Studies had a strong focus on First Nations communities on Vancouver Island) and ENGL 222/ENGL 335 at VIU; 20 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; English/I'd like to be a secondary school teacher of English and French, writing novels on the side.

[578] #306; In college (Indigenous art course at UBC, Art history at UBC), at VIU (All courses in the year of my Master of Education, especially a course taught by Denise Augustine), in my community (The Blanket exercise); 32 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teacher

[579] #226; courses at VIU (cultural safety in nursing courses); 31 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Nursing

[580] #331; no courses; 27 years, gender not identified; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); Fundamentals of Engineering Certificate Program/civil engineer

[581] #168; at VIU (Teaching Methods, the B.Ed course on indigenous education), in my community (The "Village" workshop.); 31 years; Female, Male, Other (Pulls off male role well, has testosterone); Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teaching

[582] #81; no courses; 33 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Child and Youth Care/Child protection

[583] #240; no courses; 23 years; male; international student; Hospitality Management/Manager and owner of my own sustainable resort

argue that "Elders should have been brought into the classrooms to teach us about their culture, as opposed to white washed text books and films."[584]

A small number of students who think they should have been taught more demonstrate ambivalence towards what this learning should look like. Though open to learning, in their responses these students tend to absolve themselves and Canadian society from responsibility for addressing contemporary injustice, and avoid addressing contemporary colonialism (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2007; Henderson & Wakeham, 2009; Regan, 2010; The Current, 2017). Some of these students' responses frame Indigenous peoples as an object of settler history vital to creating a settler future, considering that "these people are an important part of history and our future,"[585] but not in the present. These students emphasize that "Learning about Canadian history in the context of Indigenous people is important to grow past that history and evolve together away from it."[586] Understanding the past is certainly important, but the relegation of Indigenous peoples to the past is a colonial strategy that, combined with the orientation towards a utopian future, elides Indigenous realities in the present and works to secure a settler future (Povinelli, 2011a; 2011b; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2013). Several students teeter on the fine line between arguing that all Canadians share responsibility for learning about "an important part of our history as Canadians"[587] and expressing the kind of multiculturalism that sees learning about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples as important "simply because they're a vital part of my country and I appreciate diversity."[588] A couple students are open to learning more, but remain wary of how it might affect them, are especially concerned that learning be done "in the right way…not in a way that makes students feel attacked for being a settler,"[589] and that there has to be room so that people can voice their conflicting feelings."[590]

Most students who did not think they should have been taught more or were unsure consider that their programs and VIU are doing enough, but a few express indifference, ambivalence, and hostility towards learning more. Some students consider that their "professors did cover a wide variety

[584] #148; at VIU (Elders Teachings Across Disciplines at the Cowichan Campus); no age given; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, grandchild of immigrants; Business Administration/Providing financial advice and tax preparation services to marginal communities
[585] #208; In my community (Hulquiminum course at North oyster school in 2001-2005); 25 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Hairstylist Foundation Certificate Program/Working in a salon as a stylist
[586] #271; courses at VIU especially in politics and "Municipal and First Nations Government"; 28 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Psychology/politics and legislative policy
[587] #255; First Nations Studies in high school; 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Tourism/Recreation Management/Destination Marketing
[588] #214; FNAT101, CYC 321 at VIU; 54 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Computing Science/Child & Youth Care. I want to work with Indigenous youth, to create pride and resiliency
[589] #182; At VIU (Cultural studies, heritage/interpretation, and grad seminar); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Tourism Management/Social Media Manager, artist/photographer, or Human Resource manager
[590] #152; at VIU (FNAT 101; FNAT 102: SOCW 421 Social Work Practice with Indigenous Communities), in my community (Talk by Yvonne Rigsby Jones on what reconciliation is (and is not) at Nanaimo North Library); 50 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada), Irish; Social Work/social work

of topics within their allotted time frames,"[591] and that VIU "has done a good job"[592] and "is making big strides in the right direction."[593] Several others feel they themselves "must assume personal responsibility to learn."[594] Still others think that "it is a choice to learn about things in university, and I did not choose those courses."[595] Some may "feel undereducated on indigenous peoples," but they "also do not think that a deep understanding of this topic is essential to my success and well-being,"[596] demonstrating some of the indifference and ambivalence indicative of the barriers at play in challenging systemic racism (Schick & St. Denis, 2003; Tupper, 2011): "I have rarely had to interact with indigenous people. I don't see how knowing more about them would have benefited me."[597] "It's probably good to be taught more, but currently it's not something I lose sleep over because I don't know much about it."[598] "I personally don't have a great interest in the subject and feel like I was taught too much too soon."[599] Only one student expressed outright hostility to learning more: the History student who considered that the questionnaire was "out of touch with the beliefs of everyday natives" stated here that the questionnaire's "'questions' have bogus and subjective answers."[600] This student expressed prejudice throughout his answers: repeating an antipathy towards what he called "grievance politics;" describing Indigenous peoples as criminal, savage, and violent; claiming that "we should have instituted the white paper," and defending his prejudice by stating "that unlike this 'survey' I've gone out of my way to check out existant archaeological evidence on Canada's first peoples."

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[591] #149; At VIU (Several social geography and Anthropology courses incorporate some topics about aborigional people both in Canada and many other countries); 46 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Person that has a disability; Anthropology

[592] #157; in high school (Yes, introduction with good public school teachers), at VIU (Anthropology: Inuit, Pacific Northwest. History: BC. Canada, Language class. Gatherings.); 34 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Anthropology/Farming Teacher/Permaculturalist/Farm Coach/Farm Consultant/VIU Anthropology-Agriculture Professor

[593] #321; At VIU (I took several FNAT and history courses); 28 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Culturally aware; Forest Resources Technology/ I want to be a silviculture forester working on reconciliation and sharing the natural capital of this land with indigenous and non indigenous people alike you make the world a better and balanced place through a better approach to forestry and managing the natural capital this land has to offer.

[594] #18; in high school (Many socials studies courses brought in topics of indigenous peoples in Canada), at Vancouver Island University (An introductory english class included First Nations elements; many political studies classes take time to delve into the relevant issues that Indigenous peoples face in Canada and elsewhere globally); 22 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Indigenous but not necessarily a known citizen of my First Nations community; First Nations, non-status Indigenous person, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Political Studies/Politician; Advisor; Indigenous Lawyer

[595] #197; in high school (History); 19 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Non-Visible Minority; Theatre/Acting/Event Management

[596] #284; in high school (social studies classes, cultural safety training); 18 years, female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, child of Immigrant(s) to Canada; no faculty or career listed

[597] #137; no courses; 70 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; student

[598] #294; in high school (Socials 8-11); 17 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Carpentry/Firefighter

[599] #239; In high school (lots of discussion about residential schools and increase basic awareness on the subject), At VIU (Not really any dedicated to the subject but the odd reiteration of earlier ideas about this knowledge); 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Criminology/Forensics or Investigations of some form

[600] #23; no courses; no age given; male; international student; Hospitality Management

Questionnaire as an Assessment of Knowledge

We ended the questionnaire with a question asking the students to assess the quality or value of the survey.

> Did these questions give you an opportunity to show what you know about First Nations, Métis and Inuit people? – Selected choice – Yes, No, Decline to answer
>
> Please explain why the questionnaire was a good assessment of what you know about First Nations, Métis and Inuit people
>
> Please explain why the questionnaire was not a good assessment of what you know about First Nations, Métis and Inuit people

As we are assessing student knowledge, we consider it fair play to allow students to evaluate the questionnaire. We also take students' responses to this question as feedback to help improve the questionnaire and its delivery in subsequent versions. The vast majority of students (298, 87%) considered the questionnaire a good assessment of their knowledge. Twenty-four students (7%) did not consider it a good assessment, and 20 students (6%) declined to answer the question. Those who considered the questionnaire a good assessment most often found it an educational experience and appreciated the questions and questionnaire design. Interestingly, these two aspects were also singled out by students who did not consider the questionnaire a good assessment of their knowledge: these students generally disliked the questions and/or questionnaire design.

Many students remarked that the questionnaire demonstrated the limits of their knowledge and made them think critically about their own knowledge and perspectives. Over one quarter of the students considered the questionnaire "really demonstrated what [they knew] and didn't know…we are at a loss for not knowing."[601] Some of these found getting answers to the questions immediately after they were asked educational. Others found that the questionnaire "challenged [their] way of thinking."[602] For these students, the questionnaire required critical analysis of the things they have learned through their schooling, personal experiences, and engagement with media, and made them confront their feelings about their perspectives and beliefs. The questionnaire "asked a lot of hard questions that I don't think people think about all of the time,"[603] and "provided a sort of reality check" that made these students "realize that I hold strong beliefs but am unaware of the facts that lead to these beliefs."[604] Several students remarked on having learned things in the questionnaire that countered previously learned misconceptions and stereotypes and identified the role of the public-school system in cultivating ignorance:

[601] #325; no courses; 49 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Not sure. Something in the area of psychology.
[602] #185; in High School (Social Studies 8-11); 24 years, male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Business Administration/Luxury Retail
[603] #127; women's studies course at VIU; 24 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Fisheries and Aquaculture Technology/climate change biologist
[604] #56; In high school (History 30), Indigenous Studies 100 at a different university, At VIU (Race and Ethnicity); 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Sociology

> this showed me I know very little which [is] what I was taught. what I did know was very 50/50 of the true answers which tells me there is a lot of misconception out there in the public and what was taught in elementary school and high school was very irrelevant to today society.[605]

> I should know more, I feel like I only know what others wanted me to know which was based on their personal opinion. Therefore I do not think I have gained my own personal opinion of the topic.[606]

Only a few students pointed to specific information they learned. Many of these responses reflect students' lack of understanding of the differences and specificities of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, especially for international students who had "never heard of Metis and Inuit people"[607] or "thought First Nations, Metis and Inuit are the same type of people."[608] A Psychology and Criminology student emphasized the importance of debunking popular myths and prejudices about First Nations students' funding opportunities:

> I appreciate having had the opportunity to think of answers to several questions I had never previously thought about. Further to this, I appreciated having been properly informed about the funding process for indigenous peoples. I have mixed feelings towards how first nations topics are taught, but overall feel as though they are being approached in a good manner.[609]

Encouragingly, several students found the topics and questions relevant and applicable to all who live in Canada and felt that everyone should know the material. These students considered the topics covered in the questionnaire are "the minimum of what Canadians should know,"[610] and that "everyone, despite specific school education,"[611] who "pays attention to media or has a basic understanding or beginners knowledge about First Nations"[612] should be able to answer these

[605] #62; no courses; 26 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Fisheries and Aquaculture/ environmental/biological consulting business
[606] #80; no courses; no age given; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Physical Education
[607] #173; no courses; 23 years; male; Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada), International student, Racialized person (Visible minority); Business Administration/Digital Marketing, Administrative Assistant
[608] #178; In college (Humanities); 25 years; female; International student, Non-status Indigenous person; Business Administration/Researcher
[609] #297; in high school (Social Sciences – basics), at VIU (Criminology & Sociology - many courses talk about First Nations (overrepresentation in courts, marginalized etc.); 22 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Psychology/Researcher
[610] #261; In college (Several geography and environmental studies classes - ethnoecology, political ecology, etc); 26 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Urban/community planner
[611] #278; course in high school: 12th grade First Nations Studies; 26 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Métis, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Graphic Design/working as an in-house designer for a large company
[612] #150; at VIU (All the courses in the Post Bacc in Education for Elementary program have enhanced my knowledge and understanding of First Nations, I am currently taking a class "How to speak Hulqum'in'um" hosted by Adam Manson); 42 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Creative Writing and Journalism/teacher

questions. A couple of these students "wish everyone I knew could take this survey and learn a bit about First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people!"[613] For a Social Work student,

> It made me realize I know more than I originally thought, it brought my awareness to many issues, it brought up issues that I was not aware of. It is important for people to take this assessment and reflect on these issues as a way to bring awareness to a much-needed discussion and challenge in our country and in communities. Thank you for creating this.[614]

Some students felt galvanized by the questionnaire and wrote of their personal responsibility to learn more: "I felt that I was fairly educated on some issues but after going through this and discussing some of the issues with my friend who is indigenous I have found that there is much more I need to learn."[615]

> I thought I knew a lot, but for many of the open-ended questions, I realized that I don't know as much as I thought (and that I should). I want to help create change in our Indigenous and non-Indigenous societies. I want to work towards reconciliation.[616]

Many students who self-identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit expressed the importance of being provided with opportunities to see their histories, cultures, and present realities reflected and discussed at VIU and in their classrooms in particular. They were "happy to see this survey being offered;"[617] to see that "First Nations is being acknowledged"[618] in their classrooms; that they could "articulate an opinion I have always had but do not have the opportunity to voice often;"[619] and that the experience "highlighted my pride in my histories, and the histories of other indigenous groups in Canada."[620] Some of these students found that the questionnaire "helped me realize the depth of my

[613] #136; In high school (Social Studies), At VIU (Not Indigenous studies but I have learned about the culture throughout many of my classes); 25 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident/First Nations/I don't call myself FN because I am uneducated on the culture but I do have FN genes in my blood; Creative Writing and Journalism/Editor or writer

[614] #298; in high school (briefly in social studies), at VIU (Indigenous specific courses and all other courses in the BSW program); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Social Work/Unsure

[615] #180; at VIU (SWAG course about indigenous women activists); 23 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Global Studies/Teaching English in Japan

[616] #320; in high school (Social Studies and First Nations 12 - did not learn the "right" history... and it was taught by people that didn't know anything about Indigenous topics.), at VIU (FNAT 102, 204, 300, 380! I loved every course that I have taken here. We have (for the most part) very passionate instructors!), in my community (Elders teachings, Kwakwala language, cultural song and dance...); 27 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Tourism/Recreation Management/Indigenous Scholar

[617] #164; in high school (Hulquminum language, grade 9 indigenous social studies), at VIU (Hulquminum language complete. This term indigenous science and elders teaching); 36 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations, Racialized person (Visible minority), Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry, Native American (U.S.); First Nations Studies/Working with lands and governance

[618] #125; at VIU (English 116); 48 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Business Administration/Accounting

[619] #278; course in high school: 12th grade First Nations Studies; 26 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Métis, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Graphic Design/working as an in-house designer for a large company

[620] #201; at VIU; 31 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Social Work/Artist

knowledge;"[621] and remarked that the breadth and depth of the topics covered "brought out the big issues our people face in a respectful way."[622] For some self-identified Indigenous students, the questionnaire demonstrated the importance of Indigenous values in "show[ing] that ancestors are very important along with the land,"[623] and "allowed some feedback from individuals on their opinions and thoughts on real questions and concerns about indigenous peoples."[624] For instance, the Criminology student who highlighted the importance of ancestors and land also emphasized issues of social justice in Canada:

> It shows that ancestors are very important along with the land. the lack of government involvement and continued incarceration and children in care displays this lack of involvement. Currently, there are an overrepresentation of our indigenous people in jail and in the foster care system. The lack of health care and drinking water just indicates that we are low on the totem pole of equality. the government would rather send Millions of dollars to Venezuela to help their distraught country than dealing with their own problems.[625]

In contrast to the students who thought the questions were relatively easy to answer, some students who self-identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit found the questionnaire challenging and wondered how their non-Indigenous peers would perform, given their level of knowledge and prevailing social attitudes. Pointing to the barriers and challenges that many Indigenous students face in the public education system, a Gender Studies and Global Studies student observed the questionnaire provided "information I would otherwise not have been aware of" (TRCC, 2015a and 2015b, Battiste 2013, Kanu, 2011).[626] Other students surmised that "a lot of this information regular Canadians would not typically know,"[627] and wondered "how nonindigenous people may reply." These self-identified First Nations and Métis students here accurately identify the gap in knowledge and perspectives between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students and non-Indigenous identifying students as evidenced in our quantitative and open-ended analyses above.

Several students who responded that the questionnaire was a good assessment of their knowledge had mixed feelings, arguing that "knowledge is not experience and experience is where

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[621] #181; At VIU (One of my majors is the Indigenous Studies program); 21 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/First Nations; Arts One-First Nations/no clue

[622] #238; courses at VIU and learning in community, Aboriginal understandings and hul qimi num language course; 50 years; female; First Nations; Criminology/maybe education administration

[623] #64; history class at VIU; 53 years; female; First Nations, Native American (U.S.); Criminology/First Nations probation officer

[624] #276; no courses; 28 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community/Métis, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Biology/Researcher

[625] #64; history class at VIU; 53 years; female; First Nations, Native American (U.S.); Criminology/First Nations probation officer

[626] #54; in high school (I am Metis, so did some research in high school for curiosity reasons), at VIU (Various gender studies classes, and Allyson Anderson's FNAT classes), and in my community (Working at Boys and Girls Club alongside the Indigenous drumming circle of Nanaimo); 24 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Métis; Women's Studies/Lawyer

[627] #69; In high school (First Nations Studies, grade 12), At VIU (First year First Nations Studies, and First Nations based classes credited for my Women's Studies degree); 22 years; female; Citizen of my First Nations, Métis or Inuit community, Other/First Nations, Non-status Indigenous person, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry, white passing; Philosophy/Government office worker

learning happens."[628] They argued that questionnaires cannot adequately assess "lived experience" and "action," and that the emphasis on answering questions, or knowing facts, can sometimes detract from Indigenous resistance and resurgence. For example, a Creative Writing and Journalism student considered that:

> this questionnaire takes a good assessment of one's understanding of the Canadian Law surrounding the Indigenous peoples but does not take a good account of what one might "know". Knowing the poverty, oppression, resilience, struggle, hospitality, relationships, art and culture, governance, traditional knowledge etc is different than knowing what has happened historically on paper. There is a large disconnect between textbook knowledge and lived experience.[629]

> I am also on the fence how I feel about VIU's actual stance and if some of this is just empty for checks and balances as the institution becomes more Indigenized in the public eye. The Snuneymuxw people are fighting desperately for protection against tankers right now, our elders have testified at the end of November and Beginning of December to the NEB, along with 36 other Salish Sea Nations (some were collectives including Nuu-chah-nulth). It broke my heart to hear Geraldine and Gary Manson's testimony, as they were literally describing cultural genocide at the hands of unregulated tankers bunkering unauthorized in their waters. At some point, just saying you support them is not enough. At some point, knowing how to answer questions is not enough. At some point, not standing up when you know what is right and wrong becomes worse than if you didn't know any better.[630]

These students bring an important nuanced and critical perspective to the limitations of the questionnaire and articulate a critical Indigenous perspective on knowledge. Many Indigenous elders, educators, and scholars emphasize that Indigenous ways of knowing are place-based, experiential, generational, and relational, and point to the difficulties often encountered in trying to communicate these in classroom settings and through textbooks (Battiste, 2013; Ledoux, 2006; Mason, 2008; Deer, 2013, Battiste, 1998, 2013; Simpson, 2011; Tuhiwai Smith, 2007; Tuck, 2011). In the co-design of the questionnaire we formed the questions not from textbooks but from the experience and recommendations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge holders. But that said, an objective test, even one with open-ended questions, is a tool limited to measurement of acquired knowledge, perspectives, and attitudes. There is, as these students tell us, a distinction between knowing and acting. Yet, activism comes from both knowledge and engagement – one cannot act on something one does not know about. And, as our assessments demonstrate here and across the country (for a complete list, see footnote 1), there are far more students who don't know than those who do know and are primed for action and activism in support of justice for Indigenous peoples.

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[628] #148; at VIU (Elders Teachings Across Disciplines at the Cowichan Campus); no age given; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, grandchild of immigrants; Business Administration/Providing financial advice and tax preparation services to marginal communities

[629] #58; no courses; 32; non-binary; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Métis, Non-status Indigenous person; Creative Writing and Journalism; hopefully writing, but probably working a minimum wage service job.

[630] #324; at VIU (Multiple First Nations Studies including field schools), in my community (Snuneymuxw language course at Art Centre, Herbal Medicine elder teachings, sweat, etc.); 45 years; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Creative Writing and Journalism/I am a writer. I've published in book form, textbook, newspaper, etc.

The 7% of students who did not consider the questionnaire a good assessment of their knowledge criticized the questionnaire design and the nature of the questions. A couple of students were hostile to the way the questions were presented: a History student decried "buzzword phrases completely out of touch with the beliefs or behavior of everyday natives;"[631] another student complained that the "questions do not get to the core of the problem…[and] are based on identity politics BS."[632] Neither of these students was clear what they meant about "buzz words," in what way the wording was out of touch with "the beliefs or behavior of everyday natives" or indeed what is meant by "everyday natives." We have encountered in surveys in Ontario and Newfoundland a sense among a small minority of students that if one is not talking about serious social problems on reserves, then one is not addressing "the core of the problem," but here it is not at all clear what this student considers "the core of the problem." Neither of these students had taken any courses at VIU about Indigenous topics and did not learn much in K-12. One student considered the questions "quite leading;"[633] another "over worded;"[634] and still another "confusing."[635] The questions asked were not simple and required very careful wording. In the sense that the questionnaire is designed to instruct, it is leading. A student with no declared major identified what they considered to be major shortcomings in the questionnaire:

> It made certain assumptions about a complex issue. It continues to 'other' people by race. This is no longer helpful. Culture is not race.[636]

The questionnaire made no mention of "race". This student may have been referring to the question addressing artist Jamie Black's quote which mentions "latent racism and colonialism." However, the student's assertion conflates the socially-produced power dynamics of "racialization" with the long-debunked "objective" taxonomical categorizations of "race" (Kobayashi & Johnson, 2007). This student is correct in stating "culture is not race," but they also read into the questionnaire something that is not there. Their interpretation enacts what they criticize the questionnaire for: conflating culture and race. We agree with Charles Hale that, "to effectively combat the racism that persists…we need more race not less: more critical race theory, that yields sharper analysis of institutionalized racism, deeper understandings of the work that racism does" (2018, 507).

Several students who considered the questionnaire to be a poor assessment of their knowledge argued that it did not adequately allow them to communicate their knowledge and perspectives. Some found that "it is too complicated an issue to be used in a questionnaire,"[637] echoing the assertions of their peers who point out the difference between "knowledge" and "experience." For an Arts One First Nations student, "no questionnaire is a good assessment. You have to live Indigenous ways of knowing

[631] #23; no courses; no age given; male; international student; Hospitality Management
[632] #21; no courses; no age given; no gender given; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; no program or career information
[633] #27; At VIU (education courses); 31 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teacher
[634] #39; At Vancouver Island University (3 different FNAT courses); 27 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Child and Youth Care/CYC worker
[635] #43; no courses; 28 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Education/Teacher
[636] #44; University Canada West- HIST 111- Canada to 1867: Contact, Colonies and Empire, At VIU (Studies in Canadian Media- cultural representation); no age given; male; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Immigrant to Canada (not born in Canada); no program information given
[637] #30; has taken three VIU courses with significant Indigenous content; 73 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Fisheries and Aquaculture/undecided

for a long time to even begin to say you know."[638]A couple other students emphasized the importance of having conversations, interpersonal relationships, and experiences. A Nursing student considers "a conversation with a person is a better assessment then clicking and typing,"[639] and a Fisheries and Aquaculture student admitted that "I'm not good at writing my thoughts down. Group conversations are where I can fully express my knowledge."[640] It is interesting to note that most of the students who challenged the capacity of the questionnaire to assess what they considered to be important "experiential knowledge" had taken Indigenous-focused courses and courses with some coverage of Indigenous topics. These responses speak to the importance of including non-academic activities and opportunities on campus and in classrooms to foster affective experiences, communication, and relationships.

[638] #63; Major Indigenous/Xwunulxw Studies at VIU; 29 years; female; decline to self-identify; Arts One-First Nations/As an educator
[639] #26; At VIU (Through NIC Nurs 410), In my community (Building bridges workshop); 31 years; female; Canadian citizen or permanent resident; Nursing
[640] #32; At VIU (FNAT courses); 30 years; non-binary; Canadian citizen or permanent resident, Canadian with Aboriginal ancestry; Fisheries and Aquaculture

Conclusion

We know from our question to entering students about what they know about First Nations and Métis people and Inuit, that many students enter VIU with problematic perspectives and prejudices. We also know that some students come to VIU already well informed.

The quantitative analysis tells us a great deal about the relationship of test performance to where students learned what they know, what they think of what they learned, their social attitudes and those of their families, the secondary and post-secondary courses they have taken, and a variety of demographic factors including age, gender, where they graduated from high school, how they identify themselves, the languages spoken at home, their program of study, and their intended career.

The qualitative analysis allows us to hear student voices on multiple subjects. Students views are as diverse as their experiences. It is clear that many students deeply appreciate the efforts VIU has made to make itself a powerful educator of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people about Indigenous realities, past and present. It is also clear that the problems of ignorance, racism, and prejudice abide and must be addressed. We think it is also important for VIU to think, in particular, about how international students are being educated and how students in some fields can complete an undergraduate degree with no Indigenous content and little understanding of the major challenges facing societies in Canada today.

Again, we are very grateful for the opportunity to carry out this research for Vancouver Island University and fondly hope that the University and its Indigenous partners find this report and its associated data useful.

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