

**Celebrating Aboriginal Culture and Cultivating
Inclusion at Memorial University**

Prepared by the Office of Aboriginal Affairs

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Table of Contents

Chapter One	
Introduction	p. 4
Chapter Two	
Setting the Context	p. 8
Chapter Three	
Methodology.....	p. 17
Chapter Four	
What We Heard.....	p. 19
Chapter Five	
Summary and Recommendations	p. 49
Appendix A	
Literature Review	p. 52
Appendix B	
Environmental Scan.....	p.62
Appendix C	
List of Consultations.....	p.71
Appendix D	
Survey Instrument	p. 72
Appendix E	
Interview Script.....	p.80
References.....	p. 82

List of Figures

Figure 1: Regional Breakdown of Survey Respondents who Indicated Newfoundland and Labrador as their Province of Origin	p. 21
Chart 1: Aboriginal Group Identification of Survey Respondents	p. 22
Table 1: Academic Unit Breakdown of Survey Respondents	p. 23
Graph 1: Primary Funding Sources of Survey Respondents	p. 25
Table 2: Top Support Services Accessed by Survey Respondents	p. 26
Table 3: Aboriginal Specific Support Services Survey Respondents Would Like to See	p. 27

Chapter One: Introduction

Aligning Aboriginal Inclusion with Memorial's Strategic Frameworks

The celebration of diversity through the promotion of inclusivity is central to Memorial University's commitment to academic excellence through the active pursuit of knowledge, as articulated in Memorial's Mission Statement:

Memorial University is an inclusive community dedicated to creativity, innovation and excellence in teaching and learning, research and scholarship, and to public engagement and service. We recognize our special obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Memorial welcomes students and scholars from all over the world, and contributes knowledge and shares expertise locally, nationally and internationally (Memorial University [MUN], 2007).

Memorial has developed strategic frameworks in the three areas that are key to fulfilling the institution's mission: teaching and learning, research, and public engagement. Inclusivity, particularly with respect to Aboriginal peoples, is an integral part of these initiatives.

Teaching and Learning

In May 2011 the University Senate approved a Teaching and Learning Framework that articulated a renewed and refocused commitment to excellence in the culture of teaching and learning. From this vision sprang the development of a Teaching and Learning Community at Memorial, the goal of which is to magnify work that is engaging, supportive, inclusive, responsive, committed to discovery, and is outcomes-oriented for both educators and learners.

Supporting Vulnerable Students

The first recommendation that emerged from the Teaching and Learning Framework spoke specifically to the need for MUN to review and strengthen its support services to vulnerable students. The first initiative focused was "academically at-risk" first year students – those with admission averages between 70-74.9%, which jeopardized their chances of academic success and program completion. A year-long research project was implemented to explore the literature, review other institutional practices, and engage with key informants on how best to help and respond to their needs (MUN, 2011a). The resulting initiative was the First Year Success Program (FYSP), a three-year pilot program launched in September of 2012. The FYSP is a full-time, first-year experience that supports students across both semesters. Courses are supplemented by a university-wide support system dedicated to student success. This includes, but is not limited to, career advising,

academic advising, smaller class sizes, teaching assistants, and strengthened math and writing help centres.

The Teaching and Learning Community next focused on a second group of vulnerable learners, those with individual learning needs associated with disability(s) and/or mental health issues. Memorial collaborated with the College of the North Atlantic (CNA) for this initiative, as both institutions recognize the importance of establishing an accessible and inclusive post-secondary educational system in our province. Building on existing policies and support systems already in place to accommodate these students, this project began with a review of the literature, an environmental scan, and extensive consultations conducted across campuses and communities to explore the needs of this population. From this research a report, *Accommodating students with individual learning needs associated with disabilities and/or mental health issues* (Philpott & Chaulk, 2013) was submitted to the Provost's office recommending a healthy campus model be developed.

Intercultural Competence and Cultural Diversity

The Teaching and Learning Community at Memorial next shifted its focus to a third group of vulnerable learners - those transitioning from second language and/or second culture. The project was a pan-university initiative and initially sought an inclusive approach to cultural diversity. Aboriginal students were explicit in stating that they would prefer a separate conversation to address their unique experiences and needs. Thus, the study focused mainly on the experiences of international students and our intercultural competency in responding to their needs, as well as intercultural experiences for domestic students. This project sought to inform Memorial in meeting these commitments and moving toward greater internationalization on all of its campuses. The resulting document, *Strengthening the value chain: Supporting international student and building intercultural competence at Memorial University* was released in June 2014 (Philpott, Kennedy & Greene, 2014).

Research

In September 2011, Memorial's Senate endorsed a Research Strategy Framework, which outlines a vision, mission, guiding principles, and goals and objectives for institutional research excellence. 'Aboriginal peoples' has been identified as one of ten strategic research themes in the Research Strategy Framework. According to the framework,

Research under this theme relates to the pre-history and history of Aboriginal peoples, as well as to contemporary issues and opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador, nationally and internationally.

Key research areas include education, languages, society, culture, human rights, gender, literature, religion, ethics, politics, and social and economic development; contemporary issues around resource development, land claims, climate change, health, physical activity, and community development; indigenous expressive culture; youth engagement relating to social policy, social participation and youth programs; Northern Labrador climate change, resource development, transportation, new national parks, and collaboration with the Nunatsiavut Government; and traditional knowledge of Aboriginal peoples and its relation to contemporary issues (MUN, 2011b, pp.4-5).

Public Engagement

In September 2012, the Senate endorsed Memorial's Public Engagement Framework. The vision of this framework is for Memorial University "to be a world leader as an engaged public university, through our special obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador" (MUN, 2012, p.1). Memorial's culture of public engagement is to be guided by the following values: respect, equity and diversity, integrity, transparency and accountability, accessibility and responsiveness, and excellence. As part of the development of the framework, fifteen themes were identified as being the subject of sessions held with representatives from the university and the public, in various locations throughout the province. 'Engaging with Aboriginal Communities' was identified as one of these key themes, and in fact the session had one of the highest attendance rates at its St. John's location.

Other Initiatives

Internationalization

Most recently, Memorial drafted two reports on internationalization. The 'Internationalization White Paper' (Knutson, Chislett, & Emke, 2014) highlights areas in which Aboriginal cultures and language may be incorporated into the curriculum and the Memorial experience. Likewise, the 'Strategic Internationalization Plan 2020' proposes eight themes, the first of which is 'Educating global citizens', with a recommendation to "develop intercultural competencies in all students, faculty members and personnel" (MUN, 2015). Promoting awareness of Aboriginal cultures and ways of knowing is integral to building this intercultural competence, and something that the university community has an obligation to pursue.

Presidential Task Force on Aboriginal Initiatives

In the fall of 2009, a Presidential Task Force on Aboriginal Initiatives was struck at Memorial University. The Task Force was given the mandate of recommending enhancements to the recruitment and success of Aboriginal students of all ages. The Committee consisted of university administrators and representatives of Newfoundland and Labrador Aboriginal communities. Following extensive

consultation and a literature review, the Committee reported its advice and conclusions within the context of mission to recognize “a special obligation” to the people of the province and the priorities set out in the University’s Strategic Plan. Specifically, the report put forward a set of 22 recommendations that describe initiatives under four thematic issues:

1. Interventions to encourage completion of high school by Aboriginal people, including a new approach to teacher education and collaboration with the College of the North Atlantic.
2. Succeeding in university through access to a more welcoming environment, peer-to-peer support and adequate gathering space
3. Apprentice educational programming, including undergraduate and graduate options in Aboriginal studies and the professional training needed by Aboriginal communities
4. Coordination of Memorial’s considerable but scattered Aboriginal expertise, including better integration of the Labrador institute and a higher profile for Aboriginal initiatives.

The focus of the current initiative is on themes 2-4 with the acknowledgement that early intervention will require collaborative efforts between the Department of Education and institutions across the province, a task beyond the scope of this project, which is primarily concerned with the efforts made by, and still to be implemented by, Memorial University.

Since the Task Force was struck, a number of initiatives have been implemented and further developments are underway. The Office of Aboriginal Affairs, currently under the President’s Office on matters of direction, pursues a number of goals in response to the report prepared by the Task Force. The Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Affairs heads the office to coordinate this work in collaboration with the university community and external partners.

Building on these initiatives, this project seeks to establish an on-going dialogue to examine and enhance existing programs and services for Aboriginal students on Memorial’s campuses. The strategies employed to develop this report were drawn primarily from research on Aboriginal student success and retention (literature review), information on pre-existing programs at other Canadian universities (environmental scan), an analysis of in-house data on students at our institution; consultations with key informants at all of Memorial’s campuses, an online survey distributed to all of Memorial’s current and former self-identified Aboriginal students, and follow-up interviews with a sample of those who completed the survey.

Chapter Two: Setting the Context

According to the 2011 National Household Survey, 1.4 million people, 4.3% of Canada's population, identify as Aboriginal. 46% of these are under the age of 24. Despite representing an increasing percentage of this country's population, educational attainment levels among Aboriginal peoples remain significantly lower than the non-Aboriginal population. Aboriginal people represent approximately 5% of the of the 18-24 year old age cohort but only about 3% of all university undergraduate students in Canada (AUCC, 2011). Recent Aboriginal high school graduates are 23% less likely than non-Aboriginal graduates to go on to post-secondary education within two years of completing high school (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada [AUCC], 2010).

In 2011, among those aged 25-64 only 11% of the off-reserve Aboriginal population had a university degree, compared to 27% of the general population (Statistics Canada and Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 2012). Only 8% of Aboriginal peoples hold a university degree, compared to 23% of the total population. A number of incentives have been implemented to encourage Aboriginal youth to pursue post-secondary education.

Educational attainment is lowest among the Inuit and among registered Indians living on-reserve- only about 3% have a university degree; compared to just under 10% of Metis and off-reserve Aboriginal people (Statistics Canada and Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 2012). According to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's *White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education* (2005), low literacy rates among the Innu and Inuit adult population and the small number of Labrador students graduating from high school reiterates the need for access and transition programs to increase Aboriginal students' participation in post-secondary education.

Currently, the federal government provides financial assistance to Aboriginal people through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP), which funds status First Nations and Inuit students to attend post-secondary institutions. Most Aboriginal students who access funding through the PSSSP are successful in their studies and find meaningful employment.

In 1968, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), formerly the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, began providing direct funding for First Nations and Inuit students to pursue post-secondary education. Prior to 1992, funding was determined by the number of eligible students and their expenses. Between 1992 and 1997, the funding model changed from per-student funding to block funding, which was to be administered through local Band Councils. In 1996, funding increases were capped at two percent annually; as a result, funding has not been able to keep pace with annual increases in the cost of living and tuition fees. This has meant that communities must make difficult decisions about who

receives funding each year. Priority is often given to shorter college programs as opposed to more expensive professional or graduate programs.

Non-status First Nations and Métis peoples are not included under federal legislation governing support for Aboriginal peoples. The PSSSP is not accessible to these students. In June of 2007, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development recommended that the federal government work with Aboriginal organizations to extend eligibility for AANDC's PSSSP to non-status students. There is a lack of support from the federal government for Aboriginals who have little or no connection to bands; Métis, Non-Status and Bill C-31 Aboriginals may not be able to access financial support.

Just under half (42.5%) of First Nations post-secondary students who participated in a national survey in 2011 strongly disagreed with the statement that "First Nations languages, cultures, histories and knowledge are adequately reflected" in their educational institutions, compared to only one-quarter (23%) who strongly agreed (Assembly of First Nations, 2011).

Institutional Context

Memorial University understands 'Aboriginal' as having First Nations, Inuit or Métis ancestry. Most of Memorial's Aboriginal students come from various areas of Newfoundland and Labrador, but some come from other provinces across Canada and around the world as well. Out of 15,275 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in the fall 2014 semester (MUN, 2014), there are over 500 Aboriginal students who self-identify on the St. John's campus. Out of a total of 1,071 students at the Grenfell Campus (MUN, 2014), approximately 300 students self-identify as Aboriginal. At Marine Institute, which has a student body of 504 (MUN, 2014), there are currently 24 declared aboriginal students that are studying in programs ranging from technical certificates to post-graduate offerings.

Academic Programs

MUN has established a designated seats program for Aboriginal students. These seats are protected by the Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission. Up to, or at least three seats per year are reserved in a number of programs for applicants of Aboriginal ancestry who have met the admission requirements. Applicants must submit a letter of request with the Faculty application and provide documentation of Aboriginal ancestry.

In conjunction with partners such as the Nunatsiavut Government, Innu Nation, and the College of the North Atlantic (CNA), various faculties and schools at Memorial also deliver customized training in Labrador.

Faculty of Education

Bachelor of Education (Primary/Elementary) Nunatsiavut/ Inuktitut:

The Labrador Institute and the Faculty of Education have partnered to develop a Community Based Teacher Education program focused on primary/elementary teacher education in the Aboriginal and Northern context. Working with the Nunatsiavut Government (NG), the College of the North Atlantic (CNA), and the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, Memorial University has developed a program route including an Inuktitut language component, coastal community practicums, and a First Year Success component beginning in 2014.

Bachelor of Education (Primary/Elementary) NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC) and Labrador Option:

Currently the Faculty is seeking students interested in enrolling in a Bachelor of Education program based in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, focused on the Aboriginal and Northern context. It is anticipated that this program would begin in 2015. This program would be of particular interest to members of NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC) or other residents of Newfoundland and Labrador who wish to take advantage of a Bachelor of Education (Primary/Elementary) program in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

The Faculty of Education and the Labrador Institute are currently seeking expressions of interest from residents of Labrador interested in joining a Labrador-based cohort for a Masters in Education degree program.

The Faculty of Education previously offered a *Diploma in Native and Northern Education in Labrador (T.E.P.L.)*, as well as a *Bachelor of Education (Native and Northern)*. This is a teacher education program designed for Aboriginal students in Labrador who intend to pursue a teaching career in the communities of Northern Labrador. The program has both a primary/elementary and secondary route, and is currently under review.

Other Initiatives

The Faculty of Education has an Indigenous Interest Group Committee, composed of students, staff and faculty that meet regularly. In March 2015, EDGE 2015: the 3rd annual symposium on Indigenous Teacher Education was held at the Labrador Interpretation Centre in North West River.

School of Nursing

The Integrated Nursing Access program at the Labrador Institute is a customized program aimed at meeting specific regional and cultural needs.

Social Work

Beginning in the winter 2010 semester, the Labrador Institute, in collaboration with the College of the North Atlantic - Happy Valley-Goose Bay Campus - began hosting a Bachelor of Social Work Program. This program was an initiative of the Nunatsiavut Government and is the result of their partnership with MUN's School of Social Work, the Labrador Institute, and CNA. The students registered in the program are all beneficiaries of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement, the first program of its kind. The program is now completed and a total of 17 students graduated on June 14, 2013, and have since returned to work in Nunatsiavut communities.

Medicine

Aboriginal Health Initiative

In 2008, the Faculty of Medicine began a project supported by the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs' Secretariat entitled *Making Memorial's Faculty of Medicine a Better Place for Aboriginal Students*. The intent of the initiative was to make the Faculty of Medicine more inclusionary for students from the various First Nations/Inuit/ Métis (FN/I/M) communities, especially within the province. The project focuses on two key areas:

1. Bridging programs, services and programs designed to recruit more Aboriginal students into the Faculty of Medicine;
2. Heightened cultural sensitivity of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students on issues of Aboriginal health and health care services in both undergraduate medical courses and graduate programs.

An Advisory Committee comprised of Aboriginal community representatives, members of the Faculty of Medicine, and current medical students, oversees the project. The communities from the island of Newfoundland represented on this committee are: the Miawpukek First Nation and the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation; and from Labrador, the Innu Nation, the Government of Nunatsiavut, and NunatuKuvut.

Initially supported through funding from the Aboriginal Health Human Resources Initiative, since April 1, 2010 the initiative, now identified as the Aboriginal Health Initiative (AHI), is being funded entirely by the Faculty of Medicine.

An important component of the Aboriginal Health Initiative is the Aboriginal Admissions Program, the reservation of three seats within the faculty specifically designated for students of Aboriginal ancestry within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Applicants are first considered within the Newfoundland and Labrador competition, and if not accepted in that competition, then are considered within the Aboriginal admissions program competition. Applicants are required to meet the admissions requirements and will be required to identify themselves on

the application for admission, and supply the following information to be eligible to compete in this program:

- Proof of ancestry.
- In addition to proof of ancestry, a letter of support submitted by a leader from the applicants' Aboriginal community or organizational affiliation.
- Describe how their knowledge of Aboriginal culture and experiences as an Aboriginal person would enhance their contribution to the medical school class and the profession of medicine.

The Aboriginal Health Initiative also has a number of recruitment strategies in place. MedQuest is a summer program in St. John's open to high school students to familiarize them with various health care professions. Starting in Summer 2014, two admission seats are reserved for students of Aboriginal ancestry.

There is also a Pre-Med Summer Institute for Aboriginal students, a Pre-Med Orientation/Mentorship Program for Aboriginal undergraduate students interested in medicine, and the MCAT Prep Award of \$500 for Aboriginal applicants to prepare for the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT).

The Med Friendship Circle is a student run association organized for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal medical students to build bridges of understanding.

Aboriginal Curriculum and Initiatives

Bachelor of Arts – Aboriginal Studies Minor

The minor in Aboriginal Studies is a multi-disciplinary program available to students completing a Bachelor of Arts degree. Courses may be chosen from a number of departments and disciplines, including anthropology, education, English, history, law and society, linguistics, sociology, and social work.

Plans for the offering of a Major in Aboriginal Studies were previously underway, but it is not clear where this initiative presently stands.

Bachelor of Arts in Leadership Studies (Co-operative)

A proposal for a Bachelor of Arts in Leadership Studies (Co-operative) at the Grenfell Campus is underway. The proposed program would have three concentrations, including Indigenous Leadership, and would include coursework in the areas of indigenous justice and governance, indigenous health, and contemporary indigenous thought.

Financial Assistance

There are a number of scholarships available to Aboriginal students at Memorial:

The Dr. Evan Simpson Aboriginal Undergraduate Entrance Scholarship - Up to four entrance scholarships valued at \$1,000 each to Aboriginal residents of Newfoundland and Labrador are awarded each year by the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Scholarships, Bursaries and Awards.

The Hebron Diversity Award - This award was created from a contribution from the Hebron Project. The Hebron Project co-venturers are ExxonMobil Canada Properties (operator), Chevron Canada, Suncor Energy, Statoil Canada and Nalcor Energy. Awards are available to full-time or part-time students, enrolled at any campus of Memorial, who have Aboriginal status, a disability, or who represent a visible minority. Of those eligible students, further preference will be given to students who are majoring in engineering, the geosciences, environmental science or chemistry.

Newfoundland and Labrador Multicultural Council Aboriginal Scholarship - A \$500.00 scholarship is available primarily for the benefit of Aboriginal students who are not receiving funding from Government agencies or Aboriginal funding agencies. The application is evaluated by the Awards Committee of the St. John's Native Friendship Centre Association.

Memorial University - Faculty of Business Administration Aboriginal Scholarship - A scholarship valued at \$500 is awarded each year to an Aboriginal resident of Newfoundland and Labrador in the Faculty of Business Administration.

Aboriginal Student Support Services

Aboriginal Resource Office

The Aboriginal Resource Office (ARO) is responsible for providing support services to Aboriginal students on the St. John's campus. The office also works to advocate and educate the general university population regarding inclusion of Aboriginal peoples within the province.

The Aboriginal Resource Office (ARO), under the Division of Student Affairs and Services, houses a coordinator and a liaison officer. The office provides referral services, assistance with seeking accommodations and provides orientation specifically for Aboriginal students. In addition, ARO assists students with course selections and much more. They also provide activities that give Aboriginal students the opportunity to gather for various events. The ARO Office has a student lounge that is equipped with two computers, a printer, photocopier, telephone and fax machine, used textbooks and other resources.

With assistance from the Aboriginal Liaison Officer, the Aboriginal Resource Coordinator works to assist Aboriginal students in adapting to an academic and urban environment. The ARO offers programs and services to create a welcoming community for all Aboriginal students. ARO also provides information to potential

students on accessing funding through a wide variety of Aboriginal groups, scholarships and other potential sources of funding.

The ARO has organized an Aboriginal Orientation for new students over the last number of years, providing an introduction to the university environment that both highlights the resources focusing on Aboriginal student needs, as well as integration into mainstream student orientation. The ARO also has an MOU with the St. John's Native Friendship Centre (SJNFC) to facilitate joint initiatives.

Other Programs and Services

The St. John's campus is home to the Siawiti'nej Aboriginal Student Council, and there are Aboriginal representatives on the Memorial University Student's Union (MUNSU), and the Graduate Students' Union (GSU). There is a study room on the sixth floor of the University Centre for Aboriginal students managed by MUNSU and an Aboriginal Student lounge located at UC-4005. The Aboriginal Resource Centre (ARC) is the only student-run service on campus, funded and operating through MUNSU. Its purpose is to meet the various individual needs of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal visitors, as well as providing awareness, education and advocacy in an atmosphere of trust, respect and friendship for the Aboriginal culture as a whole. The ARC is not affiliated with any particular Aboriginal group, and is open to all Aboriginal peoples, regardless of background. Non-Aboriginal students are also welcome to join, participate in activities, and to visit the ARC. There are also student gatherings, occasional Aboriginal films, Aboriginal welcome events, Aboriginal awareness activities, culturally safe spaces for students to practice smudging and Kullik/Qulliq lighting, as well as many other exciting initiatives.

Grenfell Campus

At Grenfell Campus, there are a number of programs and services dedicated to Aboriginal students. Under Student Services, there is an Aboriginal Resource Centre and an Aboriginal Liaison Coordinator. The Grenfell Campus Student Union (GCSU) has an Indigenous Caucus and there is an Indigenous Student Room. The Aboriginal Film Series is organized by students. There is a MOU with the Nunatsiavut Government that guarantees residence accommodation for Inuit students from remote communities at the Grenfell Campus for the duration of their degree program.

Marine Institute

There are a number of ways that the Marine Institute campus has been inclusive of various aboriginal populations in both our on-campus and community-based programs. The Institute has also incorporated meaningful engagement in various special events.

Community Based Education Delivery

The Marine Institute offers a comprehensive suite of programs in various communities around the province and the country. These programs range from industry-based technical training to longer-term programs and provide accessible education to various populations, including aboriginal communities. In particular, the Marine Institute has offered numerous training courses in Labrador and has a long standing relationship with Nunavut Arctic College, the Nunavut government and other partners. In 2014, the Marine Institute trained 250 aboriginal students in fisheries programs through the Centre for Community-Based Education.

Aboriginal Engagement

One of the more unique ways we have looked at aboriginal engagement has been through special events. A great example of this was incorporated in our 2014 Graduation Ceremony, when Chef Misel Joe of the Miawpukek First Nation in Conne River graciously provided an aboriginal blessing to the ceremony.

Previous Research Conducted on Aboriginal Students at Memorial University

In October of 2011, the Aboriginal Liaison Officer at Memorial, St. John's campus, accompanied by two Aboriginal students, toured three universities in British Columbia to gain insight into programming, services, and facilities. The three institutions visited were: Simon Fraser University (SFU), the University of British Columbia (UBC) and the University of Victoria (UVic). The visitors reported that a high level of Aboriginal inclusivity was apparent on each of the campuses. In a report prepared by the Aboriginal Resource Office based on the tour, suggestions for amenities at Memorial included a centralized building with a central gathering space where students can avail of resources and celebrate their culture. The First People's House at UVic was cited as a best example to follow in the proposed development of an Aboriginal space at Memorial's St. John's campus (ARO, 2011).

In the winter of 2013, the Aboriginal Eligible Non Registrant Survey was conducted at MUN. This short telephone survey was designed to investigate the possible reasons why Aboriginal students who attended Memorial and were eligible to register for a semester or classes after the fall 2012 semester, but did not do so. Only students from the St. John's campus were selected for the study. Also of interest were the students' engagement patterns, such as their participation and opinion of the available resources and services at Memorial University. From a pool of 61 students, 18 completed the survey. The data from eight of these respondents was excluded from analysis as they did not meet the criteria for the purpose of the study. Findings from the remaining ten students indicate that the majority (80%) plan to return to post-secondary; 60% plan to return to Memorial. The main reasons student gave for not re-enrolling point were personal and not academic in nature, such as securing employment or health or family related concerns. It is acknowledged that these issues can affect all students, and are not unique to Aboriginal students in particular (MUN, 2013).

In the fall of 2013, MUN collaborated with Queen's University faculty member Anne Godlewska to develop and disseminate an Aboriginal Awareness Survey. In consultation with various Aboriginal stakeholders within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the survey instrument was developed, providing direct assessment to measure student knowledge of Aboriginal People's, their sources of knowledge, their social attitudes, and numerous other attributes. It was amended from a survey designed by a group of Aboriginal educators in the early 2000s that were trying to grapple with and define the problem of a lack of knowledge across Canada. Data are currently being analyzed and it is hoped that the results will inform Memorial University of the current level of knowledge and attitudes held by our students towards Aboriginal populations in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Further, we hope to benchmark our findings against those of the preceding survey conducted at Queens University. It is anticipated that these findings will provide guidance on future programming required both at Memorial University and within the broader educational systems of this province.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Design & Methods

This study utilized a mixed methods research design, consisting of both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interviews) methods.

Participants and Recruitment

Participants for the study were recruited through email correspondence. Due to privacy restrictions, it was not possible to contact students directly. Letters of information and a link to an online survey were distributed electronically through the Office of the Registrar to all self-identified Aboriginal students currently or previously enrolled at Memorial University. The total number of emails sent was 2,113.

Interview participants consisted of 12 students, selected from those survey respondents who volunteered to be interviewed based on a request on the survey whereby interested participants were asked to provide contact information. Of 134 survey respondents, a total of 22 students indicated an interest in being interviewed. Of particular interest was a comparison of students enrolled in different programs, as well as differences between the experiences of current and former students. Due to the voluntary nature of participation, this was not always possible.

The 22 students who expressed an interest in participating were contacted via email and asked to participate in a follow-up interview. A letter of information and consent form were attached to the email for their review. Twelve students (N=12) agreed to participate. Every attempt was made to maintain an equal balance of gender, and proportion by program, but due to the voluntary nature of participation, this was not always possible. Of the twelve interviewees, ten were female, and two were male. Half (6) were currently enrolled at Memorial; half had previously attended and were not enrolled at the time of the interview. Participants represented a wide range of programs and disciplines, and included non-degree, undergraduate and graduate registrants and alumni.

Data Collection

An online survey was distributed electronically to all (N=2,113) current and former self-identified Aboriginal students at Memorial. The survey was developed specifically for this study and consisted of 37 questions pertaining to student's experiences at Memorial. The survey was used to gather student demographic and academic program information, as well as a means to map the level of awareness, use, and effectiveness of student services (see Appendix D).

Students were recruited from the survey to participate in follow-up in-depth interviews, for the purposes of exploring more fully students' experiences and how their experiences may relate to institutional-based support.

Twelve (N=12) semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted. This sample represented roughly nine percent (9%) of survey respondents and was determined to be a sufficient number based on time and resource constraints as well as the possibility of saturation. Interviews were loosely structured around a script of 15 questions, with the use of several follow-up questions or prompts where necessary (see Appendix E). The questions pertained to student's perceptions of the supports and challenges faced at Memorial, and how these views relate to their own experiences with university services and programs. Interviews ranged from half an hour to one hour in duration and were recorded for the purpose of analysis through the use of a digital audio recorder and were transcribed verbatim. While the preferred method was face-to-face, those who wished to participate but due to location were unable to participate in person were interviewed via telephone or through the use of telephony applications (i.e., Skype). A total of four interviews were conducted face-to-face; two interviews were conducted via Skype; and six were phone interviews.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics software, v.22. Frequency, Crosstabs, and Multiple Response analyses were conducted. The threshold for statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Descriptive data in the form of interview transcripts was organized through the process of coding, according to concepts and categories that emerged, and organized using NVivo software, v.10. In order to triangulate, the interview data was compared with the survey data.

Chapter Four: What We Heard

Consultations

The extensive consultations revealed a wide range of perspectives from faculty and staff members of the Memorial community (see Appendix C). The individual nature of the conversations allowed for a comfortable environment in which people could speak openly and share their thoughts and experiences with Aboriginal students. A feeling of enthusiasm was evident, although concerns were raised about responding appropriately to the needs of students.

The need for a shared conversation between the university and Aboriginal communities was emphasized, and people appear eager to collaborate and explore best practices for celebrating Aboriginal culture and cultivating inclusion at Memorial. Differences between campuses, and across academic programs were acknowledged. Some programs, such as those at Marine Institute, are driven by industry standards and program length and modes of delivery vary widely. It is clear that addressing Aboriginal culture in the classroom is vastly different from addressing it in clinical, field, practicum facilities and workplace settings.

Faculty and staff were aware that stigma and discrimination occurs, as students had shared negative experiences with them. The need for the development of an anti-discrimination and harassment policy was emphasized, especially as Memorial moves toward the development of inclusive practices in addressing the unique needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

As most of the individuals consulted were involved in program delivery in some capacity, as either educators and/or academic administrators, conversations centred primarily on curriculum content and the provision of academic support services. While many individuals are making personal commitments to incorporating Aboriginal content into courses and programs, concerted efforts need to be made at the academic unit level, as well as across and between disciplines.

Accessibility was discussed in the context of removing barriers to educational attainment, and suggestions were made for establishing outreach and transition programs to help Aboriginal students prepare for post-secondary education.

People showed support for the expansion of existing programs, such as the Minor in Aboriginal Studies, and in discussing the possibility of offering a Major, many expressed interest in offering assistance in the development of a curriculum.

The overall message that emerged from consultations was that continued improvements will first require the commitment of the institution, followed by the coming together of students, faculty and staff, and community organizations and associations in pursuit of the common goal of prioritizing Aboriginal culture at Memorial.

Survey Findings

A total of 134 current and former self-identified Aboriginal students completed the survey. While the survey was administered to a total of 2,113 email addresses, some people had multiple addresses on file, and so it is not possible to calculate the exact response rate.

Demographic Information

Gender

The majority of survey respondents identified as female (69.4%), while 28.4% of respondents identified as male, 0.7% identified as two-spirit, and 1.5% preferred not to answer.

Age

The age of respondents varied, with over half of the respondents identifying as being between the ages of 20 and 29. Roughly thirty percent (31.3%) of respondents were between the ages of 20 and 24 years; 20.9% fell between the ages of 25 and 29; 11.9% fell between the ages of 30 to 34 years; 11.2% were between the ages of 35 to 39 years; 7.5% were under 20 years old; 6% were between 45 to 50 years old, 5.2% were between the ages of 40 and 44 years and 4.5% were over the age of 50.

Place of Origin

The majority (90%) of respondents indicated that they originated from Newfoundland and Labrador. Specifically, 42.7% were from Western Newfoundland, 26.5% of respondents were from Labrador, 17.9% of respondents were from the Avalon region, 11.1% of respondents were from Central and 1.7% of respondents were from Eastern Newfoundland.

Of those who indicated they were from out of province, most indicated Ontario (4.6%) as their province of origin, followed by British Columbia (3.1%) and New Brunswick (2.3%). Two students were from Nova Scotia and Northwest Territories. There were no non-Canadian respondents to the survey, although four people did not answer the question.

Language

All but one respondent identified English as their first language (96.3%).

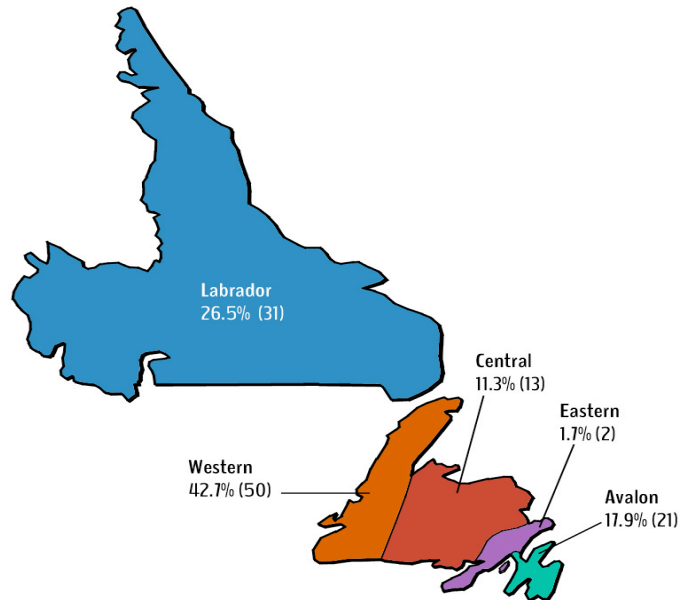


Figure 1: Regional Breakdown of Survey Respondents who Indicated Newfoundland and Labrador as their Province of Origin

Aboriginal Group

When asked to indicate what aboriginal group they identified with, 44.8% of respondents identified as First Nations (Status), while 10.4% identified as First Nations (Non-Status), 20.9% identified as Métis, and 18.7% identified as Inuit. Additionally, 1.5% identified with more than one Aboriginal group, and three (2.2%) identified as Aboriginal *and* another cultural group, specifying Anishnaabe, European, and Métis without status.

91% of the respondents had self-identified as Aboriginal students at Memorial University. 7.5% declared that they had *not* self-identified as Aboriginal.

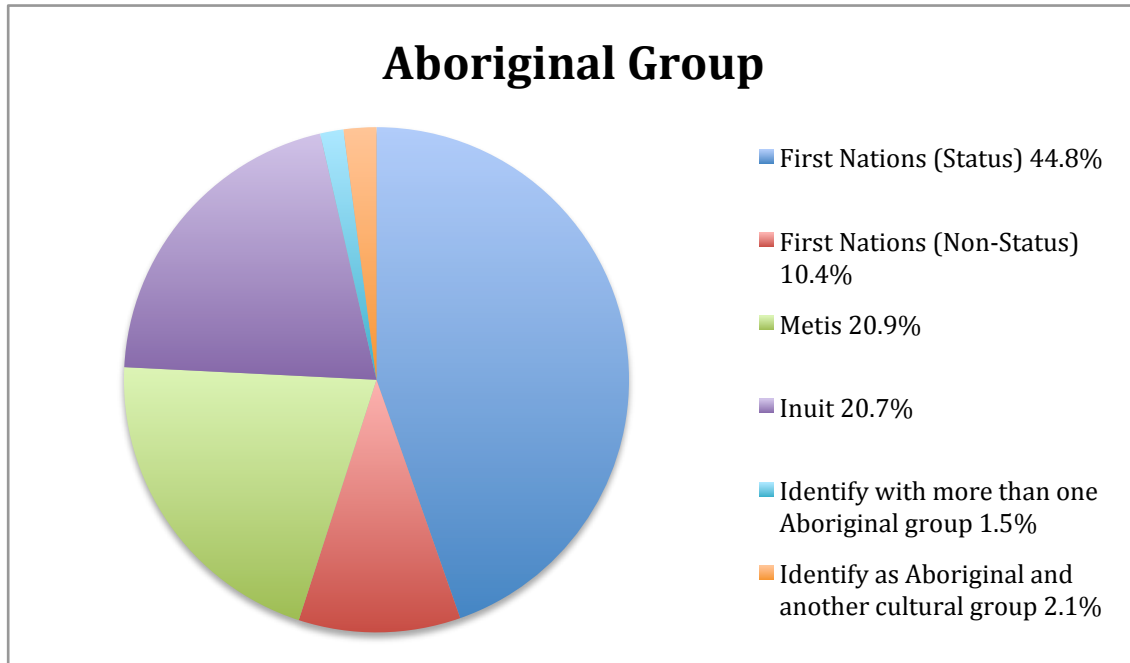


Chart 1: Aboriginal Group identification of Survey Respondents

Academic Program Information

Enrolment

In terms of enrolment status, most respondents (44.8%) were full-time students, 36.6% were not currently enrolled or registered, and 16.4% were studying part-time. A little over one percent (1.5%) indicated their status as “applying to graduate.”

Of those respondents who indicated they were not currently enrolled, 29.1% had graduated from their degree program. Approximately ten percent (9.7%) said that they were not currently registered but planned on returning to their studies, and 2.2% withdrew without completing their program. Three respondents had transferred to another program at another institution (2.1%).

Respondents were asked to indicate what academic program they were currently or most recently enrolled in. Roughly sixty-eight percent (67.9%) of respondents were either currently or most recently enrolled in a Bachelor’s Degree program, with 12.7% either pursuing or having completed a Master’s (non-thesis) Degree, 6% were or had been enrolled in a certificate or diploma program, 4.5% in a Master’s (thesis) degree program, 3.7% in a doctoral program, and 3% in a post-graduate diploma or certificate program.

Most respondents were or had been enrolled in the Faculty of Arts (21.6%), followed by the Faculty of Science (16.4%), the Faculty of Education (15.7%), the Faculty of Business Administration (10.4%), Faculty of Engineering & Applied Science (4.5%), the Marine Institute (4.5%), the School of Human Kinetics and Recreation (3%), School of Nursing (3%), the Faculty of Medicine (2.2%), School of Music (1.5%), Social Work (1.5%), the Division of Fine Arts (1.5%), the Division of Science (1.5%), both at Grenfell, Division of Arts (Grenfell) (0.7%), Division of Social Science (0.7%), and Environmental Policy Institute (0.7%) – all at Grenfell, and the Western Regional School of Nursing (0.7%). 7.5% of respondents indicated ‘undeclared.’

Academic Unit	Frequency	Percent (%)
Division of Arts (Grenfell Campus)	1	0.7
Division of Fine Arts (Grenfell Campus)	2	1.5
Division of Science (Grenfell Campus)	2	1.5
Division of Social Science (Grenfell Campus)	1	0.7
Environmental Policy Institute – MAEP Degree (Grenfell Campus)	1	0.7
Faculty of Arts	29	21.6
Faculty of Business Administration	14	10.4
Faculty of Education	21	15.7
Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science	6	4.5
Faculty of Medicine	3	2.2
Faculty of Science	22	16.4
Marine Institute	6	4.5
School of Human Kinetics and Recreation	4	3.0
School of Music	2	1.5
School of Nursing	4	3.0
School of Social Work	2	1.5
Western Regional School of Nursing	1	0.7
Undeclared	10	7.5

Table 1: Academic Unit Breakdown of Survey Respondents

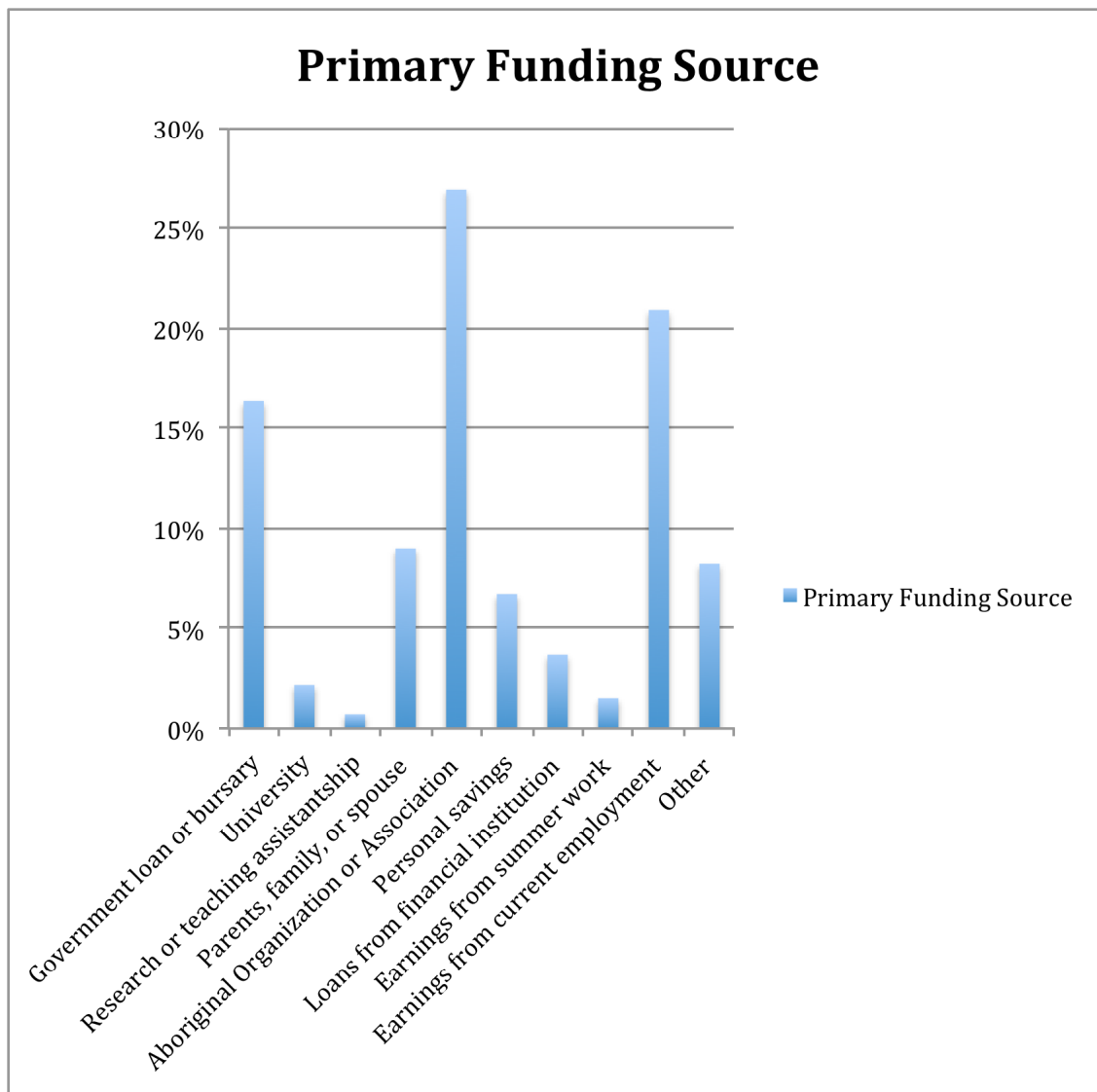
Survey respondents were attending or had attended Memorial University through various delivery methods. The majority (51.5%) of respondents attended courses on campus, 15.7% took courses online, and 32.1% took courses both online and on campus.

The majority (66.2%) of respondents indicated that they had not interrupted their studies for one or more semesters, excluding spring semesters, and/or a co-op placement, work term or internship. Thirty-four percent (33.8%) of respondents confirmed that they had. Respondents were asked to select from a list, all of the applicable reasons that they interrupted their studies. Employment (22.5%) and family (22.5%) were the top-cited causes of these interruptions, followed by financial reasons (18%), academic difficulties (10.1%), lack of academic fit with chosen program (10.1%), health reasons (7.9%), lack of social or cultural fit with the university or program (3.4%), and traveling (3.4%).

Thirty-three percent (32.8%) of respondents had previously completed a program at Memorial University. 63.4% of respondents had not. Of those respondents who indicated they had completed a previous degree, the majority had completed a Bachelor of Arts (25.7%), followed by a Bachelor of Education (17.1%), Bachelor of Science (8.6%), Certificate in Criminology (8.6%) and programs at Marine Institute (5.7%).

Financial Support

Approximately sixty-three percent (62.7%) of respondents indicated that during the current academic year, they were not receiving any financial support from their Aboriginal organization or association for their post-secondary education, while 33.6% indicated that they were. However, when asked to indicate their primary source of funding, 26.9% of respondents selected 'Funding from Aboriginal Organization or Association', while 20.9% primarily used earnings from their current employment, and 16.4% relied on government loans or bursaries. 9% depended on parents, family or spouse, 6.7% relied on personal savings, 3.7% were primarily dependent on loans from a financial institution, 2.2% used university scholarships, fellowships, financial award, grant or bursary, and 1.5% used earnings from summer work. Eleven respondents (8.2%) indicated that they used 'other' sources to fund their education; when asked to specify, respondents named a combination of several sources, including those listed above, as well as their employer.



Graph 1: Primary Funding Sources of Survey Respondents

Support Services

Of the support services available to students at Memorial, respondents indicated that the top three services they accessed were: online services and programs (17.5%), such as D2L, forums, workshops/webinars; resources (16.5%), such as computers, printers, and phones; and academic supports (11.1%), such as writing, research skills, and the library. Other services frequently availed of by students included health and counselling services (7.6%), funding (7%), such as scholarships, fellowships, grants and bursaries) and services for distance students (6.3%). Three students (1%) selected 'Other services and programs' and specified a biology project room, the Aboriginal Resource Office, and academic advising.

Support Services	Frequency	Percent (%)
Funding (Scholarships, fellowships, grants, bursaries)	22	7
Resources (computers, printers, phones)	52	16.5
Career and Professional Development	12	3.8
Health and Counselling Services	24	7.6
Housing	11	3.5
Services for On-Campus Residents	4	1.3
Services for Off-Campus Residents	5	1.6
Services for Distance Students	20	6.3
Services for Travel (Conferences, Research)	1	0.3
Social Supports and Events	5	1.6
Student clubs/associations/societies	12	3.8
Student Union	11	3.5
Student accessible athletics/fitness facilities	16	5.1
On campus employment and volunteer opportunities	14	4.4
Opportunities for Teaching and Learning Development	1	0.3
Opportunities for Research Development	2	0.6
Academic Supports (writing, research skills, library, studying, etc.)	35	11.1
Program or Discipline Specific Services and Programs	7	2.2
Specific Services and Programs (Students with Disabilities, International students, Women, Part-time, etc.)	3	1.0
Online Services and Programs (forums, D2L, workshops/webinars)	55	17.5
Other Programs and Services (Please specify)	3	1.0

Table 2: Top Support Services Accessed by Survey Respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate from a list of aboriginal specific services or programs those that they were most interested in. Respondents could select their top three choices. Services and programs most frequently cited were funding assistance (17.5%) followed by employment and volunteer opportunities (13%) and aboriginal specific content in courses and programs (11.6%). Three respondents selected 'Other' and specified helping to educate other students about various Indigenous people, and Aboriginal-run language courses.

Aboriginal Specific Services	Frequency	Percent (%)
Aboriginal Student Space	33	9.3
Services and Programs for new Aboriginal students (Orientation, peer mentoring, etc.)	28	7.9
Advocacy on issues related to Aboriginal students	34	9.6
Funding Assistance	62	17.5
Academic Support	24	6.8
Social Events	15	4.2
Cultural Events	35	9.9
Employment and Volunteer Opportunities	46	13.0
Resources (computers, printers, phones)	12	3.4
Aboriginal Specific Content in courses and programs	41	11.6
Aboriginal Language Courses	24	6.8
Other	3	0.8

Table 3: Aboriginal Specific Support Services Survey Respondents Would Like to See

Sixty-nine percent (68.7%) of respondents stated that they were satisfied with the Aboriginal specific services provided by the university, while the majority (61.2%) indicated that they were *not* satisfied with the level of Aboriginal specific content in courses and programs, while 35.8% were satisfied with the content available. Over half (53%) of respondents were unaware that Memorial University's Faculty of Arts offers a minor in Aboriginal Studies. Of those who were aware of the program, most felt that courses were not offered frequently enough to enable completion of the minor in a timely manner (28.4%). When asked how interested they would be if the university offered a major in Aboriginal Studies, 50% of respondents stated they would be somewhat interested, 26.9% said they would be very interested, and 21.6% said they were not at all interested.

University Environment

Survey respondents were asked to respond to a series of questions pertaining to the university environment. Seventy-seven (76.9%) of the respondents felt that at least one faculty member at the university has had a strong impact on their intellectual development, and 70.1% felt it was easy to meet and make friends with others at the university. The majority (76.1%) also felt satisfied with the level and types of student organizations and committees operating at Memorial campus, and 63.4% of respondents said they feel there is a strong sense of community and a feeling of shared interest and purpose at this university.

Respondents were also asked to comment on any negative experiences they may have had while attending Memorial. A minority of respondents (10.4%) felt they had experienced instances when their academic work was evaluated negatively because of an instructor's disapproval of their ethnicity or cultural beliefs. 85.1% did not feel that there was any threat to the evaluation of their academic work. When asked to select from a list of negative behaviours, twelve respondents (33.3%) reported having derogatory remarks directed at them by university staff or instructors. A further nine respondents (25%) felt they were subjected to special attention or treatment due to their identification as being Aboriginal. Four respondents (11.1%) said they had experienced name calling, one respondent said they had experienced derogatory gestures (2.8%), and one respondent had experienced a display of derogatory and/or taunting pictures and graffiti (2.8%). A further nine respondents (25%) indicated that they had experienced other negative behaviours from university staff or instructors. When asked to specify they indicated general insensitivity and ignorance, sarcastic jokes, sexism, refusal to accommodate needs in the classroom and being singled out in class.

Twenty-seven respondents (41.5%) indicated that they had derogatory remarks directed at them by other students at Memorial, eleven respondents (16.9%) had been subject to name calling, ten (15.4%) had experienced special attention or treatment, nine (13.8%) had experienced derogatory gestures, and three (4.6%) had experienced a display of derogatory and/or taunting pictures and graffiti. Respondents also detailed negative behaviours from their peers including

judgmental comments regarding funding and incorrect assumptions about Labrador.

Respondents were asked if they felt they had been subjected to any biases in decision-making processes. Eight respondents (21.1%) felt they had been subjected to grading biases. Experiences of biases in admission policies or practices; administrative and appointment decisions; misuses of power, authority or influence; the application of regulations and requirements, employment and workplace practices; scheduling of academic activities; the provision of goods and services, and access to premises, accommodation and other facilities were also reported.

Overall, 78.7% felt that the university has maintained a learning and work environment that promotes understanding and respect for Aboriginal cultures and perspectives, while 21.3% disagreed.

Based on their experiences, 76.9% of respondents felt that the university has fostered a campus community that is free from harassment and discrimination for all students, whereas 20.1% felt that this was not the case. Respondents who expressed the view that the university is not free from harassment and discrimination for all students were asked to provide details of their experience. Several respondents relayed experiences of being the subject of racist comments and jokes. Others expressed a lack of cultural inclusion, awareness campaigns and exposure.

When asked to provide suggestions to make Memorial more inclusive for Aboriginal students, approximately thirty percent (29.1%) of respondents responded. The most common suggestion was the development of proactive programs to dispel myths often associated with aboriginal students and their education. Respondents also suggested that advertisement and exposure of aboriginal culture and services is very important. Posters, cultural sensitivity and diversity training, and the development of an aboriginal student centre were the most popular suggestions. Increasing awareness of aboriginal issues, aboriginal language courses, and the induction of indigenous faculty were also popular suggestions for ways that we can increase inclusion.

General Comments

When given the opportunity to provide general feedback, thirty-five did so (26.1%). Many respondents expressed approval of the survey and its implementation. The majority of people who responded to this question were happy with the services at Memorial, while several respondents expressed that their views may not be overly applicable as they were not directly involved with the campus at this time.

Two respondents expressed the need for aboriginal based electives. Other comments alluded to the need for cultural sensitivity training, disability services, more employment opportunities for those with an aboriginal background, and

advertising as ways for Memorial to foster a culturally friendly campus. A few students would like to see more employment opportunities for those with an Aboriginal background.

Interview Findings

A number of key themes emerged from an analysis of the interview transcripts. With regards to recommended changes, support services, and inclusive practices that students would like to see, three dominant themes characterized students' perceptions and experiences.

Overarching Themes

Need for Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity

Participants relayed instances of ignorance, stigma, discrimination and other negative behaviours as barriers and challenges they faced at Memorial. Many emphasized the need for cultural awareness and sensitivity training for faculty, staff and in some cases students. This recommendation came up under the topics of the role of educators, the transition to university, and inclusive initiatives.

People are going to be ignorant no matter where you go. And I don't mean rude; I literally mean like they're going to be unaware. I wouldn't even know how you would educate people to learn about aboriginal people without them actually taking a course about it at MUN, because I know you can do that. It would depend on the person. People are going to feel the way they're going to feel, unfortunately. And it's mostly because they're uneducated about it. I feel, anyway. Not a lot of people know about the aboriginal communities.

Sometimes people say those things not even realizing what they're saying. So I think just really sort of the sensitivity around exclusion or inclusion based on heritage and things like that.

Culture Shock and Transition

Participants highlighted the difficulties in moving to an urban area- most usually St. John's – to attend university and adapting to a new way of life apart from their culture. Making the transition from high school in small rural communities was accompanied by homesickness and academic difficulties for many.

I would say, in short, getting used to the city was a challenge. It wasn't normal for me. Living in St. John's is not normal for everyone. I feel as though people in St. John's, or people that live, work, play in St. John's, they enjoy it. But a lot of aboriginal students don't go there because they enjoy it; they don't go there to play; they go there for school because it's the only institution available to us in our province. So we go there and we try and become young professionals. We have to leave our families, we have to

leave our friends, we have to leave an environment where we hear our mother tongue, and we have to go to St. John's. And that is difficult in itself.

Curriculum and Language

Many participants mentioned the need for adaptations and suggested that changes be made to the curriculum of particular courses or programs, in order to best address Aboriginal culture and history. The need to enhance the level of Labrador-specific content was emphasized by a number of participants. Typical of such responses is the following:

I gained zero knowledge from attending MUN and enriching my knowledge base and expanding what I already know on my language, on my history, and on my culture. And that helped me draw the conclusion that I, as a Labrador Inuk, am not represented at the St. John's campus in the curriculum, in the classroom, or in the discourse that is in the classroom. I found that disheartening because that was the whole purpose of me going there. There is a lot of history that is completely omitted from the learning that goes on, there is tons of learning that is omitted. The Labrador Inuit story, the trajectory, the history, the language, it's not there as of now.

Language also arose as an area in need of improvement under the theme of curriculum changes. Participants mentioned the need for more language courses when asked what supports they would like to see offered specifically for Aboriginal students, as well as when asked to comment on Aboriginal specific content in courses and programs.

Important Factors that Influence Aboriginal Students

Participants cited a number of factors that influenced them –positively or negatively – as an Aboriginal student at Memorial. The most commonly cited positive influences included personal motivation and interests, encouragement and interest from professors, and the support provided by the Aboriginal Resource Office. Some mentioned specific support services, such as the single parents group and the registrar.

I would have to say the Aboriginal Resource Office influenced me the most in a positive way because of workers there. They were invaluable as resources, just by their support that they would give us as young people coming to the city, young people trying to find a community. That was by far the most positive experience that I had at that campus – confiding in them and getting support.

Participants also noted several influences that impacted negatively on their experiences at Memorial. The most commonly cited issue was the level of ignorance and ill-informed perceptions about Aboriginal people and Labrador displayed by students, staff and faculty. Others mentioned lack of guidance and resources available, and the need for outreach and promotion of existing services.

The biggest problem I had while I was at university was the level of ignorance that the general people had of Labrador: not just of aboriginal people, but the people of Labrador and just what we deal with.

I really felt like I was a rudderless ship. I didn't know where to turn for any kind of what I would call, I don't know, mentoring or guidance or whatever.

Barriers to Aboriginal Student Inclusion and Success

Participants identified a number of challenges they see to Aboriginal student inclusion and success in post-secondary education. The number one barrier that was cited was coded as 'culture shock and transition.' Other significant barriers that were mentioned included experiencing stigmatism and ignorance about Aboriginal culture, and the challenges in accessing post-secondary education due to cultural and/or geographical isolation. Representative of such responses are the following:

Oh my god. I would definitely say the fact that we have to leave our own home to go and get better educated. I know that the Labrador coast is a bunch of small communities; they really don't have that much...if you want an even greater education, then you have to travel to St. John's or to Ottawa even. It's not possible to do it where you're from. And I know me myself I didn't like travelling too far away because I have my grandparents, who I'm really close to. And so travelling even to St. John's was an expense and an inconvenience for me to stay in touch with them.

I think the biggest obstacle – and this would depend actually on aboriginal group – the biggest ones for the Inuit would be just, especially the ones that are coming from the north coast of Labrador, is the sense of isolation, from being totally different, they're going from an extremely rural way of living. This is the sort of people that had to go off on the land and collect firewood to heat their home. So they're going from that to the bustle of St. John's. And I know in comparison to a lot of other cities, St. John's is not that massive or big or what have you. The university really has to become well versed in what, such unique culture within the landmass of Labrador.

There's not very many Innu people that I'm aware of that actually go to university and stick through the whole program and end up graduating.

I think that a lot of Inuit students don't think that they can do it, or they don't think that they would be successful in a university setting. I find, because I do spend some time in Iqaluit, in Nunavut, and there's a lot of people who kind of, they say, "Well, I don't know. I don't think I could do it. I don't think I'd be good at it. It seems really different." I think that there's not really a lack of motivation. They want to go, but they don't think that they'll be able to – almost like a lack of self-esteem or something.

Other responses pointed to financial barriers and misconceptions about funding provided for Aboriginal students, literacy and language struggles, and attrition.

Financial Support

Participants were asked to share their views on the role of financial support in Aboriginal student enrolment and success in post-secondary education. Comments from interviewees highlighted the importance of funding and its role in learning.

So I think it's a reality – some aboriginal students are definitely lucky enough to get that funding, and it definitely eases the burden. But I think of some friends of mine who have travelled from Labrador, and just to get to St. John's itself is a huge obstacle. It's a huge feat. When you're stressed out about finances, you can't learn properly.

Funding always makes a big difference, you know? I think any sort of money that could be made available to students is always a big help. I think even my sister went back to school because she managed to secure aboriginal funding. She might not have necessarily gone back before.

I firmly believe that funding, [has a] huge impact on students and their success. It also allows them, I believe, to have a broader university experience. And in the case of an aboriginal student, it gives them an opportunity to probably be more outgoing with their culture, with the supports of other aboriginal students.

Participants mentioned several different types of financial support. Student loans were emphasized, as well as band funding.

I think funding is really key. When I reflect on it, I'm not sure it's necessarily because I was an aboriginal person, but maybe just because I came from a poor family. If I didn't have Newfoundland student loans available to me I never would have gone to university. There's no scenario under which it would have been affordable.

A number of participants had interesting perspectives with regards to the requirements tied to funding. Some felt that there should be a work experience component tied in with funding for programs; others felt that funding should only be provided after the successful completion of the program.

I think that an aboriginal student should be basically fully funded for their university, for their educational experience. And part of that funding – and I don't want to use the word 'tied', but should be linked with the involvement of, especially in cultural learning, in mentoring with probably alumni or people in their chosen professions that are aboriginal, helping them to build that aboriginal network throughout all of these different professions. And I think that that's something that is missing right now. ...there should be a summer employment opportunity that provides marginal employment, where they go into aboriginal communities, work with an aboriginal nurse, or an aboriginal physician, or an aboriginal midwife or whatever – something where there's programs that link that real-life experience at a very early stage, so that these students can learn and live that experience in the aboriginal world.

The thing is I've always paid my own way. I've gotten no support from anyone. And those who do get support are very fortunate and tend not to utilize it as best as they should. So I [actually believe] that you should put forth your own money and if you succeed then I think that's up to the aboriginal band to say, here you go. That's my opinion. I think if you give them something and you don't work for it, you don't tend to see it as a wonderful privilege.

Support Services

Participants were asked to share their thoughts on the role of support services in Aboriginal student inclusion and success and in helping students have a positive experience in university. Responses spoke to the important role of academic supports - writing and tutoring in particular, as well as the services provided by the Aboriginal Resource Office (ARO) and outside Aboriginal organizations.

The postsecondary education [office] on Lemarchant Road [Nunatsiavut Government PSSSP Office]... They are really, really good. Anytime I ever needed help, they would either point me in the right direction, send me emails. They always encouraged me to get tutors...when I'm ready to give up and I really can't do this, [they] sent me emails about a tutor from this department and a tutor from that department. They were a really good help, I must say.

I got a political science tutor last term from the political science department. I went through there because I was told to go through there from the Aboriginal department. I was at my wit's end. I didn't know what to do. They told me right where that was and how to find it, and I went up there and posted up here right away and got an immaculate amount of responses from them. So it was great. It was really good.

Other supports that were mentioned included the library, orientation services, the Grenfell campus Indigenous Caucus, social events, and the needs for university-community relations in providing supports to Aboriginal students.

A number of participants pointed to improvements they would like to see with regards to support services. In particular, the need for space and resources was emphasized.

I think a place where students can go to share their culture and their experiences with other people is really important.

The one thing that I would say could be improved is employing more workers at the Aboriginal Resource Office. I mean there was only [two of them] who had their own work to do. You know, they have so many [tasks to do] before they even have to speak to us, acknowledge us there. More people employed...expand into a counsellor or just someone who can help them figure out their courses. Not one person or two people that are expected to meet all of those different diverse needs, all of the aboriginal

students through the Aboriginal Resource Office at the largest campus.

It was also recommended that services be promoted more through outreach to students in order to raise awareness.

I firmly believe that they should be very well engaged. They should be really well funded and they should be – I don't want to use the word aggressive – but they should be continually out there helping break the ice with students. Because a lot of aboriginal students are coming with some baggage. They're coming potentially from small towns.

Things that work are letting people know that you are there for them, that there is actually a support system out there. Of course, it's always that you can't force people to come into your office, which is kind of a challenge. You could set up all the resources you want, but if no one walks in your door, they're no good. So having that office there and then making sure that people are aware of it, make it easy for them to get to is a big thing. I think some sort of advertising would certainly help get people into the door that way, to avail of the services.

A number of participants also took this time to reflect on the difficulties with cultural transition and the stigma attached to self-identifying as Aboriginal, which some saw as a reason for students not wanting to engage with supports and services targeted specifically to Aboriginal groups.

I do believe that they should be putting up program on top of program tied to early stages of a university program – the cultural piece, continually there. As you get further in through a program, there should be things attached to helping these students become more successful in their chosen profession. Many aboriginal students appear to be fairly [pause] they're not comfortable speaking in large groups. They're not comfortable undertaking interviews. A lot of it hinges back to... like in my family, we always understood our aboriginal ancestry, but don't tell no one about it. So we always felt that we needed to be way more private than we should have been.

A lot of aboriginal students don't want to speak up for fear of not being accepted as smart as everybody else. And I know that sometimes I won't either. So the inclusiveness, if the prof sees that there's something not quite right, just to have that conversation earlier and to direct the person to the proper places to get the resources.

It was also suggested that the university improve its relations with other institutions and work to build connections within the community.

The publically funded institutions in this province should have a network of resource centres that probably build off of each other and provide those types of direct services to students in things such as culture and these other things that are often a fairly significant problem for aboriginal students.

The Role of Educators

Participants were asked to talk about the role of teaching staff and educators in Aboriginal student inclusion and success. The most dominant themes in responses centred around providing academic support, being helpful and understanding, and the fine line between inclusion and assimilation. Typical of such responses are the following:

Teachers in any level, their role is to try to help each students to have the greatest chance of success. And whether that is somebody with a learning disability or somebody who is exceptional in another way, needs enrichment, or an aboriginal student who sometimes might need help to understand the concepts simply because they have a different perspective, it's the teacher's responsibility to reach out to that student wherever possible and help them find a way that works for them.

Teachers are just people. They're also role models for students who go to school, I think the role of the teacher, more or less, is to make students excited about the material. Make students engage with the material. Make students feel welcome, as though they can ask questions, as though they can bring unique approaches to the curriculum and let them be creative with it.

But their role is the exact same. I've never turned to anybody and said, "I'm aboriginal and I'm having a hard time." It was never introduced as a challenge to me since I've been there. The role is the complete same as any other student, in the way that they teach, for sure.

They're educating all of us and we all have to fit in. So I don't think there should be any special thing given to the aboriginal as opposed to anybody else. If you're getting in to university, you're getting in because you've really tried to get there.

A number of comments spoke to the ignorance of academic staff members, student perceptions of faculty as being intimidating, and the need for cultural sensitivity training.

And just be aware of different communication styles, for instance. If you have a high Innu population in your class, they communicate a lot differently than someone from a different population. It's not shyness and it's not reservedness, it's something else. They just communicate in a slightly different way. They don't make eye contact as much.

In my opinion, every faculty member in MUN should understand the current aboriginal environment in this province, and any time that aboriginal environment changes, they should be brought up to speed on it. I think that mandatory cultural sensitivity training should be provided. And that's not me saying that I know that there's issues, but I think that that should be a mandatory piece.

University faculty should be formally briefed on that through ongoing cultural training, probably a lunch-and-learn type of event, you know what I mean?

The Role of an Academic Unit or Discipline

Participants were asked to identify what they felt the role of an academic unit, such as a school, faculty or department, or academic discipline is in terms of Aboriginal inclusion and success and in helping students have a positive experience. Many responses spoke to the curriculum in particular programs, such as incorporating Aboriginal and Labrador specific content into courses. Academic support and guidance, incorporating work and practical cultural experience into programs, and the need for mentoring were also mentioned. Characteristic of such responses are the following:

From a department it's not really so much a case-by-case issue at that point. It's going to be more of looking at, okay, how can we develop the curriculum? How can we develop standards? How can we develop guidelines? So it's the department's role to say, "Okay, these are the guidelines we can follow, in general, in order to improve our students' chances of success," and they can refer back teachers, they can speak to the teachers, professors, the TAs, whatever, "Okay, what did you do in this case? What did you do in this case?" and in that way, they can develop a booklet or guideline or some sort of document saying, "These are suggestions on things that you can do."

I think the mentoring programs in Memorial could really be enhanced a lot. We have a lot of talent in Newfoundland and I think that even some of the alumni could actually be doing this for the aboriginal students.

I'm terribly disappointed on what's available. And with all [due] respect, I don't want to go and do an aboriginal studies program and have to do a course in geography of the post-Baltic nations in Europe, you know what I mean?

A former student in Education mentioned the need to be made aware of and acknowledge cultural differences in certain teaching contexts, such as in Labrador and northern communities. Another participant suggested focusing on community needs to contextualize learning opportunities.

Transition to University

Participants were asked to share their ideas about what Memorial can do to help Aboriginal students in their transition from high school into university. The majority of responses highlighted the importance of outreach and recruitment tactics to engage and inform students, as well as efforts to combat stigmatism and overcome cultural shock, developing bridging or transition programs, providing mentoring and guidance, and building culture and community initiatives.

Outreach and Recruitment

I think one thing that would help, and it is money-dependent, is if you could go into those aboriginal communities and let them know that if they decide to come to Memorial, for instance, there is an Aboriginal Inclusion Office. There's a place there for them, so that at least it might set their fears aside for that particular issue. If they're like, "Well, I don't want to go because I'm going to be all by myself," if they could go into these communities and say, "Well, no. We're here for you. You just have to make sure to pop into the office." It just might help a little bit, if that happens to be a big worry. It's more of an awareness piece, I guess. Even some sort of advertising thing on campus, even the packages that go out to high schools and that kind of stuff, to say, by the way, we have these support systems in place.

Letting these students know, whether it's in an email or whatever the case may be...because a lot of times I really didn't know my options because it wasn't presented to me. It was a lot of going and finding your own answers.

Culture Shock and Stigma

I think that there is a lot of culture shock, absolutely, because a lot of aboriginal people come from small communities, and when you go from a small community to a huge university, it is shocking...I find at first there's a lot of culture shock and homesickness, stuff like that. I'm not really sure what the university could do as a whole, but I do find it is a shock to the system to be coming from this tight-knit small community to the university, which is huge and you don't know anybody.

We'd like to live in a perfect world, but unfortunately there's still a lot of racism for a lot of visible minorities, and it just seems like a lot of time the prevailing culture of the day is [against] aboriginal students and faculty.

I think it needs to start at high school. I guess in my day of 25 years ago, when I started, everybody, if you were aboriginal (I wouldn't say everybody), but to a large extent if you were aboriginal you just kept your mouth shut. So then once again when you went off to university you were carrying that baggage.

Support Programs

Well, I know that at the Labrador Institute in the same building there is an aboriginal bridging program. It seems to be successful. This is the first place where I've seen it being offered in a postsecondary institution, and I think that that is a positive thing.

Having a good mentor come in and speak to the aboriginals about what they're about to face, how to overcome some of those things that they are going to see. A lot of kids probably don't realize that when they get out there, how easily they can be led. What is your most important of being here? They can discover that. I mean, you could tell pretty well upfront who's going to be surviving and who's not. And those are the ones a

mentor could actually watch and say, okay, we know this person is going to probably go outside the lines. And you can have chats with them; it's like a counseling, like a session. But only aboriginal peoples can talk to aboriginal peoples.

So you need to have people who are – really I think you need to have some sort of special tour, and supports. I think you need to assign students to a specific person (and a close number of them) and try to get a few friends amongst them, if possible, and make a comfortable environment for them. Because if you don't feel like there's a safe spot, if you don't feel like there's anyone you can talk to, you feel even more isolated and homesick. That's what I think they should do.

One participant recommended having a liaison person in place to help students in transition.

I think a liaison person is definitely critical. I know transitioning is so difficult for students in general. Any student the transition between high school and university is definitely a big culture shock, but it's going to be doubled for an aboriginal student. So definitely a liaison kind of person, somebody that can make aboriginal people feel at home, because of course if you feel at home and feel comfortable, our chances of success are going to be heightened.

Building Culture and Community

And I know for me, and I don't know if other aboriginal students in Newfoundland would identify with this, but participating in ceremonies was always really important to me. Even in the local communities I've made contacts with people here, and I always really appreciated the opportunity to participate in a ceremony, regardless of who is leading the ceremony and how they lead it. Because there's a lot of commonalities in terms of how they do things and I really enjoy learning how one community celebrates versus another community, even though it may not be part of my culture. But still, I feel like it connects me to my culture through this new experience.

Most Important Services

Participants cited a wide array of services and programs that they identified as being important to Aboriginal students at Memorial. A number of responses emphasized the role of academic support, such as writing and tutoring services. Others mentioned the need for indigenous professors and elders. Several interviewees mentioned the importance of having an Aboriginal presence on campus, in the form of a dedicated space. Representative of such responses is the following:

I really respect the fact that Grenfell has the dedicated space for aboriginal students now. That's one of the fantastic things. It's not just about separating people, but about providing a place that people can feel comfortable to express themselves, in a way that they're not going to be mocked or ridiculed. And I know that, unfortunately, it tends to

happen. You know, if people are talking about having a smudge or if they have their eagle feather with them for whatever reason, sometimes you don't feel particularly comfortable talking about that in a general group. Or a space to have talking circles. Sometimes people need it, right? And so that's definitely some of the biggest things that a university could offer, I think, at this point.

The importance of building community partnerships and connections was also highlighted.

And so there needs to be that kind of interface between the band and the university, to build up a relationship so that the band can help identify people who might be interested in going to university. And that's where those sort of early interventions can start, is if somebody doesn't have the sciences or they're not so good at math, really the university, through that link, can say, "Here's what your members will need in order to get into our university," to really be able to facilitate access to education.

That's always one thing about aboriginal people. They always like to know when there's somebody else from where they're to. It's always, always good to have somebody that you know or that you can relate to in the kind of situation that you're in. Somebody you always know that you can go to and help with. Because even though we're such a big landmass in Labrador, we're all very close in heart. All of our communities are connected in some sort of way. 'Okay you're from Nain. I know your family. I don't mind helping you out. I'll help you out in anyway I can.' Get those people connected so that they can have that support that they need to be out there.

We need to ensure that that's always there. That those mentors, those resource people in the community, we link them with our students through an outreach program.

Other responses made mention of health services, building Aboriginal content into the curriculum, and the need to develop a transition program.

Support Services and Programs Needed

Participants were asked to share their views on types of support services and programs they would like to see offered specifically to Aboriginal students at Memorial. A number of responses indicated the need for curriculum improvement and changes; in particular, languages courses, as well as mentoring, social and cultural events, and online services/social media outreach.

Curriculum

And I think some of the aboriginal courses that are offered, through the education faculty, they're not offered every semester. It's kind of every second semester every second year based on interest or based on funding. And I'm not quite sure what the schedule is for that. Sometimes I look through the curriculum and I'm like, oh, that looks really neat! And it says it's not offered this semester, just stuff people might find

interesting, it's not necessarily offered all the time.

Mentoring

One thing that was very empowering was sharing my experience with other students. I think that there could possibly be some program in place where older students or aboriginal students that are more experienced in that specific institution, in the city, in the urban area...I think would be fantastic. If there was some kind of program where, again, those older more experienced students can take a younger student under their arm and be committed to one student, or so many students, and to just be there for that student and whatever needs that they have. Because like I said these issues that I had were so personal, I wouldn't be able to go to a service counter and describe them; I would much rather talk with a fellow student about them. And I think that it would be appropriate to set up some kind of program...an actual program that was available, like a grassroots approach from students. I think that there should be some kind of program in place for the students by the students that fosters friendliness, openness, belonging, whatever that is.

Events

Have some social activities, opportunities for people to come and learn about different cultures. And I know the multicultural fair is there, and I've seen some things that have happened at MUN before. But it's giving the chance for people to learn.

Online

Some online stuff. Maybe reach out, like if there was some kind of social media, I find that would be a good way to get people involved, rather than just having the emails.

Negative Behaviours and Challenges

Interviewees were asked if during their time at Memorial they experienced any negative behaviours from faculty, staff, or other university students that they believed was a direct result of their Aboriginal heritage or culture. Some indicated that they had not experienced any discrimination, and spoke positively about their experiences at the university. A number of participants, however, did share stories of stigmatism, faculty ignorance, racism and discrimination.

Faculty Ignorance

There is one encounter that I had – and I'll never forget it. It kind of broke me as a person. It was the first time I was treated that way by someone in my entire life, and it was in the classroom. We would talk in class and I would try to include folklore details from Labrador, from my family, from my friend group, from my peer group, whatever – I would try and include it because I've always felt that the classroom should be an open space for talking...and I was just trying to, like I said, bring across my point of my

experience of Labrador. I raised my hand and I said my piece about my experience and my family, and my experience in my friend group, and how that changed and shifted when I moved from Labrador to Ontario, and went to high school in Ontario. My professor's response was, he looked at me – I'm not sure what it was that angered him about what I said, but I definitely got under the skin somehow, because he looked at me, he looked at the class, and it was a very intentional, drawn-out pause. And he said, "Well, I have no idea why you shared that." And everyone laughed. It was humiliating. He was very intentionally trying to hurt my feelings and put me down and shut me up, whatever he was trying to do. He did that openly in front of the class and everyone laughed. I was humiliated. That hurt a lot and that was totally inappropriate, coming from him as a professional, as a professor, as an employee, I couldn't believe it. It blew me away. That should never happen, a teacher should never do anything to make a student feel humiliated, angry, confused, upset – and I experienced all those emotions from him treating me that way.

Designated Seats Program

When I was applying, I was really nervous. 'Are they only going to put me in as an aboriginal, or are they going to be like, okay, she can be accepted under these [seats], but if we don't have enough seats then maybe we can accept her under... I thought that that was a little bit discriminatory I guess you could say. I don't know. That was a little bit different for me, having to prove that I was an Inuit, having to write the letter to be consented under...of aboriginal clause for those designated seats. It was like, okay. I don't know, it stood out like a sore thumb when I was doing it, so I don't know if any other students that are applying for this are like, oh, she might get in just because she's aboriginal. I don't know. I haven't experienced anything like that at all, but it was a little bit uncomfortable, like I had to email and ask about it. I don't know. Sometimes I feel like that is an issue.

Racism

One of the things that we discuss a lot now is the idea of lateral racism. And I share my story – I've done other workshops with cultural sensitivity. I said I experienced racism my whole life, from both sides of the fence, because my Mom's aboriginal but my Dad's not. So when I would tell people that I was aboriginal, they would say, "Well, look at you, of course you're not." But then of course, the aboriginal population would make fun of me because I was white, because I didn't fit in the box. But then people at school would make fun of me because I would be talking about having a smudge and doing all these things, and this is just the way I grew up with my mom's family. And it's definitely some of the things that have hurt me in every place I've gone, whether it's work life, school life, definitely at MUN from other students.

Funding Misconceptions

I can remember one instance in particular where this girl, she overheard me saying to someone one day that I was going to a circle or something, and she said, "Oh what, are

you trying to pretend you're native?" I said, "I'm not pretending. I am." She got really, really irate with me and went on this rant about leeching money from the government and all those stereotypes that you hear, and all that sort of thing. That's not uncommon.

I find, in particular, at an educational setting, people automatically assume that if you're there and you're aboriginal you're getting your education for free.

A number of participants indicated that they did not openly disclose their Aboriginal heritage, and for some, this seemed to be a conscious decision so as to avoid discrimination and judgment.

Stigma

I didn't because nobody knew on campus that I was an aboriginal student. But that affected me significantly because I felt I had a secret I had to hide. But I discriminated against myself is the way I put it.

No, but a lot of times it's not something I would bring up... unless it comes – like I said, "Oh you're really tanned... you have to have some kind of background." Oh yeah, I'm Inuit. My lab teacher once said, "Okay, so that's why you're here. That's how you're here." I said, yeah. "That's really cool. Good for you." But my teacher was more or less proud of me to have taken that step and to do something about it, rather than just let it sit there and float away. But other than that, if it's brought up to me, it's not something that I even bring up, just in case...it's not necessarily that I don't feel comfortable; it's more or less like is it their business really, you know what I mean? But no, it's not something I bring up.

Participants were also asked if they felt they faced any other challenges at Memorial. Responses highlighted the difficulties faced in transitioning to both city and university life, dealing with the ignorance of others, and overcoming language and cultural barriers.

Transition

You can't just get up and go there. I couldn't. I didn't have a vehicle. I didn't have a license. They had access to a bus, sure. But when I'm home I can go on Skidoo or I can just walk down the road and get what I need. It was a really big challenge moving to St. John's for me. I was so used to being in such a small community that anything almost seemed difficult. Just regular grocery shopping became a bigger task. Either I was getting a taxi or I'd walk home with all my groceries. I could never afford the taxi, even if it was just up the road. I had to cart all my stuff with me. I don't know, I always found it difficult.

The language barrier is still amazingly quite an issue. In some of these communities, they learn English as a third language. They'll learn their aboriginal language, then

French (because they're near the Quebec border, and then they'll learn English as a third language. So all of a sudden you get thrown into here where there's neither their aboriginal language or French. And they're expected to function in a third language. We think of students coming from Bangladesh or China or anywhere that are dealing with major language issues, but we have Newfoundland and Labrador who are dealing with the same thing – and it's just something we don't think about.

Ignorance

There's kind of a misunderstanding of when you're in St. John's too, even though I'm from Labrador and I'm in the aboriginal community, and you think other people from the island know about Labrador... I got people ask me if I lived in igloos. We have Internet, we have houses. We're not completely without, but in a way we kind of are. Yeah, there was quite a bit of that. And it wasn't just at MUN. It was people around St. John's in general had no idea what Labrador was. Even some people didn't even know it was part of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was just surprising how little people know. If people in Newfoundland have a misunderstanding of people in Labrador, like the aboriginal people, how are they supposed to be understanding when it comes to people moving from Labrador to St. John's to go to school? 'Why don't you know how to do this?' Because we're from an aboriginal community where we're not used to, I don't know, going on a bus, learning a bus route. It's just kind of a misunderstanding between people.

The need to acknowledge the different cultural groups on campus, and to support students from our province was also emphasized.

Yeah, I think it's good because the international community, it's very visible now, there's a lot of stuff going on. And I think it would be nice if we could do a little bit more, considering our own aboriginal population so that it doesn't seem like –it would just be nice if we could help promote our own aboriginal students to say, by the way, it's not just international students that are coming in with potential (the word integration is not right), but those kinds of things.

Aboriginal Specific Content

Participants were asked if they think the level of Aboriginal specific content in courses and programs is sufficient. The majority felt that the current level and quality of offerings is not sufficient. Many did speak positively about courses they had taken and the need to improve upon those initiatives.

When asked if there were ways in which Aboriginal specific content could be enhanced, a number of suggestions were made. Some of these were general comments about the curriculum, while others emphasized languages courses, literature, linguistics, interdisciplinary programs, and the role of faculty.

It doesn't necessarily have to say, "This is an aboriginal course." Just having content in

those classes, especially since so many students are Newfoundlanders here, taking these classes...to have an aboriginal chapter or section, it's just kind of nice because the aboriginal population is still very much a Newfoundland thing. So it's nice to have it in there.

It can be more specific to communities and people, like just kind of get a general awareness of who's in your class. I know that the professor's curriculum changes, and he can change it to however they want. But be like, okay, I have someone from a Mi'kmaq community. How about today we focus a little bit on where they're from, just for today? This kind of relates to what we're learning, so why don't we just throw this in too? And then we'll learn a little bit extra.

The overarching message was that students want their heritage to be recognized and acknowledged.

I do think that Memorial needs to look at that large population that I feel they have a responsibility to, and put significant energy into developing more than one program tied to an aboriginal audience.

As an aboriginal student coming from a very different background, you just want to be recognized. You want your language to be acknowledged. You want your history to be acknowledged. You want these things to be heard in the classroom because it should be.

And one of the things that I'd raised, it's great that you're bringing all these multicultural energies into the schools and stuff like that. It's fantastic, but the biggest issue I had there was [that should reflect] aboriginal peoples of Canada. It just struck me that everyone's so gung-ho in embracing all these multicultural literacies, but people are so quick to forget the people that were here to begin with.

Participants also noted the importance of bringing different, and varied Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum and into the classroom.

it's very beneficial to have perspective from a person from that particular group, whatever the group is. When you only bring a position from one side, it's not the full perspective, of course. And while a professor may be very studied, sometimes it's nice to have a varied opinion.

If they were like, 'Okay, yeah, we got a bunch of aboriginal books, so therefore the people of Labrador are going to be happy.' No. It would really depend on who wrote the book and what their reason was, whether or not it would be applicable too. So that would be something I would, if people ever do source aboriginal books, be careful where they came from. Don't paint it all the same colour, as it were.

A few participants also mentioned faculty disinterest as hindering the learning experience. One student shared a disappointing experience with a course:

We were supposed to be learning about Inuit revitalization. He took that course hour instead to review what we already learned. And on the last day, when we were supposed to be learning about Inuktitut revitalization, he didn't touch on it, and then he dismissed class 45 minutes early. So he totally, totally dismissed both topics. Didn't even attempt to touch on them. I had been collaborating with him all semester, talking about my own creative ideas, like starting a language app and just my own research I did about what I wanted to learn about. I had been in pretty intense conversations with this professor all semester, and for him to totally gloss over the two subjects that even made me interested in learning, I was very, very disappointing. The support wasn't there, the interest wasn't there...those last two lectures, [stand out in my mind] because I waited for those lectures the entire semester. So then waiting for him to acknowledge... That was the whole focus of me sitting there in that classroom. And it just wasn't available. Totally omitted.

Other comments spoke to the need for more distance education and offerings of courses and programs at other campuses, and grant money being directed towards Aboriginal research.

Aboriginal Inclusion

Participants were asked what they think can be done to help Memorial be more inclusive of Aboriginal cultures and/or perspectives. A number of recommendations were made, highlighting the need for cultural sensitivity training, acknowledging the diversity of student's needs, incorporating language and cultural perspectives into the curriculum, and continuing to provide services through the ARO.

Cultural Sensitivity

Before teachers even engage with students, whether they have aboriginal students in their class or not, I think it's very important that they go through cultural sensitivity training, that they learn some of the history, some of the very recent history (especially for the Labrador region), to be sensitive to these students that are survivors of residential schools. I'm saying this because to be an aboriginal student is a very complex thing. It's very complex to even set foot in a post-secondary institution. It's not a walk in the park, as it is. It's just not easy and I think [it would make] a huge difference if teachers could undergo training or maybe reframe their understanding...before they step into the classroom, and they teach us their priorities, what we need to know. What we need to know before we leave there.

Building a Community

It has to feel more like a community. Because I know, where I'm from, even though we have our ups and downs, we all feel welcomed in our hometown in the end. We always get together. And I don't mind even having their yearly events that they plan, to make everybody come together type thing, but that doesn't necessarily mean that

everybody's going to go either. It all has to do with how you present people, really. Even aboriginal students, like get them together somehow. Togetherness always helps.

So the two big things I tell people to bring people together are food and stories. I mean that's indicative of Newfoundland anyway, and that's something that definitely Memorial, I think, could really build on. The best way to break down racism is to talk and to open up lines of communication and give people lots of opportunities to talk and come together, because once we start talking, of course, then we start understanding each other and then beautiful things happen... Opportunities for people to share food. Small departments can do potlucks with students; bring your traditional food. Let's try that out. On a larger scale, incorporate more food, displays. Give the students the opportunity to share their culture with everybody, whether it's in the cafeteria or whatever. Opening week having different events going on and having a focus on the different cultures, whatever that may be.

Other suggestions from participants included boosting recruitment and outreach efforts, conducting research, incorporating Aboriginal signage on campus, opening Aboriginal events to the entire university community, and the development of a dedicated space for students to come together.

Well, it might sound silly but continuing with studies like they're doing here now so that we can have a better understanding of what the population's requirements are. That would definitely be a very big benefit.

I think back maybe a generation or two, universities were seen to be really the places where the big changes in society took birth, and I'm not sure universities are so much like that anymore. There definitely seems to be more of a just going along with things.

Other Comments

At the end of the interview, participants were invited to share any other thoughts they had or to discuss any topics or issues they felt were not addressed in the study.

I really hope that any information that I have given you, any experiences that I have shared with you, that they be respected, taken seriously, and used to improve the situation at MUN. I don't want to be tokenized. I don't want to be just another aboriginal statistic, an aboriginal student... Sadly, that is the stereotype that you work against when you go to MUN. A lot of the time I felt as though I was a token, not a real person, not a student with needs. Often people in the classroom, even my professors, they would roll their eyes when I would try and talk about aboriginal issues or aboriginal history or aboriginal language. It's so sensationalized, it's talked about so much that it's almost not special. But it is very special. It has to be taken seriously. There is a certain level of sensitivity that is required in order to engage with it, and that's all I'm asking. I just really hope that people have more respect, give more empathy and understanding, and [... to improving] the quality of education at the St. John's campus.

The only thing would be just to kind of learn more about the Labrador Institute and see if they can get a little bit extra on the go for students. Because like I said, going from Labrador to St. John's, without actually having to do that, would be awesome. Because a lot of students want to stay home. They want to be with their families. They want to be where they're known, right? Not like you can do a whole degree online or a whole degree in the Labrador Institute, but always adds a little bit extra, we're always grateful for the little bit that we get anyway, Labrador.

I don't want to come across as harsh. 'Oh my gosh, Newfoundland is so ignorant!' I don't want to come across like that. But when I think back to my time, sometimes I get really frustrated with the sheer ignorance people had. And that wasn't just towards aboriginal; that was just towards Labrador as a whole. I really enjoyed my time, at the same time. I liked St. John's, but I'm hesitant about whether or not I'd recommend it as a university sometimes.

Chapter Five: Summary and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this project, which included the research undertaken with current and former Aboriginal students at Memorial; extensive consultations with faculty and staff; a review of previous research conducted; and a search of relevant literature and initiatives at other Canadian universities, a number of recommendations are put forward to be considered.

Recommendation 1: Develop a Strategic Plan

It is recommended that the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, in consultation with other academic and administrative units at Memorial, including the Office of the President, Office of the Provost and VP (Academic), the Aboriginal Resource Office, and community Aboriginal organizations and associations, develop a strategic plan for celebrating Aboriginal culture and cultivating inclusion on Memorial's campuses and in the curriculum.

In line with this strategic plan, the goals of the 2009 Presidential Task Force on Aboriginal Initiatives should be re-visited and plans made to address the set of recommendations proposed in the report.

Recommendation 2: Implement an Anti-discrimination and Harassment Policy

Based on a number of issues that were raised by students and alumni, it is clear that Memorial needs to move towards the creation of a human rights and equity committee or office, which would be charged with the development of an anti-discrimination and harassment policy. Such a policy is absolutely vital for Memorial to uphold its values of celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion.

It is recommended that the Office of Aboriginal Affairs work closely with the International Student Advising Office, the Glenn Roy Blundon Centre for Students with Disabilities, the Health Clinic and Counselling Centre to ensure that such a policy supports inclusive practices in the university community for its students, staff, and faculty.

Recommendation 3: Provide Cultural Sensitivity/Intercultural Competence Training

One of the most dominant themes that arose from the survey and interviews conducted with current and former students was the need for cultural sensitivity and/or intercultural competence training for students, staff, and faculty. Many expressed the view that such training should be mandatory. While it is acknowledged that this may not be feasible, it is recommended that the Office of Aboriginal Affairs explore options to incorporate sessions into faculty, staff and student orientation days and work with Human Resources to provide incentives for

employees to attend and participate in courses and professional development initiatives.

Several universities now offer intercultural competency training and certificate programs for students and/or faculty and staff. As the Memorial community becomes more diverse, the importance of developing and promoting such initiatives of its own will be of paramount importance.

Recommendation 4: Foster an Aboriginal Presence on Campus

An important message from Memorial's Aboriginal community is their need to feel that they belong and to have their culture acknowledged visibly on campus. It is recommended that the Office of Aboriginal Affairs work with other academic and administrative units to foster an Aboriginal presence on its three campuses. A commonly cited suggestion was having and promoting social and cultural events that celebrate Aboriginal heritage, and welcoming non-Aboriginal peoples to raise awareness, dispel myths, and encourage open communication and dialogue.

Architectural plans for the building of an Aboriginal Centre is in progress, and its construction is eagerly anticipated. The Office of Aboriginal Affairs should encourage efforts to support this venture and explore ways in which this space can best be utilized to meet the needs of Memorial's Aboriginal community.

Recommendation 5: Enhance Aboriginal Curriculum and Course Content

While Memorial currently offers a Minor in Aboriginal Studies, and many current and former members of the university community shared positive experiences with courses and programs, the need for enhanced Aboriginal specific content in the academic curriculum is evident. The survey revealed that the majority of students were not aware that the minor is an option, and of those that were, most felt that courses were not offered frequently enough to enable completion of the program in a timely manner. Three-quarters of survey respondents said they would be interested if the university offered a major in Aboriginal Studies. Interview participants also emphasized the need for curriculum changes and increased Aboriginal specific course and program offerings.

It is recommended that an institutional-wide Aboriginal Education Policy be implemented, and an interdisciplinary committee formed to review and re-develop curriculum content in academic units. Those disciplines that have had success in this area, such as Medicine, Nursing, and Education, should be ideal collaborative partners and have invaluable resources and a wealth of information to share and put into practice. Making improvements to the current Minor in Aboriginal Studies, as well as developing a Major, should also be re-visited. Enhanced curriculums will mean a prioritization of Aboriginal research and a commitment to hiring Aboriginal faculty members.

Recommendation 6: Develop Aboriginal Student Specific Support Systems

Support systems targeting specific student groups and populations are becoming commonplace at university campuses across the country. Such programs work to break down barriers to access, success, and retention. The environmental scan revealed an array of transition, orientation, mentoring and other cultural initiatives that institutions are developing in support of inclusive practices, including programs and services geared specifically towards Aboriginal students. Survey respondents and interview participants frequently mentioned the value in developing outreach, mentoring and transition programs for Aboriginal students coming into university, and providing academic, cultural and social supports such as an elder-in-residence, tutoring, language labs, and building community-university relations to improve the university experience for current students and graduates.

It is recommended that the Office of Aboriginal Affairs collaborate with other academic and administrative units, such as the Aboriginal Resource Office, Student Affairs and Services, and the Academic Advising Centre to explore the possibility of implementing Aboriginal student specific support systems. The opportunity to build upon the First Year Success Program, housed in the Faculty of Arts, should also be explored.

Summary

The findings from this project provide Memorial with an opportunity to examine and reflect on the experiences of Aboriginal students, including barriers to their academic success, and to consider a set of recommendations for future inquiry and initiatives to cultivate an environment of cultural safety and respect for all learners. The vision of this institution is committed to inclusivity, while acknowledging its special obligation to the people of this province. Efforts for a renewed focus in the three areas essential to fulfilling this mission: teaching and learning, research, and public engagement are crucial in seeing this goal come to light.

Appendix A: Literature Review

Methodology

A literature review was conducted to explore the current knowledge, challenges and best practices with regards to the experiences of Aboriginal people, and efforts to be inclusive and acknowledge cultural diversity in the post-secondary education system. A search of the peer-reviewed literature was conducted using Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and Omnifile Full Text Mega article indexes. The literature search was generally limited to studies and reports published in the English language during the past ten years (2004-2014), and focused primarily on institutions in North America. While an effort was made to locate all recent and relevant Canadian literature, particularly institutional and provincial reports, much of the peer-reviewed research conducted in this area to date is American.

Searches included certain key terms, including the following: Aboriginal, First Nations, Indigenous, Native, Indian, discrimination, equity, access, higher education, university, post-secondary education, and colonization. A search was also conducted using the Google search engine. Reports and data released from the Canadian government, as well as organizations such as the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario; the Canadian Council on Learning; and the Canadian Association for the Study of Higher Education were also reviewed.

Overview

Although the research team recognizes that “Aboriginal” is not the preferred noun for all people, for the sake of clarity we use the term to refer to the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada. We also recognize that Aboriginal peoples are not a homogenous group, but a diverse one with differing experiences, cultures, and languages, and that Aboriginal people reside in both remote reserves as well as urban centers. As such, the experiences of Aboriginal peoples pursuing post-secondary studies vary considerably.

Through this extensive literature review, a number of social, academic, institutional, and individual factors were identified as having an influence on the celebration of cultural diversity and development of intercultural sensitivity in higher education system. Several general areas of focus, however, did emerge and are organized into the following themes.

Equity and Access

While education in Canada is typically the responsibility of each province and territory, the Constitution Act of 1982, the Indian Act and innumerable treaties between the Federal Government of Canada and Aboriginal peoples all detail the Federal Government’s legal obligation to ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to education (Phillips, 2011).

Cultivating equity, for the purposes of this report, can be defined as minimizing the barriers Aboriginal students face in accessing and succeeding in their academic pursuits at post-secondary institutions. The attainment of post-secondary education by Aboriginal people is significantly lower than that of the average population. Only 48.4% of Aboriginal people, aged 25-64, have had some form of post-secondary education (trades certificate, college diploma, university certificate or diploma below the bachelor level, and university degree) compared to 64.7% of non-Aboriginal people (Statistics Canada, 2011). We can attribute this gap, in part, to social privilege and stratification (Wang, 2013), as social categories create hierarchies that allow certain members of society easier access to institutions such as education. Data indicates that a high K-12 dropout rate, low expectations of Aboriginal students, inadequate financial support, and racism and discrimination within the educational system are some of the primary reasons for low Aboriginal post-secondary education attainment (Franchetto, Pritchard, & Bristow, 2014; Richardson & Cohen, 2000, as cited in Wang, 2013). There is a growing body of literature focused on these challenges, with many programs being put in place to attempt to correct the imbalances that hinder Aboriginal student access and success to higher education.

Barriers and Historical Perspectives

There are numerous barriers to increasing Aboriginal enrolment and retention in post-secondary institutions and enhancing their individual experiences while there. Following interviews and consultations with staff at Aboriginal student centres at universities across Ontario, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) released a report in March 2014 addressing the "systemic barriers that impact the ability of Aboriginal peoples to access, persist and succeed in post-secondary education" (Franchetto et al., 2014, p. 2). The report cites a history of discrimination, which includes the legacy of residential schools, and persistent government underfunding of Aboriginal education as contributors to these barriers.

The study of Aboriginal post-secondary education in Canada is tainted by the legacy of the residential school system. For approximately 80 years, residential schools were part of a larger system designed to "[isolate] status and non-status Indians alike by removing them from their communities, Bands and families" for purposes of assimilation (Malatest, 2010, p. 12). Reports and studies conducted both while the schools were open and after they closed reveal that the schools were rife with physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as illness, neglect, and malnourishment (Nagy & Sehdev, 2012). In 2008, Prime Minister Harper formally apologized to residential school survivors for the abuses that took place during the operation of these schools. However, this troubled history can severely complicate Aboriginal peoples' relationship with the Canadian education system (Franchetto et al., 2014; Malatest, 2010; Neegan, 2005).

Though the last of Canada's residential schools closed its doors in 1996, Eurocentric ideology continues to frame the teaching of Canada's settler-Indigenous history. In this way, Eurocentric ideology becomes normalized and Aboriginal knowledge and ways of knowing have been subjugated and dismissed (Neegan, 2005). Furthermore, until 1960, any Aboriginal person who earned a post-secondary credential automatically lost their status as First Nations (Franchetto et al, 2014). Aboriginal students who do overcome these challenges and attend post-secondary institutions have reported being faced with a "hostile, culturally insensitive curriculum and system, which has not recognized Aboriginal cultural values and contributions to contemporary societies" (Franchetto et al., 2014). These realities have fostered an immensely distrustful relationship between Aboriginal peoples, education, and government. Additionally, while the Federal Government continues to be legally responsible for Aboriginal education at the elementary and secondary levels, Aboriginal children are the only children in Canada who are not protected by educational legislation (INAC, 2006 as cited in Phillips, 2011) and are subject to unequal funding parity (Phillips, 2011).

Other barriers to Aboriginal success in post-secondary education include the cost; distance to and from students' home communities; lack of knowledge about how universities operate; lack of support from community; and family, child care, and language barriers, as English or French is often the second language of those living in rural or northern communities (Hunt-Jinnouchi, 2010; Malatest, 2004; Roland 2011; Smith & Gottheil, 2011). Citing Malatest (2002), Ottman (2013) adds that post-secondary challenges for Aboriginal students include lack of Aboriginal instructors and staff, and a lack of cultural diversity in curriculum.

In a study conducted in 2010, the Office of Indigenous Affairs at the University of Victoria identified homelessness as one of the most significant issues impacting Aboriginal people's access to post-secondary education (Hunt-Jinnouchi, 2010). Although racism and discrimination is not consistently cited within the literature as a direct barrier to post-secondary education (Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs And Northern Development, 2007), the lack of information and misinformation about Canada's history with Aboriginal people and about Aboriginal knowledge can impact the number of Aboriginal post-secondary graduates and their experiences of post-secondary education. (See section on Curriculum, below.)

As mentioned above, treaty agreements between the British Crown and Aboriginal signatories guarantee equal access to all levels of education (elementary, secondary, and post-secondary) as a right for all Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Scully, 2012). Currently, the post-secondary student support program (PSSSP) is the primary source of funding supporting Aboriginal students who wish to access post-secondary education (Howe, 2006 as cited in McCall, 2007). This program distributes funding to Aboriginal organizations throughout Canada to support Registered/Treaty Indian (Status) students living on and off reserve and Inuit students (McCall, 2007). A review conducted by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), now known as Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (AAND), found

that the student living allowances funded by the PSSSP were 14 years out of date around the year 2006 (McCall, 2007). This, along with many other previously discussed barriers, has had a negative impact on the number of Aboriginal students attaining post-secondary education. Providing equitable access to post-secondary education will, in time, increase the number of Aboriginal people with university credentials to that of the general population (Simon, 2007, as cited in King, 2008).

Enrolment and Retention

In terms of retention and enrolment within post-secondary education, Aboriginal people face a unique set of challenges as compared to non-Aboriginal people. Data from Statistics Canada (2003) indicates that self-identified Aboriginal people make up less than 3% of the undergraduate student population in Canada. Another way we can clearly see this disparity is in the underrepresentation of Aboriginal people across different professions, such as in the healthcare industry (Smith, McAlister, Gold, & Sullivan-Bentz, 2011). Although approximately 4% of Canada's population is comprised of Aboriginal people, less than 1% of healthcare professionals in Canada are Aboriginal.

Similarly, a study of Aboriginal graduate students in British Columbia (Archibald, Hawkey & Pidgeon, 2014) noted that Aboriginal graduate students are rare, and are typically the only Aboriginal person in a given faculty; that is, they often do not have the guidance of an Indigenous faculty member. There is also a clear relationship between Aboriginal student success in K-12 and the likelihood of Aboriginal students enrolling in post-secondary education, with Aboriginal high school graduates 26% more likely to pursue post-secondary education than Aboriginal peoples who did not complete high school (Franchetto et al., 2014).

General needs identified across the literature include the need for pre-university preparation, transition programs to university, social and cultural support, and a supportive academic environment, including at the classroom level. Without these key issues being addressed, the transition to university can be a struggle for students adjusting to being away from their home communities and attempting to integrate into an urban environment without the support of their families and communities (Franchetto et al., 2014; Malatest, 2004; Malatest, 2010; Smith et al., 2011).

Curriculum and Pedagogy

Given that learning is not a "culture-neutral" transfer of information (Paquette & Fallon, 2014, p. 1), differences between Western and Aboriginal knowledge and teaching methods can significantly affect Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students' perceptions of Aboriginal culture. Western and/or European education methods can be described as "secular, fragmented, [and] neutral or objective" (Kanu, 2011 as cited in Mashford-Pringle, 2013 p. 2). This contrasts starkly with Aboriginal ways of teaching, which are by nature "flexible, adaptable, and synergic," (Ibid).

Traditionally, an entire community would be responsible for sharing knowledge with younger generations, thereby ensuring a “high rate of knowledge transfer from one generation to the next” (Mashford-Pringle, 2013, p. 2), and this education was typically informal, experiential, and natural compared to Western classroom settings (Neegan, 2005). Unfortunately, at the post-secondary level, politics determine the ways in which educational programs are shaped to meet the needs of the instructors rather than the learners (Simon, Burton, Lockhart, & O'Donnell, 2014). This gap between traditional Aboriginal pedagogical practices and Western/European pedagogical practices should be addressed in the development and review of curriculum standards. Additionally, Aboriginal history has been widely neglected for many years by educators, and curriculum standards do not typically mandate inclusion of Aboriginal history. This ignorance has created racialized perceptions of Aboriginal people and has been reported on by a number of Faculties of Education across the nation (Scully, 2012).

In a 2011 study on creating a more inclusive space for Aboriginal scholars in the academy, Karen Roland investigated the under-representation of Aboriginal scholars in the professoriate of Canadian Universities through interviews with Aboriginal scholars. One former Ontario professor interviewed in this work opined that it is “pointless to bring more aboriginal scholars into the 'hostile' academic environment without making the necessary changes to improve the environment,” (Roland, 2011, p. 16) a sentiment shared by many former and current Ontario professors interviewed for this study. Another interviewee asserted that many Ontario professors “simply do not see Aboriginal people as relevant to their disciplines,” adding that acknowledging the violent colonial practices of Canada's origins often means being “seen as some sort of radical attempting to demonize great thinkers,” which in turn discourages Aboriginal students from continuing their studies. This study, and several others, point to the necessity of a more holistic and nuanced curriculum and pedagogy, one that acknowledges the cultures with which it is engaging (Bishop, O’Sullivan, and Berryman, 2010; Roland, 2011; Scully, 2012). In many Aboriginal communities, language is an essential tool for maintaining cultural identity, as it allows the transmission of knowledge and connects people across generations (Mackenzie, Townley & Yeoman, 2013). This lack of culturally relevant and inclusive curriculum— including language courses—combined with a dearth of Aboriginal role models among faculty, can contribute to students’ feelings of isolation and alienation within post-secondary institutions (Hanrahan & Hudson, 2013).

Extensive scholarship exists on the longevity of effects of the settler-colonial invasion on Aboriginal peoples, and on strategies for healing from this trauma. This healing process is a long one that will require the integration of Aboriginal traditions and teachings with modern western curriculum (Mashford-Pringle & Nardozi, 2013). The current mainstream education system that Aboriginal people are immersed in continues to be concerned with assimilation in terms of both which knowledge is taught and how it is taught, as well in the way it funnels Aboriginal individuals into the mainstream economy with little regard for traditional customs

(Ibid). In order to be more inclusive to Aboriginal people, post-secondary institutions must strive to be “dual world competent” in what is, ultimately, a colonized space (Hunt-Jinnouchi, 2010). Many institutions are attempting to do just this.

With this collaboration and inclusivity in mind, many scholars and members of the Aboriginal community stress the importance of creating a more balanced learning environment. Scholars agree that it is important that educational institutions are sensitive to and representative of both Western and Aboriginal ways of knowing in order to engage Aboriginal students and prevent the proliferation of harmful racial stereotypes among non-Aboriginal students (Anuik & Gillies, 2012; George, 2010; Guenette & Marshall, 2008; Henderson, 2000; Wiebe & Guiney Yallop, 2010).

Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence is widely defined across the literature, and often described in relation to multiculturalism, cross-cultural adaptation or awareness, intercultural sensitivity, transcultural communication, and global citizenship. Some of these terms are specific to particular academic disciplines or occupations (Deardorff, 2011).

Deardorff (2009) defines intercultural competence as a person’s ability to interact in an effective and appropriate way in cross-cultural situations based on specific criteria, specifically attitudes, knowledge, comprehension and skills. “Attitudes” refers to respecting and being open to cultures other than one’s own. “Knowledge” and “comprehension” refers to being culturally self-aware as well as developing linguistic knowledge, while “skills” encompasses critical self-reflection and reflexivity and communicating across cultures.

Gopal (2011) agrees that the development of these criteria is necessary for successful cross-cultural teaching initiatives. Deardorff (2011) asserts that intercultural competence can be developed in students both through curriculum and through co-curricular activities, while noting that there is a lack research on the assessment of intercultural competence, which starts with a clear definition and framework that sets out specific goals and measurable learning outcomes for students.

Similarly, Soria and Troisi (2013) discuss what they refer to as global, international, and intercultural (GII) competencies. GII competencies include “an appreciation of cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity” and “comfort in working with people from other cultures” (p. 262). The authors note that while institutions have traditionally focused on facilitating the development of GII competencies through study abroad opportunities, participation in on-campus intercultural activities (such as coursework and interactions with fellow students from other cultures) may yield greater development of students’ GII competencies, a finding that is especially significant to the study of Aboriginal inclusion on campus.

Several models for assessing intercultural competence have been developed, the most common of which include Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (1993), King and Baxter Magolda's intercultural maturity model (2005), and Cross's cross-cultural continuum (2001). Bennett's model was adapted to create the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), a statistically reliable and cross-culturally valid measure of intercultural competence. A 50-item theory-based instrument that can be conducted in paper form or online, the IDI can be used for a wide range of purposes, including individual assessment, group analysis, needs assessments, program evaluations, and research. Evaluations conducted on the IDI (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003; Paige, Jacobs-Cassuto, Yershova, & DeJaeghere, 2003) have consistently assessed it as a reliable and valid means of measuring intercultural sensitivity. Other models of assessing intercultural competency can be found in the work of Portalla and Chen (2009) as well as Anderson and Lawton (2011).

Transition Programs

A report generated by the University of Victoria examined the barriers associated with Aboriginal transition programs to post-secondary education, focusing on current transition programs offered at colleges and universities in British Columbia, and how those transition programs helped attract Aboriginal students. The report highlights the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA), an organization that most Aboriginal institutes in British Columbia are a member of. These institutions, for the most part, were found to provide a more holistic learning environment in which students had access to Elders and community members. This allows for transmission of cultural knowledge, which led to a greater Indigenous self-identity (Hunt-Jinnouchi, 2010). This is just one example of outreach programs targeting Aboriginal students.

Given that one major barrier for Aboriginal people for attending post-secondary education is geographic location and leaving their home community, this is an issue worth investigating further. At first glance, distance education would appear to be a viable option for Aboriginal students to avoid this issue, as it would allow them to remain in their home communities while receiving their education. This alternative solution was examined extensively in a report generated by Simon et al. (2014). A lack of financial resources, lack of course content with Aboriginal perspective, and lack of adequate technology were cited as the main reasons that distance education within Aboriginal communities was inaccessible. Thus, it is evident that there is no simple solution for increasing Aboriginal education, as there are numerous barriers—some of which interlock with one another—to overcome.

Changes in the Making: Existing Projects and Policies

In the past five years, several initiatives have been undertaken by various organizations to address the needs of Aboriginal students in post-secondary

settings. In 2008, the Deepening Knowledge Project was initiated at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). The project “engaged faculty, staff, and students at OISE/UT in different ventures that work toward increasing knowledge of Aboriginal histories, perspectives, and contemporary communities among instructors in the program and teacher candidates” (Mashford-Pringle & Nardozi, 2013, p. 6). To accomplish this, workshops were conducted which addressed a range of topics including who Aboriginal peoples are, statistics about Aboriginal people, and historical and intergenerational trauma experienced by Aboriginal peoples as a result of residential schools and legislation such as the Indian Act. These workshops varied in length from 45 minutes to 3 hours and gave participants an opportunity to learn how potential ways to incorporate Aboriginal subjects into the curriculum, including resources that could be used by teachers and/ or their students. The workshop facilitators also screened videos about Aboriginal peoples that address the social injustices they have and continue to face. Feedback from the workshops have been generally positive, with many instructors eager to book more workshops the following year. According to the workshop facilitators, each instructor made mention of the great importance of the topic, its implications for the audience’s future students, and for social justice in general (Mashford-Pringle & Nardozi, 2013, p.7). By attending the workshops, the vast majority (90%) of participants felt they had attained a better understanding of Aboriginal people and 93.5% reported that they were inspired to learn more about Aboriginal people (Mashford-Pringle & Nardozi, 2013, p.9).

In November 2007, an Aboriginal Roundtable, formed by senior officials from 20 universities, First Nations and Métis educational institutions and governments, was formed and met for two days at the University of Manitoba. Following collaboration at this session, officials released a joint communiqué asserting that ensuring that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students have equitable access to post-secondary education is a mission that falls to university presidents to accomplish. As such, the communiqué calls for Canada’s university presidents to provide leadership in seven areas, including developing evaluation standards for universities that prioritize openness and accessibility, developing Aboriginal strategic plans within each institution, increasing and improving financial resources, and cultivating partnerships with Indigenous institutes of higher learning (Simon, 2007).

As with non-Aboriginal students, support systems in post-secondary are crucial to the success of Aboriginal students. Based on data collected from the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, Smith and Gottheil (2011) summarized findings from existing promising initiatives aiming to address student access and success of under-represented groups (including Aboriginal peoples) in Canada. Among these “lessons” were that access and success should not be targeted in isolation, that institutions need to work harder to integrate under-represented groups into regular campus programming and activities, and that assessment is key to determining the success of initiatives (Smith & Gottheil, 2011).

Finding that Aboriginal graduate students usually make up the only Aboriginal people in an entire faculty, universities in British Columbia undertook the Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement (SAGE) initiative in 2005 (Archibald et al., 2014). With the goal of developing Indigenous master's and doctoral graduates who could then go on to transform Indigenous education, the SAGE program allows members to meet throughout the school year to discuss their academic work and attend workshops. Meetings typically incorporate some ceremony, such as a song or prayer, and an emphasis is placed on the students supporting and advising each other. Findings suggest that the relationships facilitated by SAGE foster a sense of belonging, self-accountability as well as creating networking opportunities.

With the Nunatsiavut Government in Newfoundland and Labrador having identified a need for social workers in its communities, a partnership was forged with Memorial University to develop and implement a Bachelor of Social Work program for Inuit students in Labrador. In writing about the program's Indigenizing practices, Brennan et al. (2013) note that the planning and delivery of the culturally-relevant program was possible because "Inuit-specific principles, beliefs, communication styles, and approaches to partnering were infused into all aspects of the program, including the course content" (Brennan et al., 2013, p. 73).

Decolonizing and Indigenizing the Academy

Somerville (2007) states that "Canada is a 'contact zone of contested place stories,'" (as cited in Scully, 2012), where Eurocentric stories are privileged above others. When Aboriginal stories are left out of the curriculum, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners suffer a severe lack of understanding how Aboriginal peoples culture, community, traditions, and history is intertwined with Canada's (den Heyer, 2009; Donald, 2009; Godlewska, Moore & Bednasek, 2010; Kanu, 2005; Tupper & Cappello, 2008; as cited in Scully, 2012). Hunt-Jinnouchi (2010) asserted intertwining more Indigenous knowledge into programming in order to create harmony between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal education.

The use of the medicine wheel for evaluation within institutions has been proposed as a way to decolonize, or remove the Eurocentric, ways of teaching and evaluating students. By integrating Aboriginal perspectives, new opportunities for learning will be created, engaging and connecting Aboriginal students. The medicine wheel has been used in various other programs such as social work, addictions, and sobriety (Verwoord, Mitchell, & Machado, 2011). The medicine wheel emphasizes balance, and interconnectedness among its teachings. As a practical measure, the medicine wheel would be an excellent way to begin the decolonization process through the integration of traditional values in education.

In 2013, *The Morning Watch*, Memorial University's Education and Social Sciences journal, dedicated two issues to the topic of 'Indigenizing the Academy' (Anderson & Hanrahan, 2013). Over eleven articles, the issues addressed topics ranging from

identity and language preservation, to the legislative aspects of First Nations education. The issues include transcribed interviews with Innu and Inuit leaders, a conversation with two linguists working to Indigenize the academy through language education, and a discussion with a Labrador Metis woman reflecting on her journey through graduate school. By exploring these topics, the edition means to address both what it means to preserve Indigenous identities in the academy, as well as what Indigenizing the academy looks like within a more global context. Publication and distribution of this kind of research is paramount to Memorial University's ongoing efforts to foster a more inclusive environment for Aboriginal students.

Conclusion

Across the literature, there is clear consensus that a discursive shift is needed in order to stimulate Aboriginal inclusion and success at the post-secondary level. An understanding of Aboriginal peoples' complex and pained relationship with the Canadian government and education system is central to such a shift. Concurrently, consideration needs to be given to the diverse set of challenges and barriers unique to Aboriginal students as they transition from their home communities to metropolitan centers, while curriculum and pedagogical practices could be reformed to be less overtly Eurocentric. Importantly, non-Aboriginal faculty and students alike must be educated about Aboriginal epistemology and knowledge in order to create and maintain respectful and decolonized learning environments. Lastly, successful programs at educational institutions across the country are consistently prioritizing collaboration, respect, and accountability as they develop policies that support their Aboriginal students, in turn creating culturally competent and inclusive campuses for both working and learning.

Appendix B: Environmental Scan

Introduction

An environmental scan was conducted to determine how Canadian universities are recognizing Aboriginal culture on their campuses, as well as to identify trends in addressing the needs of Aboriginal students. All universities recognized by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) were reviewed to identify emergent trends in university-based support programs. The intention of this scan was to identify established and successful programs and common initiatives that may inform and strengthen approaches at Memorial University. A review of program and service offerings across all provinces revealed several common themes, which are presented below. A full listing of the institutions and initiatives reviewed can be found at the end of this report (see Appendix B Sources). This review summarizes common approaches and names individual programs that are considered as exemplary.

Through this extensive review it became evident that approaches and services for Aboriginal students, as well as programs geared towards specific cultural groups and populations, are quite widespread and vary significantly in structure and organization. While some institutions have offices or institutes devoted to Aboriginal affairs, most of Aboriginal specific student services are organized by and/or housed in the institution's student services division, and work in a collaborative capacity with other administrative and academic units on campus. Generally, this is a well-identified group of students and it appears that Canadian universities are striving to be both informed of their needs and aware of how effective they are in responding.

Despite low levels of educational attainment, Aboriginal students maintain a dominant presence as Canada's most visible minority group on university campuses today. The majority of institutions of higher education offer specific services and programs for students of Aboriginal ancestry, typically housed in an office or centre, separate, though parallel to programs targeting international students. Specific supports include orientation and transition programs, culturally-relevant educational offerings, social and cultural events, and indigenous development projects. Examples include Wilfrid Laurier's SEEDS program for first-year Aboriginal students, embARC, a transition program at the University of Guelph, and the University of New Brunswick's Bridging Year Program.

Institutional Frameworks and Strategies

A number of universities have incorporated themes around Aboriginal education into their institutional frameworks, or in a few cases created strategic plans specific to Aboriginal students. These documents typically provide an overview of existing support services and programs for Aboriginal students, identifying areas of need and challenge, and contextualize initiatives within the overall framework of the

particular institution, with a focus on engagement and enrolment. Exemplary in this regard are Vancouver Island University's Aboriginal Service Plan 2013/14 and 2014/15', the University of Saskatchewan's strategic planning documents on Aboriginal initiatives, and Nipissing's 'Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy.' Taking a different approach, the University of Regina titled its 2015-2020 Strategic Plan *peyak aski kikawinaw*, which is Cree for "We are one with Mother Earth," a title meant to reflect the plan's emphasis on indigenizing the university.

Several institutions have designed comprehensive websites as 'one-stop shops' for Aboriginal initiatives, making it easy for visitors, prospective students and researchers to navigate. Exemplary in this regard are UBC's Aboriginal Portal, Indigenous UWinnipeg, and the University of Manitoba's Indigenous Connect.

Aboriginal Affairs Offices

Central Aboriginal affairs offices are new at most profiled institutions, with many having only been established in the last five years (Education Advisory Board, 2014). Through the work of these offices, Aboriginal administrators typically report to senior leaders at the institution to ensure the visibility of Aboriginal affairs, to oversee and facilitate internal communication to enhance the coordination of Aboriginal services and initiatives, and establish relationships with local and regional communities. Activities and tasks that may fall under their mandate include dedicating campus spaces for Aboriginal students and staff, developing a strategic plan to achieve Aboriginal success, collaborating with deans and provosts to incorporate Aboriginal content into the wider university curriculum, establishing advisory councils to provide guidance on Aboriginal initiatives, and collecting data to assess satisfaction and outcomes. Examples of comprehensive models include Simon Fraser's Office of Aboriginal Peoples, the University of Manitoba's Office of Indigenous Affairs, and Wilfrid Laurier's Office of Aboriginal Initiatives.

Recruitment and Pre-Admission

A few Canadian universities offer 'viewbooks' for potential applicants to review when making the decision to apply and/or enroll. Exemplary in this regard is the University of Manitoba's Indigenous Viewbook, with the tagline, 'Define Yourself. Define your Future.' Many institutions also provide Aboriginal specific student handbooks to ease in the transition to university life.

Social media are increasingly being used for recruitment purposes; many universities use social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to connect with potential applicants and to provide information about admissions policies, procedures, academic programs, and institutional practices.

While many services geared specifically to Aboriginal students are offered at no or very little cost, pre-admission programs and/or more intensive supports such as

academic assistance and language programs are often quite costly. In some cases, scholarships are available to help offset these costs.

Orientation and Transitions/Access Programs

Most Canadian universities offer some kind of orientation session or welcome event specific to Aboriginal students. The length and degree of comprehensiveness of these events varies across institutions and campuses, ranging from a part-day event that is part of orientation for all new students, to quite extensive programs and specialized delivery specific to Aboriginal students.

The University of British Columbia offers one of the more comprehensive of these intensive programs with Jump Start, a first year transition program for new international and Aboriginal students. It includes a two-week immersion program in August and continues to provide support throughout the first year. Similarly, Carleton offers the Aboriginal Enriched Support Program, a one-year transition program for students seeking entry into university. The University of Manitoba offers a Native Studies/Aboriginal Student Centre (ASC) Orientation credit course, which integrates an orientation component with relevant information, resources and skills.

Academic Support

Academic advising and counseling services, while available to all students, have features or services that are geared specifically towards Aboriginal students at many universities.

Social and Cultural Support

Mentoring

Several universities offer mentoring programs to new Aboriginal students. These programs typically match new Aboriginal students with current students. Examples of such programs include York University's Aboriginal Peer Mentoring Program and Sharing Circle and the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC)'s Peer Support Network.

Elders

Most universities have access to elders, who are either available on campus, such as the Elders in Residence program at Cape Breton University, or are invited periodically as visitors to the institution, such as York's Visiting Elders Program. The University of Victoria offers Elder's Voices, a partnership project with Camosun College, in which a group of elders from local communities guide students, staff, faculty and administration in Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

Resource Centres & Student Space

An increasing number of Canadian universities are organizing Aboriginal student support services and initiatives into comprehensive centres and in many cases, dedicated campus space. These centres offer a broad array of specific services and programs that seek to address Aboriginal students' unique needs. Examples include Trent University's First Peoples House of Learning and Brandon University's Indigenous Peoples Centre.

Perhaps the most impressive physical space allocated to Aboriginal initiatives is UVic's First Peoples House, a beautiful facility boasting a design that reflects the cultural values of the Aboriginal peoples of that region. Other noteworthy spaces include Acadia's Welkaqnik Aboriginal Gathering Space and Resource Centre and Sneq'wa e'lun- Blue Heron House at Royal Roads University. The Gordon Oakes-Red Bear Student Centre is currently under construction at the University of Saskatchewan.

Advisory Committees and Councils

The majority of the larger institutions have Aboriginal education councils or advisory committees dedicated to the support of the university's Aboriginal student population. In most cases, these councils also work to build partnerships with Aboriginal communities on research matters and in building cultural awareness in the university community. Membership varies but may include students, faculty and staff from the university and community representatives. Examples are Western University's Indigenous Postsecondary Education Council (IPEC), the University of Manitoba's Traditional Peoples Advisory Committee (TPAC), and UBC's President's Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Affairs.

Cultural Awareness Initiatives

A number of institutions have implemented unique initiatives in support of specific programs of study or Aboriginal matters of interest. Examples include McMaster's Aboriginal Health Interest Group, a group of medical students dedicated to promoting an understanding of and improving Aboriginal health; the University of Toronto's Waawaakte Northern Lights Initiative, which provides students the opportunity to engage with traditional Aboriginal cultures; and the University of Winnipeg's Indigenous Speaker Series.

Student Groups and Organizations

Many universities have institutional organizations and/or student-run clubs, societies, and associations for Aboriginal students. These provide cultural, social and advocacy support, and offer a wide range of programs and services. The University of Toronto offers perhaps the most comprehensive of offerings, with a number of student groups to get involved with.

Community and Outreach

Several institutions provide community-based and outreach programs to Aboriginal youth. The EAGLE Program -Establishing and Aboriginal Gateway into Learning and Education at the University of Guelph offers Aboriginal students in grades 7 and 8 the opportunity to explore post-secondary education. Participants experience three days in the life of a university student, see what it's like to live on campus and learn about university life. The University of Windsor offers the 4Winds STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) & Beginning Time Teaching Program is geared towards Aboriginal youth in grades 5 and 6. At the University of Calgary, the Native Ambassador to Post-Secondary Initiative (NAPI) provides educational outreach and youth leadership training to Aboriginal youth ages 13-24.

Curriculum Content

Many universities are making concerted efforts to incorporate Aboriginal content into academic programs and research projects. The University of Ottawa boasts the Institute of Canadian and Aboriginal Studies, which focuses on Canada's cultural and national diversity and the contribution of Native peoples.

Aboriginal Studies Programs

The majority of universities offer some coursework specific to Aboriginal culture and/or language. A number of faculties and schools offer Aboriginal studies programs; some of these programs focus on a specific group while others encompass a broad range of interdisciplinary perspectives, traditional and non-traditional. While some institutions give students the option of declaring these fields of study as their major or minor, such as the University of Ottawa, others, such as the University of Alberta, boast full faculties dedicated to the study of Aboriginal culture and heritage. Western University offers a Leadership in Aboriginal Education - Master of Professional Education Program (MPed.). Lakehead University offers the Indigenous Learning (IL) Program, a cross-cultural initiative for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, as well as a Native Language Instructor's Program, the only program in Ontario with a mandate from the Ontario College of Teachers to provide teacher certification in Algonquin languages. The development of a proposed Bachelor of Arts in Leadership Studies at the Grenfell Campus with an Indigenous stream is also in progress.

Graduate and Professional Programs

Career-oriented services and programs developed specifically for Aboriginal graduate students are becoming more commonplace. Graduate studies and professional development opportunities are the most extensive of these. A number of institutions offer SAGE (Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Engagement), a cross-university peer mentoring initiative that encourages Aboriginals to pursue

graduate-level study. Western University offers the Access Transitions Program, which provides First Nations students with additional academic and personal/cultural supports that will increase their likelihood of success and prepare them for entry into selected professional graduate schools.

Many universities offer specialized professional programs for Aboriginal students or to fill a need for such trained professionals in Aboriginal communities. Most of these are in the health sciences fields, such as medicine, nursing and social work. Aboriginal education programs are also becoming quite common across the country. Queen's University and the University of Manitoba both offer Access to Engineering programs.

Research Initiatives

An increasing number of institutions are promoting Aboriginal content specific research initiatives. In the Atlantic region, Mount Allison researchers are engaged in the *Métis of the Maritimes* project, which compiles the oral history of the Métis of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. In western Canada, the University of Manitoba boasts the National Research Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, focused on residential schools. TALK ABOUT SSHRC CHALLENGE AREA

Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Policies

Most universities and higher education institutions have policies for the prevention of discrimination and harassment that are in compliance with human rights legislation. Pertaining to a student attending university campus, as declared by policy specific to the provincial governing body. While there is a Canadian Human Rights Commission established, most provinces within Canada have established provincial Human Rights codes that are applicable to students within their jurisdiction. For example, Simon Fraser University's (SFU) policy on anti-discrimination was written to uphold the institution's responsibility for preventing and handling discrimination under the Human Rights Code of British Columbia. SFU's Human Rights Policy encompasses all forms of discrimination and outlines a clear education and action plan. Generally, discrimination and harassment policies reference these provincial codes while primarily establishing criteria and procedures that are university based. These policies uphold the university's responsibility to handle discrimination and/or harassment complaints, resolve relevant problems, provide education and training and remedy violations.

Across the nation, institutions have adapted one or multiple policies that have a foundation in province based human rights codes. The majority of universities have a policy that is based on prevention of discrimination and harassment. In addition to this, many institutions have policies that are focused on general human rights as well as the expectations for participation in respectful learning. For example, Carleton University's policy on Anti- Racism and Ethnocultural Relations has been enacted in addition to a Human Rights Policy, ensuring total inclusion. These

policies generally provide a foundation for resources that a student can avail of when facing discrimination, harassment, violation of their human rights and/or unethical mistreatment in the academic environment. Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador, to date, has not adapted a policy (outside of sexual harassment) in this domain, at either its St. John's campus or at Grenfell. However, both the Marine Institute and Faculty of Medicine - Post Graduate Studies have developed specific anti-discrimination policies within their domain. Similarly, the College of the North Atlantic has policies established for both anti-discrimination and harassment.

Generally, policies in this area establish the particular institution's position on the assurance of equitable education for all students. The criteria and procedures identified aim to facilitate an inclusive learning environment free of unnecessary barriers. Discrimination and its various forms such as harassment, undermine the principles that these policies in conjunction with the provincial human rights codes have established. Therefore, action plans are put in place through these policies to prevent violation of the fundamental rights of students and threats to personal dignity and integrity, as well as to remedy any policy violations that may occur. An example is McGill University's policy on Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited By Law.

Aboriginal Specific Policies

Further analysis of university and higher education policies has shown that a "select few" institutions across Canada have developed policies specific to aboriginal education. These policies are developed with a purpose to ensure equitable learning, specifically for the aboriginal student population. Generally addressing the issues of full access, participation and success, institutions implementing these policies are looking to encourage full representation of aboriginal culture on campus. The national Report of Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples written in 1996 is credited as a stimulus to enacting these policies and encouraging the development of services and programs and addressing recruitment, retention and education completion of aboriginal students. The Aboriginal Education Policy at the University of Calgary is an excellent example of a policy established with a focus on encouraging aboriginal education.

Also, in the field of aboriginal education several universities have opted to include the commitment to provide aboriginal teachings and programs on their campuses. For example, the University of Lethbridge has included the promotion of aboriginal teachings, perspectives, course availability and development in collaboration with the aboriginal community. Establishing and maintaining the availability of aboriginal learning encourages cultural understanding and further insight into aboriginal culture for both aboriginal and non-aboriginal students.

More commonly developed than specific aboriginal education policies are guidelines for aboriginal practices occurring on campus. Like many other higher education

institutions, Memorial University has established a Kullick Lighting and Smudging policy to accommodate these indigenous practices. For universities that have established aboriginal education and facilitation policies these practices are often included in those established guidelines. Policies for aboriginal practices established by universities may vary depending on the aboriginal belief and practice established on campus. Generally, policies are enacted as a means of right to practice aboriginal culture but also acts to educate and expose. Of note, Wilfred Laurier University has established a policy on the aboriginal use of traditional medicines, acknowledging and supporting four sacred medicines (tobacco, sweet grass, sage, and cedar) with a purpose of encouraging these practices in the safest manner.

Inclusion and Diversity

Encouraging inclusion and diversity has become a growing priority for universities across Canada. Approximately six Canadian universities have adopted and implemented strategic plans. A particularly notable plan has been developed at Dalhousie University under the Human Resources division. This plan encompasses 15 recommendations for activities that the university plans to use to encourage inclusion and diversity; it also acknowledges that exclusion and marginalization may at times be unintentional due to inadequate skill and knowledge. The focus of this strategic plan is to take a holistic approach towards inclusion, encompassing and applying this through all members of the university community. Through university based data collection on diversity and proactive education and engagement, Dalhousie has planned to make a commitment to the value and understanding of inclusion. By acknowledging the abundant diversity within the campus, the university will be able to provide students and staff with a respectful, supportive, inclusive environment. As a result, the university will be able to create a welcoming and celebratory environment that will have the capacity to encompass diversity and prevent marginalization.

Equity and Human Rights Services at Western University has implemented a Diversity and Inclusion Plan (2011-2015) for faculty and staff. The vision of this plan highlights six goals: engaging and retaining the best talent, inclusion and connectivity of the community, accessibility and accommodation, work-life balance, a community free of harassment and discrimination, and diversity leadership and accountability. UBC has prepared an 'Implementing Inclusion' document in support of the university's commitment to equity and diversity, while the University of Ottawa offers a plan for inclusive teaching practices.

Indigenous Cultural Competency and Professional Development

An emerging trend on Canadian campuses is the offering of intercultural and competency development opportunities for students and/or staff as an area of study. While many of these programs are geared towards International students, or do not target Aboriginal cultural awareness specifically, such as Wilfrid Laurier's Intercultural Effectiveness Certificate Program, offered through the Centre for

Intercultural Learning, educational institutions are increasingly cognizant of incorporating Aboriginal content into such programs. For example, Queen's University's Human Resources department offers a workshop titled "Expanding the Circle: Including Aboriginal Cultures in the Workplace." The workshop aims to enhance workplace relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, highlighting the benefits of Aboriginal ways of knowing into the workplace. Topics addressed in the workshop include stereotypes, history and rights, terminology, and cultural approaches.

As part of its commitment to ensure that Indigenous students, staff, and faculty have a culturally welcoming and safe environment in which to learn and work, the University of Manitoba also holds an Indigenous Awareness Week. Events at this year's week focused on treaty and land rights, Indigenous identity and naming, and Indigenous women's roles in treaty-making and governance. Similarly, Wilfrid Laurier University hosts an Aboriginal Education Week in order to foster dialogue and educate the community about Aboriginal culture, with events discussing land disputes, environmentalism, and Indigenous masculinities and two-spirited individuals.

Appendix C: Consultations

Name of Participant	Academic or Administrative Department
Penny Blackwood	Executive Director, Alumni Affairs & Development
Julie Brittain	Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics
Marie Croll	Social/Cultural Studies, Grenfell Campus
Gerard Curtis	Visual Arts, Grenfell Campus
Samantha Delaney	Indigenous Student Caucus, Grenfell Campus
Sheila Freake	Aboriginal Resource Office Coordinator
Janice Galllott	Student Services, Grenfell Campus
Maura Hanrahan	Humanities, Grenfell Campus
Denise Hooper	Retention Manager and Senior Academic Advisor
Matthew Janes	Director, Student Services Grenfell Campus
Charlotte Jones	Fine Arts, Grenfell Campus
Jose Lam	Business, Grenfell Campus
Robert Leamon	Director of Campaigns, MUNSU
Valerie Legge	Department of English
Marguerite MacKenzie	Professor Emeritus, Department of Linguistics
Stephanie MacKenzie	Grenfell Campus
Chelsea Noel	Grenfell Student Union
David Penner	St. John's Native Friendship Centre
Lynn Phillips	Dean of Faculty of Arts
David Philpott	Professor, Faculty of Education
Sharon Pippy	Centre for Institutional Analysis & Planning
Fiona Polack	Department of English
Bernadette Power	Faculty of Education
Angela Robinson	Social/Cultural Studies, Grenfell Campus
Rob Shea	Marine Institute
Alvin Simms	Professor, Department of Geography
Carolyn Sturge-Sparks	Program Coordinator, Aboriginal Health Initiative
Rojean Williams	Manager, Advancement Services and Operations, Alumni Affairs & Development

Appendix D: Survey Instrument

Cultivating Aboriginal Inclusion at Memorial University Survey

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to explore the experiences and unique barriers to academic success that Aboriginal students at Memorial face and determine how their specific needs can best be addressed. By identifying key factors that influence the student experience, Memorial should be better able to assist Aboriginal students' progress through their programs.

This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. At the end of the survey, you will be asked if you are interested in participating in a follow-up interview. If you are interested, you may submit your name and contact information. The information you provide is completely anonymous and is NOT connected in any way with your academic program or grades.

We thank you in advance for taking the time to complete this survey and would appreciate your response. Your participation is important but it is also voluntary. Your responses are anonymous and will only be used for statistical purposes. The information will only be available to the independent project team. Data will be reported in a form of quantitative conclusions, therefore, prohibiting the identification of individual participant data. You may withdraw from the survey at any time. Any data collected from you up to the point of your withdrawal will be destroyed and will not be used in the project.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact:

Dr. Melanie Greene
Project Manager
Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Memorial University
Ph. (709) 864-3025
Email: melaniejg@mun.ca

Demographic Questions

1. Please specify your gender

Male Female I prefer to self-identify as

2. Please specify your age category

Under 20

20-24

25-29

30-34

35-39

40-44

45-50

Over 50

3. a) What is your province or country of origin?

b) If you are from Newfoundland and Labrador, please identify the community you are from:

4. Is English your first language?

Yes No

5. What Aboriginal group do you identify with?

First Nations (Status)

First Nations (Non-Status)

Metis

Inuit

I identify with more than one Aboriginal group

I do not identify as Aboriginal

I identify as Aboriginal and

6. Have you self-identified as an Aboriginal student at Memorial?

Yes No

Academic Program Information

7. What is your current enrolment status?

Full-time

Part-time

Leave of Absence

Applying to Graduate

Not currently enrolled/registered (Please proceed to Question 9)

8. If you are currently enrolled as a student at Memorial University, how many semesters have you attended in your current program of study? (Please

proceed to Question 10)

9. If you are not currently enrolled as a student at Memorial University, which best describes your situation:

- I am currently not registered but plan on returning to my studies
- I graduated from my degree program
- I was terminated (academically dismissed)
- I withdrew without completing the degree (left my program)
- I transferred to a program at another institution (Please specify)

10. Please specify what academic program you are currently or were most recently enrolled in:

- Certificate or Diploma Program
- Bachelor's Degree
- Post-Graduate Diploma or Certificate
- Master's (Thesis) Degree
- Master's (Non-thesis) Degree
- Doctoral Degree

11. Please specify what faculty/school you are currently or were most recently enrolled in:

- Undeclared
- Faculty of Arts
- Faculty of Business Administration
- Faculty of Education
- Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science
- School of Human Kinetics and Recreation
- Faculty of Medicine
- School of Music
- School of Nursing
- School of Pharmacy
- Faculty of Science

- School of Social Work
- Division of Arts (Grenfell Campus)
- Division of Fine Arts (Grenfell Campus)
- Division of Science (Grenfell Campus)
- Division of Social Science (Grenfell Campus)
- Environmental Policy Institute - MAEP Degree (Grenfell Campus)
- Western Regional School of Nursing
- Marine Institute (please indicate the program or area of study)

12. Please specify the method of delivery of your current, or most recent, program:

- On Campus
- Online

Both

13. Since starting your post-secondary education at Memorial, have you ever interrupted your studies for one or more semesters (NOT including Spring semesters, or a co-op work term or internship)?

Yes

No (If 'No', please proceed to Question 15)

14. Why did you interrupt your studies? If you have interrupted your studies more than once, please check all of the reasons that you interrupted your program for at least a semester.

Lack of social or cultural fit with the university/my program

Lack of academic fit with my program

Financial reasons

Family reasons

Health reasons

Employment reasons

Traveled

Academic difficulties

15. Have you previously completed another program at Memorial University?

Yes

No

If yes, please indicate your degree/diploma/certificate:

Student Support and Services

16. During the current academic year, are you receiving financial assistance from your Aboriginal organization or association to support your post-secondary education?

Yes

No

17. Please indicate your primary source of funding from the list below. Please select only one response

Government Loan or bursary

University scholarship, fellowship, financial award, grant or bursary

Research or Teaching Assistantship

Parents, family, or spouse

Funding from Aboriginal Organization or Association

Personal savings

Loans from financial institution

Earnings from summer work

Earnings from current employment

Other (Please Specify):

18. Below is a list of support services available to students at Memorial campuses. Please select the top three services you access most frequently.

Funding (Scholarship, Fellowships, Grants, Bursaries)
Resources (computers, printers, phones)
Career and professional development
Health and counselling services
Housing
Services for on-campus residents (ResLife)
Services for off-campus residents
Services for distance students
Services for travel (Conferences, Research)
Social supports and events
Student clubs/associations/societies
Student Union
Student accessible athletics/fitness facilities
On campus employment and volunteer opportunities
Opportunities for teaching and learning development
Opportunities for research development
Academic supports (writing, research skills, library, studying, etc.)
Program or discipline specific services and programs
Student specific services and programs (Students with Disabilities, International students, Women, Part-time, etc.)
Online services and programs (forums, D2L, workshops/webinars)
Other services and programs
Please Specify:

19. Which of the following Aboriginal specific services or programs are you most interested in? Please select three choices

Aboriginal student space
Services and programs for new Aboriginal students (ie. orientation, peer mentoring, etc.)
Advocacy on issues related to Aboriginal students
Funding assistance
Academic support
Social events
Cultural events
Employment and volunteer opportunities
Resources (computers, printers, phones)
Aboriginal specific content in courses and programs
Aboriginal language courses
Other
(Please specify):

20. Overall, are you satisfied with the Aboriginal specific services provided by the university?

Yes

No

21. Overall, are you satisfied with the level of Aboriginal specific content in courses and programs at this university?

Yes

No

22. Are you aware that Memorial offers a minor in Aboriginal Studies program through the Faculty of Arts?

Yes

No (If 'No', please proceed to Question 24)

23. If yes, do you feel that courses are offered frequently enough to enable a student to complete the minor in a timely manner?

Yes

No

24. How interested would you be if the university offered a major in Aboriginal Studies?

Very interested

Somewhat interested

Not at all interested

University Environment

25. Do you feel that at least one faculty member at the university has had a strong impact on your intellectual development?

Yes

No

26. Do you feel it has been easy for you to meet and make friends with other students?

Yes

No

27. Are you satisfied with the level and types of student organizations and committees at the university?

Yes

No

28. Do you feel there is a strong sense of community, a feeling of shared interest and purpose, at this university?

Yes

No

29. Have you ever felt that your academic work was evaluated negatively

because of an instructor's disapproval of your ethnicity or cultural beliefs?

Yes

No

30. Have you experienced any of the following behaviours from university staff or instructors at Memorial? Please check all that apply.

Special attention or treatment due to one's identification as being Aboriginal

Name calling

Derogatory remarks

Derogatory gestures

Physical attacks

Display of derogatory and/or taunting pictures and graffiti

Other (please specify):

31. Have you experienced any of the following behaviours from other university students at Memorial? Please check all that apply.

Special attention or treatment due to one's identification as being Aboriginal

Name calling

Derogatory remarks

Derogatory gestures

Physical attacks

Display of derogatory and/or taunting pictures and graffiti

Other (please specify):

32. Do you feel you have been subjected to any biases in the following decision-making processes at Memorial? Please check all that apply.

Administrative and appointment decisions

Employment and workplace practices

Admission policies or practices

Grading

The application of regulations and requirements

Scheduling of academic activities

Misuses of power, authority or influence

The provision of goods and services

Access to premises, accommodation and other facilities.

33. In your experience, do you feel that the university has maintained a learning and work environment that promotes understanding and respect for Aboriginal culture(s) and/or perspectives?

Yes

No

34. In your experience, has the university fostered a campus community that is free from harassment and discrimination for all students?

Yes

No

If no, please provide details of your experience.

35. Do you have any further suggestions for ways in which Memorial University can make its campuses more inclusive for Aboriginal students?

36. General Comments:

37. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview?

Yes

No

If you are interested in participating in a follow-up interview, please contact the Project Manager directly or provide your contact information below.

If you are interested in being included in the prize draw for the chance to win an iPad Air 2 or a gift card for the university bookstore, please proceed to the link below:

<http://channels.mun.ca/survey/entry.jsp?id=1415745357901>

Thank you!

Appendix E: Interview Script

- 1) Please tell me a bit about yourself as a student at Memorial (Prompt: educational background, academic program, year of study, enrolment status, etc.)
- 2) Have you ever interrupted your studies at Memorial? (Prompt: took a leave of absence, left for an extended period of time, etc.). If yes, please talk a bit about this experience.
- 3) What do you feel is the **most** important factor that influences(d) you, as an Aboriginal student at Memorial?
- 4) In your experience/opinion, what are some of the biggest barriers to Aboriginal student inclusion and success in post-secondary education?
- 5) What do you believe/think is the role of financial support in Aboriginal student enrolment and success?
- 6) What do you believe/think is the role of support services in Aboriginal student inclusion and success and in helping Aboriginal students have a positive experience?
- 7) What do you think is the role of teaching staff and educators in Aboriginal student inclusion and success and in helping Aboriginal students have a positive experience?
- 8) What do you think is the role of a department and/or academic discipline in Aboriginal student inclusion and success and in helping Aboriginal students have a positive experience?
- 9) What do you think Memorial can do to help aboriginal students in their transition into university from high school?
- 10) Could you please identify what you consider to be the most important services and programs provided for Aboriginal students at Memorial? (Prompt: What about the Aboriginal Resource Office; Student Unions, and Student Affairs and Services units in particular?)
- 11) What types of support services and programs would you like to see offered specifically for Aboriginal students at Memorial?
- 12) During your time at Memorial did you experience any negative behaviours from faculty staff, or other university students that you believe was a direct result of you Aboriginal heritage?
- 13) What challenges - if any - do you feel you've faced at Memorial as a result of your Aboriginal heritage?

14) Do you think that the level of Aboriginal specific content in courses and programs at Memorial is sufficient? Are there ways in which Aboriginal specific content could be enhanced?

15) What do you think can be done to help Memorial be more inclusive of Aboriginal culture(s) and/or perspectives?

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