

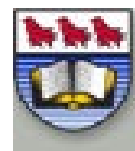
Ethnohistory Field School Report 2022

“We do not think alone”: An Argument for a Collaborative and Holistic Approach to Stó:lō (and other local) IPK Integration in K-12 Classrooms Touchstone Position:”

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The Ethnohistory Field School is a collaboration of the
Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, Stó:lō Nation & Stó:lō Tribal Council, and the
History Departments of the University of Victoria and University of the Fraser Valley.



Because of its size, spanning from 10 kilometres north of Yale all the way down to the mouth of the Stó:lō,¹ there are various K-12 educational jurisdictions and organizations operating in S'ólh Téméxw (or Stó:lō territory). In 2015, the British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Education implemented a curriculum redesign, requiring educators to integrate Indigenous perspectives and knowledge into all curricular areas and grade levels. In 2019, it added a ninth professional standard for BC educators requiring them to “respect and value the history of First Nations, Inuit and Métis in Canada and the impact of the past on the present and the future” and “contribute towards truth, reconciliation and healing” by “foster[ing] a deeper understanding of ways of knowing and being, histories, and cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis.”² This was met with excitement from Indigenous departments in school districts, Indigenous resource creators, and Indigenous cultural centers.

Chilliwack School District Principal for Indigenous Education Brenda Point attests to the “exciting” and “interesting times” we (people in the field of education) are in, referencing the 2015 curriculum revision as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) 94 Calls to Action, the new focus on decolonization in education, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).³ Additionally, the 1992 founding of the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) in BC contributed to the implementation of many of the values promoted by these documents and initiatives; their activities, such as “[p]rovid[ing] a united voice on First Nations education in BC, as directed by First Nations leadership,” resource and curriculum development, and establishing relationships between First

¹ Naxaxalhts'i (Albert Sonny McHalsie) in discussion with the author, May 19, 2022.

² “Professional Standards for BC Educators” BC Teachers’ Council, June 19, 2019, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/teach/teacher-regulation/standards-for-educators/edu_standards.pdf.

³ Brenda Point in discussion with the author, May 27, 2022.

Nations and educational organizations continue to contribute to the primary goal of FNEESC—“to promote and support the provision of quality education to First Nations learners in BC.”⁴

This report brings the voices of Stó:lō and other Indigenous workers in the education sector in S’ólh Téméxw into conversation, exploring the efficacy of these organizational-level changes as well as the ongoing barriers to positive, meaningful, lasting change in Indigenous education in BC. The experts who contribute to this report argue for the need for increased communication and relationships, between and within educational structures across Stó:lō territory. They explain that teachers are arriving in schools with good intentions, but no clear framework on how to establish trusting, authentic relationships with communities, which lie at the heart of ethical integration of local Indigenous knowledge and perspectives (IPK). Because of this, there becomes a fear of missteps and appropriation in new teachers and an overreliance on Indigenous teachers, community members, and support workers.

SURFACE LEVEL CHANGE IN BC EDUCATION: A CONCERN FOR STÓ:LŌ EDUCATORS

Are you seeing a difference in teaching since integration is mandatory now, at every single grade level and in every single subject? Or is this just another kind of lip service that makes it look like the districts are doing something, makes it look like BC is doing something good?

“There’s a little bit of change. But ultimately, yes, still the latter”

(Anonymous Informant #1)⁵

“As chair of the BCTC, I was honoured to be part of a collaborative consultation process with the partners and certificate holders, that enabled us to revise the professional standards, which includes a new Standard 9. This standard honours the histories and cultures of *our* First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.”

(emphasis added; Jim Iker, Chair, British Columbia Teachers’ Council)⁶

⁴ “About FNEESC” First Nations Education Steering Committee, accessed July 24, 2022, <http://www.fnesc.ca/about-fnesc/>.

⁵ Anonymous Informant #1, in discussion with the author.

⁶ “New teaching standard strengthens Truth and Reconciliation in the classroom.” Crawford Bay Elementary School, July 5, 2019, <https://cbess.sd8.bc.ca/news/new-teaching-standard-strengthens-truth-and-reconciliation-classroom>.

There are ongoing concerns across S'ólh Téméxw regarding whether the changes in the education system are meaningful and lasting, or simply bureaucratic box-checking. The use of “our” in the above excerpt from Jim Iker’s quote about the newly-introduced ninth standard provided above, while well-intended and otherwise gracious, illustrates the lingering vestiges of settler colonialism. In his seminal book, *Elements of Indigenous Style*, Gregory Younging (Opaskwayak Cree Nation) explains, “Indigenous Peoples are independent sovereign nations that predate Euro-colonial states and are not ‘owned’ by Euro-colonial states. Indigenous style therefore avoids the use of possessives that imply this.”⁷ This use of an offensive possessive by the chair of the British Columbia Teachers’ Council, an organization responsible for “[s]etting standards for applicants and educators in B.C., including education, competence and profession conduct requirements”⁸ as well as those for post-secondary teacher education programs perhaps explains why there are concerns that these changes to BC education are not wholeheartedly embraced by all.

The shallow (or often lacking) integration of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives (IPK) in BC, confirms curriculum and resource developer Lisa Wolgram’s insights where she argues that this might be attributed to the lack of top-down support from the BC Ministry of Education.⁹ She explains how the addition to the curriculum was “essential and long overdue,” but that “educators in the K-12 school system have been provided with little in the way of guidance and resources to effectively and ethically support teachers to authentically integrate

⁷ Gregory Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style* (Edmonton: Brush Education Inc., 2018), 91.

⁸ “BC Teachers Council.” *Government of British Columbia*, accessed July 20, 2022, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/boards-commissions-tribunals/bctc>.

⁹ Lisa Wolgram, “Professional Learning, Collaboration, Land, and the Integration of Indigenous Perspectives and Knowledge into the British Columbia K-12 Curriculum: What Can be Learned From Stó:lō Educators?” (master’s thesis, University of the Fraser Valley, 2021)

culturally-appropriate Indigenous curriculum and pedagogy.”¹⁰ She positions the redesign as a step forward, something that “creates new opportunities for educators,” but also a requirement that “creates challenges—not the least of which is how to move forward in a respectful way that forefronts Indigenous voices, perspectives, priorities, and messaging.”¹¹ Wolgram concludes that to achieve *authentic* integration, “educators must begin a process of locating themselves within the Indigenous pedagogical, cultural, and historical context of the people in whose territory they practice.”¹² This conclusion explains and affirms the recent development of enhancement agreements between various BC First Nations and school districts that operate on their territory, which aim to promote local connections to culture, people, and land.¹³ This paper examines the barriers that continue to impede, as Wolgram puts it, the *authentic* integration of IPK, specifically in S’ólh Téméxw—which, according to the ninth standard and enhancement agreements across the province, requires a focus on not just Indigenous perspectives and knowledge broadly, but *local* Indigenous education first.

My project is partially animated by Wolgram’s master’s research on authentic integration as well as her work with Michael Blackburn through Alongside Consulting. As part of their collaborative work with Fraser Cascade School District (FCSD), Wolgram and Blackburn executed a district-wide survey of teachers in FCSD regarding their integration of IPK. The results of their survey and Wolgram’s thinking on authentic integration act as this paper’s springboard. It is my hope to extend and bolster the work done by Wolgram and Blackburn through Alongside Consulting by synthesizing and discussing insights from informants in a

¹⁰ Wolgram, “Professional Learning,” 1

¹¹ Wolgram, “Professional Learning,” 1

¹² Wolgram, “Professional Learning,” 2

¹³ For examples, see: Chilliwack SD’s “Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement 2017-2022”; Abbotsford SD’s “Enhancement Agreement for Indigenous Students”; Fraser Cascade SD’s School District #78 (FRASER-CASCADE) Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement 2011-2016.”

variety of positions in school districts beyond FCSD who contribute to the integration of IPK. This project seeks not to be comprehensive, but rather to: first, reflect on the current state of integration of Stó:lō perspectives and knowledge in the K-12 educational system in S'ólh Téméxw based on information shared from local informants, which unfortunately includes reporting on areas of need and, at some points, providing critique and disclosing disconcerting evidence that this issue requires more attention from all of us; second, highlight challenges and barriers to the use of local resources; and lastly, circulate advice from resource specialists and celebrate strategies being used in different educational contexts. Because of the scope of this project, this report takes a conversational and reflective approach. I organize the information provided to me in many one-on-one interviews into themes, hoping to demonstrate common threads in the project's interviews. I also outline (some) directives that emerged in the conversations shared throughout my research, which work in conjunction with my accompanying series of infographics.¹⁴ Although many of the specialists interviewed provide similar guidance—for example, it came as no surprise that all interviewees corroborate Wolgram's definition of authentic integration and observed the need to focus on local Indigenous perspectives and knowledge first—there are nonetheless noteworthy tensions that reflect a disconnect between educators in Stó:lō territory.

While this report points to barriers, limitations, and challenges in the journey toward authentic integration, I wish to first acknowledge the effective strategies being undertaken by the various organizations the interviewees represent; many are thoughtful, innovative, and effective in promoting the integration of Stó:lō resources, perspectives, and knowledge. Because of the scope of this paper, I have included a list of these strategies in Appendix 2. However, based on

¹⁴ See Appendix 1.

the often contradictory (or non-corroborative) responses from interviewees, I use this space to advocate for a change in the way districts, schools, and individual teachers integrate local IPK and resources based on the evidence provided. I seek to promote a more collaborative, holistic approach to the integration of IPK in S'ólh Téméxw and argue that such an approach can contribute to more effective integration of IPK, but, more importantly, more relational (and therefore meaningful) education for all students and pre-service teachers. The evidence gathered in this project reflects the educational disconnect that exists throughout the territory—not only between public education and Stó:lō community and content creators, but between and within districts. Some of the project's informant responses have been anonymized or generalized in order to protect interviewees, but the message from Stó:lō territory is nonetheless indisputable: while (and I would argue *because*) these are exciting times in Indigenous education, more needs to be done (and is being expected by Stó:lō communities) regarding local IPK and resource integration.

My identity as a settler, a former high school teacher, and current PhD student of Indigenous Literatures undoubtedly makes its way into this research, and Wolgram, a settler scholar and resource expert, was indeed central to the beginning stages of this research. However, I seek to honour and foreground the voices and guidance of the Stó:lō and other Indigenous knowledge keepers, experts, elders, and leaders who so graciously shared such important information with the hopes that it will positively influence the future of education in S'ólh Téméxw.

“HOW LOCAL IS LOCAL?” AND THE AMBIGUITY IN ENHANCEMENT AGREEMENTS

While organizations like FNEESC develop and publish First Nations curriculum resources for educator use, they are created with a province-wide lens, meaning they need to be (and, according to resource developer, Michael Blackburn, were *intended to be*)¹⁵ localized by the teachers who use them. Often, however, teachers seem to be using these resources ‘as is,’ meeting the BC Ministry of Education’s ninth professional standard, but not the requirements of their local enhancement agreements. In my first interview for this project, I asked Stó:lō Elder, historian, and Cultural Advisor for the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, Naxaxalhts’i (Sonny McHalsie), “how local is local?”. He answered quickly, “Well, Stó:lō”.¹⁶ He laughed, then I laughed. But of course the answer is never quite that simple. With over ten tribal communities consisting of over two dozen First Nations (some of whom do not identify as Stó:lō or are not formally affiliated with either of the two Stó:lō tribal councils, and where in Abbotsford and Langley school districts there are more Indigenous staff and students who are originally from other parts of Canada [i.e. largely Cree and Metis] than there are local Stó:lō) it is understandable that in my conversations with teachers, administrators, and resource experts, this question and its follow-ups prompted very few certain answers.

Discussing the use of local IPK with school district employees revealed great variation not only between school districts, but within school districts, regarding how much local IPK is sufficient to meet the needs of the students and the requirements of the Ministry of Education. This variation might be (if only partially) attributed to the differences between enhancement agreements in S’ólh Téméxw. While all are certainly well-intended and carefully created in collaboration with local First Nations community members, some boast numerous references to

¹⁵ Michael Blackburn in discussion with the author, May 19, 2022.

¹⁶ Naxaxalhts’i, May 19, 2022.

Stó:lō-specific action steps and objectives while others use more pan-Indigenous language with less measurable courses of action. For example, Abbotsford School District’s “Enhancement Agreement for Indigenous Students” demonstrates a focus on individuality, hoping to encourage students to “learn about their own Indigenous cultural identity and connect with their ancestry in a meaningful way,” a goal associated with the value that “[s]tudents will learn about the diversity of different Indigenous cultures of the First Nation, Métis, Inuit People and their personal connection to these cultures.”¹⁷ The agreement was made by an advisory committee in consultation over six months with “stakeholders,” that is, “Indigenous community leadership, Elders, families, and students themselves,” as well as Matsqui First Nation, Sumas First Nation, and the Fraser Valley Métis Association, showing a care and attention to the local communities it serves.¹⁸ It acknowledges the consultation and collaboration of local First Nations to create the agreement. Its goals and values promote diversity, inclusion, and the success of all Indigenous students. While admirable and certainly important, whether educators should prioritize integrating *local* IPK, IPK in general, or, say, IPK that reflects the student population in the classes they teach remains unclear. How much *local* IPK should teachers be integrating? While measurements (or another checklist) can be stifling for educators familiar and comfortable with integrating IPK, or, even worse, can lead to more ‘box-checking,’ educators new to integrating IPK (or those doing so ineffectively) are left with little guidance regarding which (and how many!) resources to use in their classrooms.

On the other hand, the Chilliwack School District’s “Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement” strikes a balance between being inclusive and promoting a Stó:lō-centric education for the students in its district. On its first two pages, it demonstrates a focus on place and

¹⁷ “Enhancement Agreement for Indigenous Students,” 3.

¹⁸ “Enhancement Agreement for Indigenous Students,” 2.

community by using “TS’ELXWEYEQW (CH-IHI-KWAY-UHK)” as its title, above a photograph of a canoe and paddle beside what appears to be the Stó:lō (river) and reserving the first page of text as an acknowledgement of “the history, governance and traditional territory of the Stó:lō people upon which we work and reside. The AEAC has been operating since 1994 and is evidence of the longstanding committment [sic] and positive partnership that has been built between the Stó:lō First Nations and the Aboriginal community.”¹⁹ In addition to acknowledging the Stó:lō contributions (notably, first), the agreement outlines how “[m]any Aboriginal nations, including Métis, are represented in the SD#33 student population.”²⁰ While the agreement seeks to first, “increase Aboriginal students/families/guardians belonging and engagement at school,” and second, “[t]o continue to increase academic success of all Aboriginal students,” the agreement’s third goal, to “continue to increase the respect and understanding amongst all students and staff of language, culture, governance and history of Stó:lō and ALL Aboriginal peoples” demonstrates a balance between the importance of localized IPK and celebrating diversity to promote inclusivity.²¹ This, paired with actionable steps like promoting a Longhouse Extension Program, in which students come to the Coqualeetza grounds and participate in hands-on learning in a longhouse built for cross-cultural education, and increasing student participation in Halq’eme’ylem language courses, indicates a promising local focus²².

Of course, a district’s commitment to local Indigenous resource, perspectives, and knowledge integration cannot be determined from its Indigenous enhancement agreement document, but with their promotion from the district level and by administrators in schools, they certainly contribute to teacher practice. Based on my conversations with teachers in the district,

¹⁹ “Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement 2017-2022,” 1-2.

²⁰ “Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement 2017-2022,” 3.

²¹ “Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement 2017-2022,” 5.

²² “Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement 2017-2022,” 5-6.

most of which identified themselves as settlers, I believe clarifying the expectations for teacher IPK integration in terms of locality, outlining how teachers might incorporate teaching about Indigenous diversity with a local-first mentality, and providing examples or best practices in the enhancement agreement (as seen in Chilliwack's last four pages), helps to create tangible objectives.

WHY LOCAL?

“[E]verything that we use comes from here. So when you start talking about Sxwōxwi:ám or start talking about Sqwelqwel, that's all from here, it's all in the land, and it's all around us, right? You can relate to it, right? Whereas if he is talking about something that's way over in Alberta, or way over in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, or wherever, it's got nothing to do with us here. So I think people need to start realizing that...so whatever happens in [S'ólh Téméxw], that's our culture...And I think we got to be specific and really make sure that we're just talking about our culture, our history in this area.”

(Naxaxalhts'i)²³

“[starting local is] so important because a lot of the time [...] people come here and settle; they settle within this area. And in order for them to take care of this area, they need to understand the land. In order for them to understand the land, they need to know the relationship between the land and the Xwélmexw people here. And when you have that relationship and you have that connection, you're more likely going to take care of it...”

(Dianna Kay)²⁴

“[I]f anybody came to me asking for my guidance, I would tell them, then you start where you are...And figure out how you're going to establish relationships with the local knowledge keepers from that nation. And that way, you're demonstrating to the students what it looks like to honor the land that you're on, the unceded territory that you're working on. And so, you know, that in itself, to me would show what it looks like to decolonize our curriculum. And it goes the same for wherever you are.”

(Saylesh Wesley)²⁵

²³ Naxaxalhts'i, May 19, 2022.

²⁴ Dianna Kay in discussion with the author, May 20, 2022.

²⁵ Saylesh Wesley in discussion with the author, June 9, 2022.

“So in our curriculum, in every aspect of K to 12 curriculum, it talks about connecting with local Indigenous knowledge...we highlight that when we are having Pro-D or having workshops with teachers and saying that, ‘we’re a guest here, and when you are a guest in someone's home, you greet the people whose home it is first.’ That’s where we are. I don't know how you could connect to place—connect kids to place—without starting locally first.”

(Allison Gardner)²⁶

“I totally believe that [education] needs to be [local]—within our enhancement agreement, we say, our first line is ‘this territory you're in.’ So we say your resources should first of all be looking at the local resources. And that's where we [the Indigenous Education Department] need to help with that”

(Brenda Point)²⁷

AN EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICES: FROM LOCAL TO OUT-OF-TERRITORY

When asked how much Indigenous education in S’ólh Téméxw should be Stó:lō, Brenda Point’s initial response, “[w]ell, I think everything should,” is quite telling.²⁸ She uses language and place as her central example, explaining how acknowledging the territory or introducing yourself using local Indigenous language can be first steps to infusing Stó:lō IPK in schools in the territory. However, she is a powerful advocate for inclusivity and followed up this example with an acknowledgement of the wide diversity of the 2,500 self-identified Indigenous students in the district, their families’ roles in supporting local education, and the ten First Nations that feed into schools in the territory—“we have a lot of people [of diverse backgrounds] stepping up and helping us to come into classrooms. And that to me, is key, the people—people teaching people.”²⁹

Point settles on 75% as the golden standard for the percentage that should be localized IPK and provides a compelling strategy for deciding which content should be local and which should be from outside the territory: using Stó:lō resources where possible, and using other

²⁶ Allison Gardner in discussion with the author, May 25, 2022.

²⁷ Brenda Point, May 27, 2022.

²⁸ Brenda Point, May 27, 2022.

²⁹ Brenda Point, May 27, 2022.

Indigenous resources to fill in the gaps. Because of the time it takes to develop usable (print, material, audiovisual, etc.) cultural content, there are often unfulfillable requests made to librarians and resource staff. Point uses the example of astronomy, which, she explains, is a challenge to find (appropriate) Stó:lō resources for. In this example of a topic area difficult to find, they brought in Cree Elder Wilford Buck from Winnipeg to tell his astronomy stories under a constellation dome. In regard to resource development, Point explains, “we’re going to keep working on that one, but we’re not quite there yet,”³⁰ and bringing in Buck to tell stories from a Cree perspective demonstrates an acknowledgement of that gap and an intentional use of out-of-territory resources. What is notable in Point’s process is the direction of resource promotion—from local to out-of-territory.

IPK AND RESOURCE INTEGRATION: WHOSE JOB IS(N’T) IT?

“There [are] also teachers who are just insidious in their thinking. They’re still racist—are still implicitly racist—they’re still discriminating. And you know, *you just know* they are those things, and they don’t even have to announce that they are. So it’s political, and it can feel dangerous at times.”

(Anonymous, on being an Indigenous Support Worker in schools in S’ólh Téméxw)³¹

“It can be easy for me to become a dumping ground for teachers. They’ll want their Indigenous students—or even the students that they don’t feel like they can motivate—they’ll just sort of leave them with me if they can. And it’s like they don’t really care what I do with them.”

(Anonymous, on being an Indigenous Support Worker in S’ólh Téméxw)³²

One of the significant findings of Wolgram and Blackburn’s survey of FCSD is that in their efforts to integrate IPK, educators rely heavily on Indigenous Support Workers (ISWs) in

³⁰ Brenda Point, May 27, 2022.

³¹ Anonymous Informant #2 in discussion with the author.

³² Anonymous Informant #3 in discussion with the author.

their schools as resources themselves as well as to suggest or recommend resources for classroom use.³³ Almost all survey participants listed their school’s ISW as their primary “resource or contact [they] have accessed.”³⁴ According to Wolgram and Blackburn, “[t]his data also communicates that ISWs are operating outside of their regular responsibilities of supporting Indigenous students (as outlined in the Indigenous Support Worker Job Description) as they are being asked by teachers to extend their work to include curriculum and cultural support to educators.”³⁵

Saylesh Wesley, an established leader in education in S’ólh Téméxw, calls her role as an Indigenous Resource Enhancement Teacher with Chilliwack School District a “melting pot of duties,” including “empower[ing teachers] with the tools, the knowledge, the resources that they might need to proceed with a certain unit,” but also being “a buffer and a safety net for them in case they feel lost,” “vetting and endorsing what they want to teach,” and seeking to “stand [teachers] up, help them to understand that they can be vulnerable, and that they can make mistakes, and that they can be okay with making those mistakes—but better yet, that they correct them.”³⁶

In practice, however, Wesley explains how her job often requires teaching in classrooms when teachers feel “they are not yet ready, or maybe not even willing to step into the brave place of trying to learn.” Often, Wesley continues, non-Indigenous teachers are hesitant to grow their Indigenous knowledge: “[t]hey feel like if they’re not Indigenous, that they are not able to have Indigenous knowledge...[but] they should also be ready and willing to learn to be just as

³³ Alongside Research and Consulting, 2022, in the author’s possession.

³⁴ “Indigenous Perspectives and Knowledge: Successes and Challenges in Integration, A Report on the Survey for Staff in the Fraser Cascade School District,” 24.

³⁵ “Indigenous Perspectives and Knowledge: Successes and Challenges in Integration, A Report on the Survey for Staff in the Fraser Cascade School District,” 46-47.

³⁶ Saylesh Wesley, June 9, 2022.

comfortable teaching Indigenous content as I am.” She expresses the high personal cost of undertaking such a support role, calling herself “a well-known resource who gets pulled in many different directions,” and emphasizes the difference between her intended role of working *with* teachers, “and slowly be able to pull away,” to the reality of often teaching *for* them. The challenges, however, are not representative of her experience as a Resource Enhancement Teacher, and she goes on to ascribe her move back to the classroom after two years of being seconded to the district level to missing working with students; she explains, “as amazing as it’s been, and I know that it’s certainly launched me forward quite a bit, I miss the students and district level feels very corporate. And you’re not really working with students at all. You’re working with adults and other teaching professionals.”³⁷ Wesley’s knowledge and experience will undoubtedly be sorely missed, and her move back to the classroom and the quotes that opened this section seem to corroborate Wolgram and Blackburn’s findings that support staff (here, Resource Enhancement Teachers) are overburdened.

Brenda Point acknowledges this high personal cost of working as an ISW—“they feel like they need to be superheroes, have superpowers...[and] we’re hearing loud and clear from the Ministry of Indigenous Education to be very wary that this could be a burnout for your staff; we know that, we see that, we hear that.”³⁸ In order to address this and spread the responsibility, the Chilliwack Indigenous Education Department seconded ISWs for two days of the week to work at the district head office, developing curriculum and lesson plans before going back into schools to demonstrate how to use them. They are also implementing a new position, an Indigenous lead, in every school, starting with elementary schools in order to “alleviate that pressure of feeling

³⁷ Saylesh Wesley, June 9, 2022.

³⁸ Brenda Point, May 27, 2022.

like they need to be the know-all, be-all, do-all.”³⁹ This new position and commitment to dividing the responsibility for IPK integration shows that Chilliwack SD recognizes the importance of keeping Indigenous knowledge holders in positions where they can make a systemic difference.

Interestingly, when in conversation with Abbotsford School District Principal for Indigenous Education Darlene MacDonald and Teacher for Indigenous Success Supporting Indigenous Pedagogy Allison Gardner (Métis), they expressed great joy in hearing that teachers were going to ISWs first when beginning to integrate local IPK.⁴⁰ Gardner and MacDonald have worked tirelessly to create a network of collaboration and support, first, between ISWs, mentors, and the Indigenous Education department, and second, between these staff and teachers; encouraging teachers to see ISWs first further develops this relationship, wherein ISWs’ thorough training and education are utilized to liaise between schools and the Indigenous Education department. However, the Abbotsford School District Indigenous Department’s mandate is “to support Indigenous students,” explains District Principal of Indigenous Education Darlene MacDonald, “and the funding for Indigenous support workers is a direct correlation to enrollment in schools.”⁴¹ MacDonald articulates their job candidly, explaining how they are there for students and that teachers are responsible for their own learning related to integration: “they’re expected to do their very best for kids every day and if they help teachers, too, that’s gravy.”⁴² MacDonald divides the objective of ISWs, “to create enhancement, substantial experiences that are continuous throughout the year for Indigenous students,” into categories of direct and indirect. Directly, MacDonald explains, ISWs are to support students in their self-

³⁹ Brenda Point, May 27, 2022.

⁴⁰ Allison Gardner and Darlene MacDonald in conversation with the author, May 25, 2022.

⁴¹ Darlene MacDonald, May 25, 2022.

⁴² Darlene MacDonald in conversation with the author, September 19, 2022.

discovery and Indigenous education, be a “liaison between home [because] parents might feel more comfortable talking to them—and that bridge to the school to support more positive interactions and communications, [and assist in] accessing supports within the broader community as needed.” In terms of indirect support, she says, “we know if a teacher is feeling more comfortable and sharing Indigenous ways of being and content and knowledge that the Indigenous student is going to be more connected to their learning, they're going to see themselves, [...]there's a greater possibility of that Indigenous pride to be able to [be cultivated]—that connection and identity and sense of belonging that comes with that.”⁴³

MacDonald explains that while ISWs should not be expected to teach or *be* a resource, they can be a touchpoint for teachers, able to point them to supports or resources offered by the Indigenous Education Department. She acknowledges that “it can be lonely work,” as ISWs are often the only Indigenous adult in the school and compassion fatigue can become overwhelming and lead to burnout. To combat this, MacDonald and her team have put in place a vast array of strategies to facilitate community and mentorship between ISWs in the district, such as weekly meetings for ISWs, extensive and thorough collaborative training systems, mentorship programs, and more. However, despite these supports, the expectation that, in addition to indirectly and directly supporting Indigenous students at their school, ISWs liaise and/or support all the teachers at their school at least in the beginning stages of their integration of IPK seems, to me, like an extraordinary amount of responsibility for one position. It is also notable that while the job descriptions differ district to district, there seem to be similar issues regarding ISW workload—districts respond to the risk of ISW burnout in different ways (secondment, training, weekly meetings, mentorship), all of which, though productive and supportive, *add* to their

⁴³ Darlene MacDonald, May 25, 2022.

already-brimming plates. Given the lack of funding, a diminishing number of people willing to stay in or take on these positions, and the pervasive ignorance, fear, or hesitation in teachers to integrate IPK, I wonder if these positions are sustainable in their current configuration.

The evidence collected in my personal interviews with employees in Abbotsford, Chilliwack, and Fraser Cascade School Districts corroborate the findings of Alongside's teacher survey: "participants [teachers] have an expectation that local Indigenous Elders, knowledge holders, and other Indigenous community members all have the time, resources, and knowledge to provide educators with support and expertise around the integration of IPK into curriculum."⁴⁴ While teachers recognize the importance of connections with Indigenous Elders, knowledge holders, and community members, "they misplace the goal of these connections by suggesting that these people be used as 'content expert' resources for the integration of IPK into curriculum rather than extending invitations to participate in the integration of IPK into curriculum as collaborative partners building reciprocal relationships which benefit both parties."⁴⁵ Indigenous Support staff urgently require more support themselves, it seems, in order to meet the needs of both students and teachers in their schools. Furthermore, their roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined in order for students to fully benefit from their presence, for longevity in the position, and for teachers to work toward more authentic integration.

THE NEED FOR MULTIPLE POINTS OF INTERVENTION IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Getting teachers to authentically integrate local IPK is a lofty objective and requires great care and attention to the cycle of teacher education, from K-12 experiences, to post-secondary

⁴⁴ "Indigenous Perspectives and Knowledge: Successes and Challenges in Integration, A Report on the Survey for Staff in the Fraser Cascade School District," 56.

⁴⁵ "Indigenous Perspectives and Knowledge: Successes and Challenges in Integration, A Report on the Survey for Staff in the Fraser Cascade School District," 56.

pre-service Education programs, and after graduation, teacher professional development (Pro-D). Several interviewees implied or frankly stated that there is a great difference between new and more experienced teachers' willingness and ability to integrate IPK and teach with Stó:lō resources. New non-Indigenous teachers are, according to multiple administrators, coming into teaching with more understanding of the importance of Indigenous education, integration, and more awareness of their privileges. However, some interviewees also noted the political and religious tensions and the troubling disconnect between promising pre-service teachers' activist perspectives as university students and those they promote in districts in the territory. Wesley explains that one of the problems is that "[t]he districts and the universities are two different entities and they certainly don't mesh all the time. You know, they do when it comes to the general curriculum, the core subjects, but Indigenous education, no."⁴⁶ This disconnect, between post-secondary graduates coming out of progressive university communities, who both Point and Wesley identify as motivated, inclusive, change-makers (or "crackerjacks"⁴⁷), and the teachers in the often slow-moving education systems they enter can create frustration, tension between new and veteran teachers, patterns of maintaining the status quo in hopes of acquiring a permanent contract, or complacency. In addition to ameliorating these teacher-teacher rifts and encouraging young teachers to take risks and enact change within their schools, increased communication and collaboration between K-12 school districts and post-secondary teacher education programs could provide administrators and teachers more support and access to innovative research done in the fields of Education and Indigenous Studies.

⁴⁶ Saylesh Wesley, June 9, 2022.

⁴⁷ Brenda Point, May 27, 2022.

Resource Availability in Pre-Service Teacher Education: Important, But Not Everything

Working in academia myself as a PhD student, I feel obligated to first acknowledge the existence of the extraordinary number of hoops researchers and university employees are asked to jump through in order to adjust post-secondary learning to be more aligned with Indigenous principles and worldviews. And while many universities publicly commit to decolonization, reconciliation, and Indigenization, undertaking community-based research or Indigenous-led-and-initiated research continues to present challenges. However, as the purpose of this project is to examine potential ongoing barriers to teachers' integration of local IPK in Stó:lō territory, I think it especially important, if even briefly, to reflect on the importance of multiple points of intervention for teacher education, starting with their training in university. While pre-service teachers are praised in many of my interviews with district administrators and university representatives as more committed to authentic integration, I believe the following cursory examination of Stó:lō territory teacher education program available curricular resources might (partially) explain the lack of translation of pre-service teacher willingness and awareness to authentic integration after becoming full time teachers.

TABLE 1. *Stó:lō and Indigenous Resources in Teacher Education Program Libraries in the Lower Mainland*

	UFV	UBC	SFU	TWU
Education Library/Collection				
Total Titles in Education Library/Collection	6000	250,000		4000
"Stó:lō" Boolean Search (physical copies)	34	14	3	1
"Indigenous" Boolean Search (physical copies)	587	4800	1338	196
Entire Library				
"Stó:lō" Boolean Search (physical copies)	131	58	122	14
"Stó:lō" Boolean Search (incl. online)	139,880	9349	137,550	7991
"Indigenous" Boolean Search (physical copies)	9202	53,000	37,983	3478
"Indigenous" Boolean Search (incl. online)	24,785,159	8,723,489	10,277,791	6,539,547

(Sources: <https://library.ufv.ca/>, <https://www.library.ubc.ca/>, <https://www.lib.sfu.ca/>, <https://www.twu.ca/library>; data for "Total titles" row was provided via phone call to each library)

Table 1 above provides an approximate illustration of the Stó:lō-specific and Indigenous educational resources available to pre-service teachers in Stó:lō territory. While this data has limitations,⁴⁸ I find it compelling nonetheless. The highest percentage of Stó:lō titles in a local university education collection or library is 0.006%, while the highest percentage of titles associated with “Indigenous” (and synonyms) is 0.1%. Because these universities are the only approved teacher education programs in the lower mainland,⁴⁹ I am troubled by the low number of Stó:lō resources made available to pre-service teachers who will at least be serving the lower mainland in their practicum year if not beyond that. Of course, some universities are further from Stó:lō territory, and lower numbers might reflect their relationships with Indigenous nations geographically closer to their campuses, but Trinity Western University (TWU), for example, located in Langley, BC, only provides its education students access to one physical Stó:lō resource. On the other hand, University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) has the highest number of Stó:lō in-person resources in its education collection and a comparatively high number of “Indigenous” resources for its size. This rough analysis of teacher education curriculum resources in the lower mainland of BC stems from the common concern for the lack of accessibility of physical Stó:lō resources for educators and students in K-12 schools and a desire for more visibility of and educator familiarity with Stó:lō educational resources.

While examining the availability of physical resources in university curriculum collections is telling, it does not provide a complete representation of the quality of these

⁴⁸ Some limitations include: the total titles in each library or collection were provided by employees as only approximate estimations; the Boolean search phrases used, though as thorough as possible, using various common spellings and historical versions of each word, may pull some irrelevant titles (for example, if a resource referenced someone with a name including the letters “stolo” in this order); differences in terminology, such as “location” and what resources are deemed “physical” on each library website could have created some discrepancies regarding resources “in” collections or “in” the library

⁴⁹ “Approved teacher education programs,” *Government of British Columbia*, April 11, 2022, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/resources-for-teachers/training-and-professional-development/teacher-education-programs>.

programs to prepare pre-service teachers to authentically integrate Stó:lō perspectives and knowledge. One of the central ideas produced by my series of interviews about resources is that it is not *all* about physical resources. Accessibility to physical resources is only one piece that will contribute to a change in K-12 education in S'ólh Téméxw. For example, while its library only has one Stó:lō resource, in 2021, as part of its initiative to increase representation and promote a reciprocal, collaborative relationship via its Aboriginal Partnership Council, TWU hired Stó:lō mentor Patti Victor as the university's first University Siya:m to act "as a liaison between TWU and local aboriginal [sic] communities."⁵⁰ This *might* point to a commitment to consistent collaboration and consultation with Stó:lō people. However, challenges remain with defining what is local and what is Stó:lō within the context of multiple tribal jurisdictions; this decision was controversial, as many members of Kwantlen First Nation questioned the hiring of a Pilalt Elder in this role on their territory. Although seen by many as a step forward, this controversy demonstrates another barrier to positive, lasting, and ethical change that both K-12 school districts and post-secondary institutions face when making decisions regarding local integration of Indigenous IPK. Whether its hiring decisions or lack of physical resources calls the university's true commitment to change into question or simply demonstrates how one piece of data cannot define an organization's commitment to integration, it is not clear. On the other hand, other universities have prioritized purchasing more resources, but other evidence, such as upper-level employees mispronouncing "Stó:lō," illustrates a problematic lack of interaction with community and community members. This contradiction makes plain that a holistic approach to pre-service teacher education, including (but not limited to) attention to both the

⁵⁰"TWU Welcomes Its First-Ever University Siya:m," TWU News, October 23, 2012, <https://www.twu.ca/news-events/news/twu-welcomes-its-first-ever-university-siyam>.

availability of resources and consistent Stó:lō consultation and collaboration is required to foster the authentic integration of Stó:lō perspectives and knowledge in classrooms.

Educating Educators: Mentorship, Collaboration, and Pro-D

Certainly, quality pre-service teacher education contributes to better integration and use of local resources, but ongoing teacher professional development ensures both veteran and newly graduated teachers become similarly acquainted with (and introduced to) Stó:lō resources and pedagogical principles. Among almost all other interviewees, Stó:lō educator and Language Curriculum Developer Dianna Kay asserts the need for more structured teacher education. When asked how we can promote the use of local resources, she responded

“[a] suggestion would be to actually teach the teachers alongside of them on how to use it because we’ve got lesson plans coming out of the yin yang. There are repositories of lesson plans across Canada...but it doesn’t mean people use [them]...And then when you read a lesson plan, it’s an interpretation of that teacher’s understanding of how things flow because the way *you* think things are flowing and the way *you* think things should flow is different than the way I think it should flow.”⁵¹

The subjectivity associated with lesson planning and lesson plan interpreting requires *scaffolding* for teachers, Kay explains, which many others also commented was lacking regarding integration of local content. It also requires working with Stó:lō educators and community members to understand the pedagogical requirements that come along with Stó:lō content, here, the *flow*. She goes on to detail a missing piece in the early development of Indigenous education in BC, specifically in Stó:lō territory:

⁵¹ Dianna Kay, May 20, 2022.

“One thing we kind of missed out in our education is understanding what an educated person who goes from K to 12 in Stó:lō country actually looks like, what does this person look like at the end? What should they have, what skills should they have? What kind of good citizen should they be? Is that a requirement? We’ve never really spent time examining that as a nation. We’ve just kind of been going into the system and kind of changing the system from within.”⁵²

Now, she asserts, it is time to “*create* the system” (emphasis added), and expresses the hope that the product will be “something that’s more relevant,” implying K-12 education has been missing the mark.

The scaffolding, Kay (among many others) suggests, has to come from consultation and collaboration with Stó:lō community members and leaders, especially, given the centrality of language to authentic integration, those who speak Halq'eméylem. According to Saylesh Wesley, agency and authenticity are central to ethical and meaningful consultation and collaboration. Common administrator requests for professional development for their staff often ask that she visit their school and tell the story of “this place,” assuming she has stories about it; she laughs, “I’ll be like, ‘I don’t have any recollection of past lifetimes, and I haven’t been to this place.’”⁵³ Her response, while lighthearted, points to problematic tokenization that continues in schools. She continues to explain how upon agreeing to share the knowledge she does have, of particular plants or trees, for example, she must be careful when teaching. First, she must speak cautiously so as not to share anything too sacred that might be appropriated, and second, her teaching is often policed for secularity, urging her to stay away from anything too spiritual, when her

⁵² Dianna Kay, May 20, 2022.

⁵³ Saylesh Wesley, June 9, 2022.

connection to land is something she locates in the “spiritual realm.” She calls it a “tricky place,” a “damned if you do and damned if you don’t situation,” and laments:

“there's never an open door policy that says ‘you determine, as a Stó:lō person on your territory, what you're willing to share, and how you're willing to share it. And we will just be grateful that that's what we get.’ They want [to decide] what we share, they want to decide how we're going to do it, and they want me to do it in a good little Indian kind of way. And so it becomes superficial and surface, it's tokenizing. But if they open their hearts and their minds and invite me, ask me, if I'm willing to share some teachings or knowledge about this particular place, if I might have. That's different. That's, this humility is very much a term and a way of being that everyone defines for themselves. But at the end of the day, to me, humility is ‘do you make me feel safe? Do you make me feel respected? Do you think I'm a valuable person for the, occupying space on God's green earth?’ Then I know that they're deserving of my time. And rarely do I ever get that.”⁵⁴

Wesley’s experiences are, unfortunately, not the exception, but the rule. Speaking briefly with numerous teachers in S’ólh Téméxw, their comments regarding Elder school visits were similarly disconcerting. When asked about community member visits to their school, one teacher expressed that they had tried to bring some Elders in, but they were “just so bad,” that they “don’t know how to deal with kids” and “clearly didn’t respect [the teachers’] time.”⁵⁵ The incommensurability of settler and Stó:lō worldviews seemed insurmountable for these veteran, purportedly-inclusive educators; Western expectations of regimented education, scheduling, and discipline align with Wesley’s conclusion: “people want power and control—they want things

⁵⁴ Saylesh Wesley, June 9, 2022.

⁵⁵ Anonymous Informant #4 in discussion with the author.

their way. And there is an agenda.”⁵⁶ A demonstrative example of ethical consultation and collaboration is Chilliwack School District’s in-community professional development day. Brenda Point describes the day’s objective as an opportunity to “build learning about sense of place, the history, the knowledge” of the four surrounding First Nations they requested sessions from.⁵⁷ Each First Nation facilitated their own sessions, and Point called this “really valuable” because “the people who you tap are the most important pieces, because you see, you feel, you hear, you understand when you have a person in front of you who can express all of their lived experience, their knowledge, etcetera.”⁵⁸ It is clear, then, that meaningful consultation and collaboration, the backbone of educator scaffolding and education, requires a surrender of power and control, humility, and respect for difference.

While Stó:lō-led education is ideal, as Alongside’s survey and my interviews elucidate, Elders, community members, and collaborators are spread thin across districts in the territory. Various districts have made attempts to alleviate the burden of educating both the students as well as the teachers in the territory, such as recording Elders or live streaming presentations into multiple schools, but it remains a challenge for teachers to book presenters for their classes (especially considering the requirement to integrate local IPK daily, in every subject matter). Moreover, there appears to be a lack of shared understanding of what resources are available, and what resources are being made use of. For example, while many non-Indigenous interviewees in educational roles expressed their desire to use more Stó:lō resources in their classrooms, recommend them in their libraries, or purchase them for their organizations, they cited the reason they were not accomplishing these things as a short supply of Stó:lō resources.

⁵⁶ Saylesh Wesley, June 9, 2022.

⁵⁷ Brenda Point, May 27, 2022.

⁵⁸ Brenda Point, May 27, 2022.

Yet, there are in fact quite a few resources available – teachers simply are not reaching out and accessing them. As Point’s earlier comment about being “not quite there yet” with resource development expresses, publishing cultural resources requires time and care; this time, waiting for presenters and physical resources, becomes, it seems, a justification for A) not integrating IPK at all, or B) using out-of-territory resources without consultation. With the growing accessibility of (often pan-)Indigenous resources on the internet (through Teachers Pay Teachers, What in the World, and more), teachers reported a variety of reasons for their resource choices: some are deemed to be likely more engaging for their students, or of ‘higher quality’; some were suggested at a (provincial) Pro-D; some are easiest to come by online; some are subscription-based and thus, an ostensibly convenient alternative; some are what they read or were taught to use in university or even in their own K-12 education. Unfortunately, when asked how they choose their Indigenous resources, very few teachers I spoke to attributed their choice to locality.

Redefining “Resource”

“[T]he resources are developed from those things [language, land]. What you're doing [in your interviews] is you're getting, from what I observe, the understanding of what the foundation is for those resources, for those books. Because if Sonny [McHalsie] never went out on the land, if he never went fishing, if Keith [Carlson] never decided to...go knock on elders’ doors, none of [the books] would exist. Because it's a foundation. So understanding the connection of the land to our people is the most important. That's one of the fewest things, least things, that are taught.”

(Dianna Kay)⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Dianna Kay, May 20, 2022.

In addition to consultation and collaboration throughout the teacher's career cycle, redefining our understanding of "resource" can promote deep relationships that lead to more sustainable, authentic change in pedagogy and local resource integration. Throughout this research project, my interviews with knowledge holders and resource experts with varying degrees of direct association with K-12 educators revealed an interesting constant: our conversations were rarely about *resources* (at least as teachers and administrators define them). This project began as an inquiry into the use of Stó:lō resources in local schools, for example, the books and their corresponding teacher's guides developed by the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre. What I found in my first few interviews was that first, there was an extreme variance in the use of these resources from classroom to classroom, school to school, and even district to district, depending on each level's priorities. That is, prioritizing resource awareness, diversity in Indigenous education, place-based learning, or Halq'eméylem resurgence, etc. means districts, schools, and classrooms will use different—or more, or less—physical resources. These conversations, initially about resource use and qualities that make resources more accessible to teachers, turned quickly into discussions about pedagogy, relationships, and sustainable change in K-12 education.

While resources like books, audio clips, videos, and corresponding lesson plans make a big difference in resource integration, what these conversations demonstrates is that these resources will not be used (and often are not!) without shifts in educator perspective and teaching philosophy. So while it is true that there are changes needed in the way traditional educational resources are created (see Appendix 3 for a list of recommendations from this project's interviewees), addressing the barriers to *use* of local resources and promoting a holistic approach to Stó:lō *knowledge* and *perspective* integration might be a more effective primary objective to

create change in the use of *resources*. Local places and land-based educational experiences can be resources for both teacher location and exploration as well as student education. When asked for advice for educators beginning a journey of authentic integration of Stó:lō knowledge and perspectives, every interviewee urged teachers to become more familiar with land, place, and stories of S'ólh Téméxw.

One educational opportunity many districts have taken advantage of is the Bad Rock Tours offered out of the SRRMC. Naxaxalhts'i, Halq'eméylem place names researcher and cultural historian guides and narrates four different versions of his upriver tours: 1) a full day tour called the Smelá:lh Tour, “for ‘worthy people’ who know their history and want to learn more; 2) The Steqem tour, a three-hour tour “for ‘worthless people’ who have forgotten their history and don’t have time to learn more; 3) a custom tour with custom start and end points (which is sometimes helpful for school tours); and 4) the Sí:yá:m Tour, “for those of ‘unblemished ancestry, good manners, extrahuman support and especially wealth.’”⁶⁰ These tours introduce participants to S'ólh Téméxw, its narratives, important sites, history, and spirituality, an extraordinary place to start for educators in Stó:lō territory.

Allison Gardner and Darlene MacDonald express the need for teachers to have an emotional, personal connection to the content they teach, which can often come from place-based and land-based experiences. Gardner asserts, “the most successful way that we’ve been sharing resources for teachers to use...is to have them *experience* the pedagogy and the process *through* the curriculum. I just don’t feel like change is going to happen without experience.”⁶¹ MacDonald agrees, referencing a transformative and emotional trip to St. Mary’s residential

⁶⁰ “Cultural Place Names Tours,” *Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre*, accessed July 21, 2022, http://www.srrmcentre.com/upriver_tour.

⁶¹ Allison Gardner, May 25, 2022.

school with administrators and counselors; she reflects, “we can read about this in a book, we can have discussions and intellectual discussions, but something about standing on the physical grounds in the perimeter of the girls’ dorm and hearing that account from an intergenerational survivor changed the way those counselors and vice principals did their work.”⁶²

However, emotion and experience need not be so heavy all the time. MacDonald tells of another experience of a school canoe trip, which students designed and created a canoe paddle for, then heard stories and teachings around the importance of the canoe, canoe pulling, and the impacts of historical events on canoe carvers and community members on their trip up Allouette Lake. MacDonald frames these kinds of experiences, especially for non-Indigenous participants as valuable for many reasons, but especially for the opportunities they create,

“pushing people a little bit beyond their comfort zone, and that’s also what we’re doing, is we are scaffolding and supporting and we can’t just expect everyone to just jump in there and do it themselves. We have to be able to provide supports and scaffolds and encouragement and correction when needed and guidance and experiences so they can really have their pedagogy changed. And then on the other end of the spectrum around emotions that can change your way of being, we realize that our secondary counselors [and administrators] was an employee group that we needed to provide more opportunities and understanding [for].”⁶³

MacDonald and Gardner point to the district’s role in initiating and arranging place-based, emotional, experiential learning opportunities for its employees because of the educator lack of connection to land and place. And in a world that has lived digitally and connected through Zoom video conferencing for over two years, being in place is especially important. Naxaxahlt’si

⁶² Darlene MacDonald, May 25, 2022.

⁶³ Darlene MacDonald, May 25, 2022.

stresses that “you need the place,” and that while digital tours and videos sufficed during the peak of the COVID19 pandemic, “everybody appreciates that you have to be out there on the land.”⁶⁴ Many educators pay lip service to the importance of land, as seen, for example, in the sharp increase in land acknowledgements, one interviewee pushes for more genuine commitments to relationship with land. When asked if teachers welcome suggestions to utilize the land as a resource for their own and their students’ learning, another anonymous interviewee states, “[n]o, but if they do, they expect me to go and do it.”⁶⁵

Place and land are important to teacher education, Dianna Kay explains, because of their intimate connection with language and Xwélmexw (Stó:lō) people. She asserts,

our language is the sounds of the land coming through us. That’s what I believe. And the only way that the land can get sound, you know, tell us what it's saying, is through our people. Because we're the ones that make the biggest impact on the world and they're telling us through our feet.⁶⁶

Connection to land allows for communication *from* the land, and familiarity with S’ólh Téméxw makes people “look at the land differently,” Kay insists, and its relationship with Xwélmexw (Stó:lō) people:

you're going to look at how the land interacts with me differently because I really believe too that the sounds of the land are in our language. Like you listen to the sound of a babbling brook..., you'll hear our Xwélmexw sounds, the language. You listen to how the trees interact and cross each other, that's a sound that comes through in our language. It's really beautiful.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Naxaxalhts’i, May 19, 2022.

⁶⁵ Anonymous Informant #5 in discussion with the author.

⁶⁶ Dianna Kay, May 20, 2022.

⁶⁷ Dianna Kay, May 20, 2022.

Language, place, and land are central to content integration in ways that go unnoticed because of the emphasis placed on *content*, or *resource*. The advice Lisa Wolgram gives to teachers to encourage more authentic integration is both thoughtful and bolstered by research—both her own, and this project’s findings:

Don't focus on integrating because that's focused on content and resources and checking boxes. Ideally, teachers [should be] backing up..., going down that road [of decolonization] a little bit and looking at worldview and looking at place and looking at where you are and who you are in that place. And once people start to focus on that, and kind of start--nobody needs to be an expert on Stó:lō content or Stó:lō culture to be able to integrate, like you just don't because you never will...But if people can back up and start to just know where they are and know who they are, where they are, *then* turn to integration, then you have something that's personally relevant and it makes sense to you to actually be able to integrate authentically.”⁶⁸

Redefining *resource* can contribute to authentic integration more readily than focusing solely on resource and curriculum development, and cultivating an identity (not just a partitioned *teacher* identity), especially for non-Indigenous educators, connected to the land contributes to more ethical K-12 education as well as more understanding between settler folks and Stó:lō people in S’ólh Téméxw.

As a final note, I regret that my conversations with school resource librarians made their way into my discussions only indirectly, and I wish to acknowledge the incredible amount of research and education K-12 librarians undertake to contribute to increasing the use of local resources in schools in the territory. The few librarians and library employees I spoke to were

⁶⁸ Lisa Wolgram in discussion with the author, May 19, 2022.

extraordinary resources, innovating library practices in order to reduce harm to their students, promote truth-finding, encourage use of ethical and appropriate resources and terminology to teachers, provide access to digital and physical, acquire funding for more texts, editions, and versions of resources, and support teachers and students in various other ways beyond their job descriptions. Appendix 4 lists strategies shared with me that librarians, administrators, or resource experts might consider in their journey toward promoting more authentic integration of Stó:lō perspectives and knowledge in schools more broadly.

CONCLUSIONS

“It's an unfortunate circumstance where there's this wall between us or, or canyon between us. And if you jump off the edge, you're just going into the abyss of somewhere, you don't know where you're going to land.”

(Saylesh Wesley, on Indigenous-settler relations in K-12 education)⁶⁹

As evidenced in my interviews, informal time spent in K-12 schools, and brief consultations with post-secondary teacher education program employees, authentic integration of Stó:lō perspectives and knowledge requires multiple points of intervention, both with regard to time (in, for example, a teacher's career) as well as level (district, school, classroom). Courage, kindness, and self-reflection are common characteristics interviewees reported were most important to improving IPK integration, that is, local resource use, in local schools. While many of my conversations centered on teachers specifically, I believe these attributes are pivotal to all levels and positions that work in education, from K-12 to post-secondary, to professional development and resource creation. Although a great deal of this report brought to light the

⁶⁹ Saylesh Wesley, June 9, 2022.

discouraging and sometimes unsettling truth about integration of Stó:lō knowledge and perspectives as well as consultation, and collaboration with Stó:lō people, it is important to acknowledge the remarkable work being done by administrators and educators in S'ólh Téméxw for two reasons: first, there is hope. There are certainly good things happening in the territory that require celebration and recognition. Second, and perhaps more importantly, these strategies should be shared with educators in different districts, schools, and classrooms. Extraordinary work done at one level, at one time in the teacher career cycle, or in one position, can be most effective if groundwork is laid at other levels, points, and positions. Developing more resources or corresponding lesson plans is only a partial answer, one supported by pedagogical, philosophical educator and administrator reflection; consulting and collaborating with Stó:lō Elders and community members is imperative, but if resources are not accessible, integration becomes the sole responsibility of Indigenous community members. Holistic intervention is required.

One of the major barriers to increasing the use of local resources and integrating IPK that none of the project's interviewees reported but I believe should be noted is the lack of collaboration between districts. I recommend district collaboration for many of the same reasons the interviewees of this project encouraged a renewed commitment to collaboration as a backbone of classroom integration of IPK. As land-based pedagogies and Indigenous research expert Elizabeth Fast (Michif and Mennonite) and Indigenous research methodologies expert and Professor Emerita of Educational Foundations Margaret Kovach (Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux) assert, “we do not think alone.”⁷⁰ They explain further, “sharing our story offers the possibility of

⁷⁰ Elizabeth Fast and Margaret Kovach, “Community Relationships within Indigenous Methodologies,” in *Applying Indigenous Research Methods: Storying with Peoples and Communities*, ed. Sweeney Windchief and Timothy San Pedro (New York: Routledge, 2019), 21-36.

integrity, accountability as it were, in that, as researchers, we are putting forth as fully as possible our biases, assumptions, and theoretical proclivities” and that sharing personal experiences and situating oneself in relation to others “is not only a conduit for grounding and community accountability, but also for vulnerability. It is our vulnerabilities that connect us and the teachings of the sacred circle tells us that it is our connections that keep us strong. In Indigenous research the vulnerable is honorable.”⁷¹ While there were multi-district Stó:lō award ceremonies and youth conferences in the past, they have become too large and difficult to organize, says Brenda Point.⁷² There is an all-Indigenous district provincial leadership group, but even Point admits, “everybody’s landed in a different place” in terms of, for example, graduation credit requirements, which appears to happen often on various topics regarding Indigenous education.⁷³

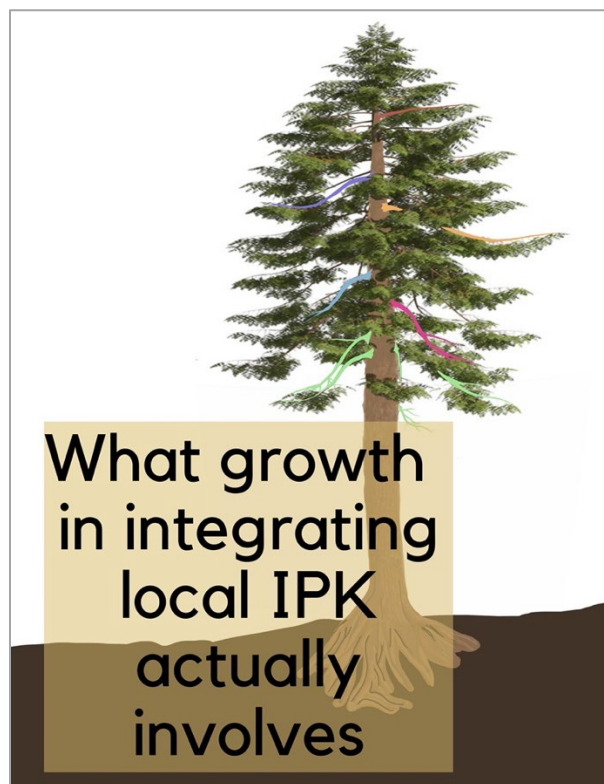
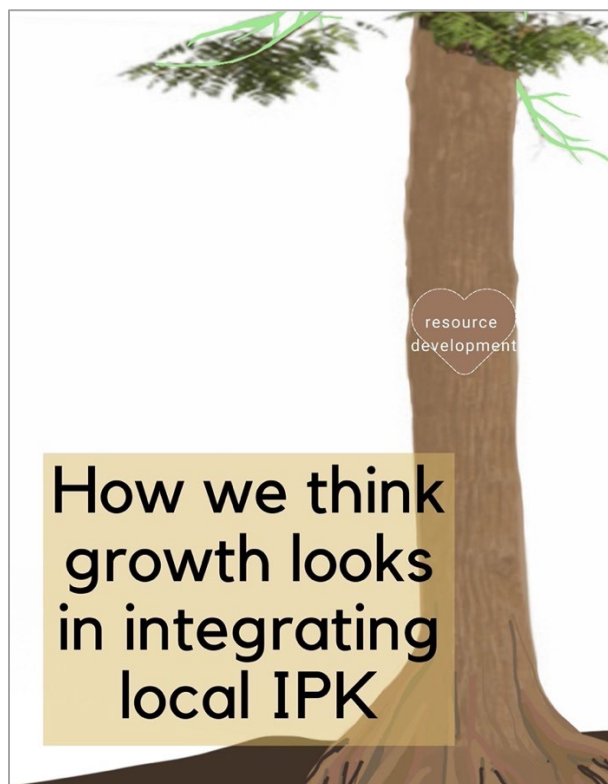
The appendices that follow this report, beyond the inclusion of my supplementary infographics, outline barriers, advice, and strategies undertaken for Stó:lō resource, perspectives, and knowledge integration. Here, I seek to place these *separate* conversations, especially valuable commentary that did not find a home in my limited discussion, *in conversation with each other* with the hope that their coming together might inspire new ideas regarding the use of local resources and the authentic integration of Stó:lō perspectives and knowledge in schools in S’óhl Téméxw.

⁷¹ Elizabeth Fast and Margaret Kovach, 21-36.

⁷² Brenda Point, May 27, 2022.

⁷³ Brenda Point, May 27, 2022.

Appendix 1



Appendix 1 Cont.



Appendix 2

Unique Strategies Employed in (or recommended in) S'ólh Téméxw to Encourage More Authentic Stó:lō IPK and Resource Integration:

Cultural Resource Distribution:

- 1) Host resource “Tastings,” wherein (over a meal) resource staff bring a variety of resources to a school or professional development session, present on them, provide examples of how they might be used, then order those teachers choose to use. (Chilliwack SD)
- 2) Track resource use, sign outs, and discuss ways to more effectively distribute resources.
- 3) Subscribe to the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre digital resources.
- 4) Participate in the Stó:lō Sitel Working Group, led by Dr. Jo-Ann Archibald (this also falls under “ongoing educator self-reflection.”)
- 5) Ensure there is a teacher librarian at every school (Mission SD)
- 6) Develop a cross-district repository for Stó:lō educational resources (SRRMC, Alongside Consulting)

Curriculum Creation:

- 1) District secondment of Indigenous enhancement teachers to district office multiple days every week to focus on developing curriculum before returning to schools to demonstrate how to use them. (Chilliwack SD)
- 2) District job postings for curriculum development (Fraser-Cascade SD, Abbotsford SD). One caveat for this option is developing a plan to vet, educate, and collaborate with teachers given these positions and avoiding giving these positions to teachers based on seniority alone.
- 3) Hire or collaborate with a curriculum development organization such as Alongside Consulting.
- 4) Hire ISWs or enhancement teachers to take on curriculum development passion projects in areas in which they hold knowledge.

Alternative Resource Education Suggestions:

- 1) Canoe trips (Abbotsford SD)
- 2) Location-based professional development (Abbotsford SD, Chilliwack SD)
- 3) Professional development run by local First Nations (Chilliwack SD)
- 4) Bad Rock Tour for teacher professional development
- 5) Longhouse Extension Program, Sti:kaya Programs (these “teach about things like governance and history and all kinds of topics that local knowledge keepers come in and share with classrooms and students”)⁷⁴ (Chilliwack SD)
- 6) Language teacher-in-residence programs throughout districts (Chilliwack SD)
- 7) Mural painting, ensuring there is Indigenous art in schools
- 8) Create integrated resource packages for topics, but also language (Fraser Cascade SD)

⁷⁴ Brenda Point, May 27, 2022.

- 9) When possible, participate in or learn about Stó:lō ceremonies or educational re-enactments like those put on by the SRRMC or the naming ceremony put on at Seabird Elementary.

Quality Pre-Service Teacher Education:

- 1) Hire a university Siya:m or Stó:lō community member, consult and collaborate with them consistently (TWU)
- 2) Employ and explain a culturally inclusive checklist for pre-service teacher use (UFV)
- 3) Teach pre-service teachers to choose resources more ethically and critically; have students practice identifying appropriation and other problems with obsolete resources. (UFV)
- 4) Encourage “two-eyed seeing” and promote the use of two-eyed seeing kits. (UFV)
- 5) Develop a social justice framework for programs and courses.

Ongoing Educator Self-Reflection

- 1) After teaching new lesson plans, have teachers meet, discuss, and reflect on their practice.
- 2) Survey teachers anonymously regarding their Indigenous professional development, track attendance, provide feedback forms, and reflect on how to increase the effectiveness of Indigenous professional development.
- 3) Avoid scheduling Indigenous professional development on days with teaching specialty (PSA) sessions.
- 4) Integrate Stó:lō methodologies, including more experiential learning, more inquiry-based activities, and student-led, place-based, learning opportunities.

Appendix 3

Recommendations for Resource Creators and Distributors in S'ólh Téméxw, as synthesized from project interviews and supplemented with additional author recommendations:

- 1) Ensure resources are easily searchable online, tagging them with synonyms, spelling variations.
- 2) Divide resources—text, audio, video—into smaller, potentially shorter, more digestible chunks.
- 3) Digitize print resources to increase accessibility.
- 4) Ensure resources are not overly text-heavy. These are used less frequently.
- 5) Focus on developing oral resources as well as oral/visual resources.
- 6) Ensure illustrations are in colour and engaging.
- 7) Stream Elder presentations into multiple schools or record their presentations to show afterwards; keep these videos in a repository all teachers can access.
- 8) Create an annual yearly subscription to a repository of authentic Stó:lō-created and/or Stó:lō-approved resources across districts; invest the subscription money back into Stó:lō community projects and initiatives.
- 9) Develop and re-publish resources to reflect contemporary times. For example, replace photos, examples, and inappropriate terminology in resources to keep them relevant.
- 10) Develop resources in multiple formats. For example, have the same resource in print, visual, and audio formats if possible.
- 11) Develop resources in multiple file formats to make them compatible with different devices (ie: Epub, Pdf, png, etc.)
- 12) Caption Video resources to increase accessibility and representation of Halq'eméylem written.
- 13) Try to make physical resources more affordable.
- 14) Develop more material resources students can handle and practice traditional skills with (ie: dipnets for practicing dipnetting).
- 15) Make navigating resources more straightforward or explain their organization more overtly (ie: use indexes, legends, introductions to using the resource where possible).
- 16) Provide resources in English as well as Halq'eméylem (or both translations in one resource!)
- 17) Publish teacher's guides along with resources when possible.
- 18) Outline intended audience age realistically and overtly.
- 19) Republish resources in greater numbers when possible.

Appendix 4

List of Employed and Recommended Strategies Associated with Libraries/Librarians:

To administrators, teachers, and district employees:

- 1) Ensure librarians have time in-library. Too often, librarians are pulled from their posts in order to cover for other staff shortages. If unavoidable, librarians should be compensated for their time in classrooms.
- 2) Provide collaboration time for administrators, district employees, and teachers to work with librarians to develop policies and procedures around resources, create year plans, choose resources for classrooms, and more.

To librarians:

- 3) Organize your collections thoughtfully and intentionally; organizing by place, theme, or nation, for example, might encourage library visitors to begin to organize their thoughts in a similar way; challenge your visitors to think in new ways! See, for example, the organization of the Ray and Millie Silver Library at Mamele'awt Community Aboriginal Centre through Abbotsford School District.
- 4) Include material culture and archaeological belonging replicas, games, musical instruments, and more in your collections.
- 5) Encourage teachers to provide choice to their students; ensure there are options for novel studies, short stories, pictures books, and other resources.
- 6) Become familiar with and use funding opportunities that are available; for example, there is often extra funding available for bringing in audiobooks.
- 7) Start local, but bringing in resources by out-of-territory Indigenous writers is also important.
- 8) Spend time reviewing available resources in the library and online to ensure they are ethically sourced, collaboratively developed, have proof of reciprocity in copyright, and/or approved by local Indigenous communities.
- 9) Reduce further harm to students by considering removing resources written by settler writers when possible. Some libraries remove these completely, while others place those that are appropriate but settler-written in a separate section.
- 10) Update displays often to show new arrivals, newly published resources, or those relevant to current events.
- 11) Encourage the use of proper terminology by teachers and students alike.
- 12) Encourage the use of resources that promote authentic integration. When possible, be involved in planning stages of lesson planning.
- 13) Provide spaces where students and teachers can view and listen to visual and audio resources.

Appendix 5

Barriers to Authentic Stó:lō Resource, Perspectives, and Knowledge Integration in K-12 Classrooms in S'ólh Téméxw:

- 1) Being “frozen in fear”⁷⁵; teacher reluctance.
- 2) “I think hastiness and lack of preparedness and trying to...throw together really big, heavy topics without enough preparation and thought, and some insensitivity around content area...[mistakes become] very strongly felt [to students and parents], and also ha[ve] the residual effect of teachers pulling back in fear and not wanting to kind of put themselves out there”⁷⁶
- 3) “Lack of consultation and not listening to that inner voice.”⁷⁷
- 4) “Not really thinking about ‘how is this going to impact the students who are in my classroom?’ because maybe they don't know the students in their classroom. [It] really comes down to relationships. If you really know your kids, you’re going to be more sensitive to their experiences”⁷⁸
- 5) Thinking too linearly.
- 6) Ignorance regarding online searching (keywords, terminology), where to search, how to choose resources.
- 7) Ignorance regarding protocols and developing relationships with Stó:lō community members, Elders, and educators.
- 8) Overdependence on the First Peoples Principles of Learning; they are a good starting point, but authentic integration means localizing FNESC and other provincial Indigenous resources.
- 9) Government funding for resource and curriculum development are applied for and assigned on a project-by-project basis, increasing time between projects.
- 10) Improper use of resources (choosing to use only parts of developed curriculum, implementing them without proper professional development).
- 11) Staffing shortages require all positions to work beyond and outside of their job descriptions.

⁷⁵ Darlene MacDonald, May 25, 2022.

⁷⁶ Darlene MacDonald, May 25, 2022.

⁷⁷ Darlene MacDonald, May 25, 2022.

⁷⁸ Darlene MacDonald, May 25, 2022.

Appendix 6

Advice to teachers and administrators trying to integrate Stó:lō resources, perspectives, and knowledge more authentically:

- 1) “The most important thing is that everybody's comfortable and you're in a safe space...and to have [and ask] those hard questions because a lot of the time people hold back from those hard conversations because they don't feel safe or of the consequences later.”⁷⁹
- 2) “[Y]ou have to have the will and you have to have the heart of one who wants change. For the better. Those who are teachers, who are certainly invested in empowering and healing and restoring any Indigenous people that they work with to become people, to become people with voices, are going to do whatever they can to integrate Indigenous knowledge and methodologies into their work. You have to have that spirit in you.”⁸⁰
- 3) “[Y]ou don't even have to be a radical activist to make change. [You have to have it] in your heart to help restore and heal and stand up a marginalized child because of their identity. And you just want them to feel like they are human and that they're worth something, that you love them.”⁸¹
- 4) “Abide by the enhancement agreements. Be absolutely invested in, if you can't find the local people, like for instance, here, if there aren't enough Sto:lo teachers, then you show your every effort to get them first of all. Second of all, then you extend yourself to the other Indigenous teachers, make sure they're in your school.”⁸²
- 5) “Every school needs an Indigenous admin, ideally of the territory and community connected...the schools here are large enough that they have multiple admins. One of them should be Indigenous, and not just be Indigenous because they have a status card. But be Indigenous because they walk with their culture, they are community members, they are able to demonstrate that they have teachings and that they are kind and humble.”⁸³
- 6) “[P]ay [Elders] accordingly. Make their time equally beneficial, symbiotic...if you are soliciting their services and their knowledge, then you honor that. And make [it worth their] while, make it comfortable for them.”⁸⁴
- 7) “[D]on't try to integrate. Try to pivot a little bit and look outside of the curriculum. Look at your pedagogy, and look at yourself and try to figure out where you are...And who are you within where you are? And I think it's important for teachers to recognize that they—if they are non-Indigenous teachers—they're in Sto:lo Téméxw, they're in Sto:lo world or Sto:lo land. And so what does that mean for them? They have to figure that out. Other people can tell them what that means--and there's lots of resources to go to for people to

⁷⁹ Dianna Kay, May 20, 2022.

⁸⁰ Saylesh Wesley, June 9, 2022.

⁸¹ Saylesh Wesley, June 9, 2022.

⁸² Saylesh Wesley, June 9, 2022.

⁸³ Saylesh Wesley, June 9, 2022.

⁸⁴ Saylesh Wesley, June 9, 2022.

figure out where they are—but they're the only ones who can figure out what that means for them and for their pedagogy.”⁸⁵

- 8) “[U]nderstand[ing] yourself as a learner in that context is really important too. Some steps need to be taken, not backwards, but to the side [toward starting your own journey of understanding your place in S’ólh Téméxw] and then come back and then try and integrate.”⁸⁶
- 9) “[O]ne of the I think the biggest step to integration is personal work first...I think there's ways to do that for teachers that isn't burdensome, but takes time. And...I think there needs to be more conversations about how that's okay. Instead of just trying to get it done, check the box, get it in, as long as the work is being done.”⁸⁷
- 10) “Well, we need to first be learners. And if we're not, that's a problem. And if you're an expert, you're not a learner, so [changing that perspective].”⁸⁸
- 11) “Know your why. Ask yourself ‘why?’ when deciding on resources, methods, and activities. Ask yourself if you are just trying to get content out quickly or if you are trying to have the students connect to something and learn from it to grow and move forward. Ask yourself, ‘what is my intention?’”⁸⁹
- 12) “[T]he change in times and the change of energies and the work that we do now, what we consider is important, is so shifting, and we're not realizing it because it's done so slowly...We don't realize *just a little* changes. And that brings me to it. One of our Elders, Auntie Vivian, she says ‘success is found in the details and the little tiny decisions you make every day. That's where you find success.’ And she says ‘it may not be significant right now,’ but...she's asking us, telling us, basically, to be mindful of how we choose and what we choose and how we walk”⁹⁰
- 13) Develop relationships with Stó:lō people and land.
- 14) Slowness, thoughtfulness.
- 15) Consultation, especially if you are not sure about something.
- 16) Taking time to examine your own bias and privilege.
- 17) Adjust the way you think about looking for resources and knowledge transference; broaden your search, be open to finding and using resources that don't *exactly* match your vision. For example, there may be a resource for one animal, but not another.
- 18) Learn proper pronunciation and meanings of Halq'eméylem words and use them in class.

⁸⁵ Lisa Wolgram, May 19, 2022.

⁸⁶ Lisa Wolgram, May 19, 2022.

⁸⁷ Michael Blackburn, May 19, 2022.

⁸⁸ Sheryl MacMath in discussion with the author, May 20, 2022.

⁸⁹ Allison Gardner, May 25, 2022.

⁹⁰ Dianna Kay, May 20, 2022.

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