

Report on VIU EleV Workshop on November 6, 2019.

Co-creating promising practices for Indigenous students to thrive at VIU

*“It is possible for us to do well.”*

EleV Program Workshop for Community Educators and VIU Staff

November 6, 2019

Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo Campus

# Contents

## Part 1

Preface ..... 3  
Context and Process..... 3

## Part 2

Introduction ..... 4  
2.1 Policies and Systems ..... 5  
2.2 Supports and Services..... 6  
2.3 Academics ..... 8  
2.4 Decolonization ..... 10

## Part 3

Next Steps for this work ..... 13

## Part 4

Conclusion... ..... 20

## Part 5

Appendix: Eight Case Studies ..... 22

## Part 1

### Preface

The EleV program, funded by MasterCard Foundation, is in year three of a five-year pilot. Vancouver Island University (VIU) is a grateful recipient of this funding working with four program elements of youth leadership, student supports, Q to 20 student transitions and transitions to employment. More importantly, we are appreciative of the co-creating approach that has all learning partners continually adapting the program expectations as we listen, observe, witness, share truths and create space to come together as a community. The November 6<sup>th</sup> workshop on policy and practice as it relates to supporting Indigenous students was an example of this work. My observation of this gathering is that we had a conversation that we likely would not have had a year ago, as it is in the shared spaces and hard work that we are deepening our relationships and learning to trust. In my mind this is the work of decolonization and reconciliation that has us putting youth and students at the center to inform the program and shine a light on the future.

Respectfully,

Sharon Hobenshield, Ha-youly, Wilp Malii

*Director, Office of Aboriginal Education and Engagement*

### Context/Process

On November 6, 2019, 44 people gathered at the Nanaimo Campus of Vancouver Island University in order to engage in a series of guided dialogues. The aim of the dialogues was for community educators and VIU educators to co-create better practices for Indigenous students to thrive at VIU. The participants included Elders, Indigenous community educators, staff members from VIU's Office of Aboriginal Education and Engagement, and two VIU students. Jennifer Brennan, Head, Canada Programs, MasterCard Foundation, which funds the EleV Program, attended as an observer. Another attendee was Dr. Robert Daum, who collaborated with VIU's Office of Aboriginal Education and Engagement (OAE) in codesigning the workshop and in supporting the process.

Snuneymuxw Elder Gary Manson opened the event and welcomed everyone to the territory. Sharon Hobenshield, Director of VIU's Office of Aboriginal Education and Engagement, and Tasha Brooks, Indigenous Education Navigator, set the context for the workshop, and Robert Daum reviewed the dialogue and reporting process. Two VIU students – Julian Stonechild and Greg Moynan – provided some student perspectives and engaged in a dialogue with the participants. Their insights provided very important context from current students' perspectives regarding the day's discussions, but any material about student experiences contained within this report should *not* be read as representations of the experiences of these two students. Further important context and guidance was offered by two representatives of the Nuu-Chah Nulth Tribal Council on the development of their Postsecondary Student Policies: Ian Caplette, Director of Education, Training & Social Development, and Judi Thomas, Pathways Student Success Supervisor.

The rest of the day was for roundtable dialogues to identify challenges and co-create solutions. There were four dialogue circles at roundtables. Each dialogue roundtable was facilitated by a member of VIU's OAE team; another VIU team member took notes at each table. The dialogues were sparked by

the eight cases, which are attached to this report as Appendix A. The details in the eight cases are anonymized. Any resemblance to actual people or organizations is entirely coincidental, but the circumstances in each case reflect real issues. All notes were taken without identifying the speakers, in order to protect participants' privacy and to foster openness in sharing ideas. The workshop agenda is provided on page 5 of this report.

## Part 2

### Introduction

This report summarizes and analyses the ideas that participants generated together in roundtable and plenary dialogues at the November workshop regarding how to better support the capacity of Indigenous students to thrive at Vancouver Island University. Their ideas were sparked by the eight anonymized cases, which are provided as an Appendix to this report. Throughout the dialogues, participants applied a holistic lens to the issues, but four broad themes surfaced in the notes: (1) **policies and systems**, (2) **supports and services**, (3) **academics** and (4) **decolonization**.

We recognize that these themes overlap in various ways, but it seems helpful to focus on them in turn, without losing sight of important ways that they intersect and interact. Although this report is the product of collective discussion, as well as collective writing, analysis, and editing, we know that the structure and content presented here is not the only way to think about or describe these issues and the work ahead. But in order to plan how to move forward together in addressing the challenges and opportunities that were identified, it represents what we believe to be a useful place to start.

In the report we begin by considering each of the **four broad themes** one at a time. For each theme we began with a **foundational value** or values, which participants had articulated as important in guiding their approach to that theme. We recognize, of course, that many important values inform participants' thinking about these issues. We then summarize some important **challenges** that participants noted. Next we summarize some **strategies** that participants suggested for meeting these challenges. We then conclude the discussion of the theme by noting some **good practices**: concrete steps that would help to implement the strategies required for meeting these challenges.

After treating the four themes in this way, we identify a series of high-level **Next Steps** for working together to support the thriving of Indigenous students at VIU, in light of what we learned together at the workshop and in subsequent conversations with participants. As a way to focus our thinking about Next Steps, we present a Table containing a working draft of these proposed Next Steps. Once the high-level Next Steps are reviewed and HMS approves a final draft of them, we will be able to identify **actions and tasks, outcomes and dates for moving forward** on each of the Next Steps to advance our work on **policies and systems, supports and services, academics and decolonization**. In this way the participants' collective wisdom will guide our planning for this important Year 4 in the EleV program.

## 2.1 Policies and Systems

### Foundational Value for Policies and Systems

*“Reconceptualize what policy can do for our people.”*

### Challenges in Policies and Systems

Participants described a variety of challenges related to policies and systems encountered by students, families, communities and university staff supporting students. These challenges can be attributed to gaps, misalignments, inconsistencies, rigidity, complexity, confusion, unfamiliarity and change. These challenges include:

Participants discussed policy challenges rooted in **“old guidelines”**, which might be the result of a **lack of awareness** of the extent of changes in ISC policies and practices in recent years. In some cases, **rigid policies** were in place as a result of fear: “We believed that if we didn’t have rigid policies, they would take the funds away from us.” In some cases, organizations or individuals might be insufficiently nimble in navigating **cases that fall outside policy guidelines**, perhaps out of a concern that “fair does not always look equal.” One participant noted a case of a **school district that seemed to “freeze up”** when confronted with a case outside the parameters of existing policy. Participants noted the **slow pace of change** within various organizations “stuck in **preconceived notions**” of “the way it needs to be.” A participant noted that it might be “easier for self-**governing** communities to change policy.” For some communities managing multiple issues, policy change **“may not be a priority.”**

*“Funding bodies don’t understand individualized attention – there are markers that we need students to hit for them when the situation is much more complex than that.”*

Concerns surfaced about a broad mix of challenges rooted in or exacerbated by policies and systems, including:

- A student doing **upgrading was not** eligible for funding for a specific program. They didn’t fit into the **boxes** that define students, because they were not in a specific program.
- **Systemic barriers posed by full-time status** requirements for students taking only three courses.
- **Administrative processing delays in funding confirmation.** A student might have to prove that they are a person. Some applicants find that paperwork takes too long, and sometimes forms and pictures expire when sending to government agencies.

Several comments pertained to challenges posed by a lack of awareness, coordination or response to changing policies. One participant noted that FNEC is helping with some of the changes, but they don’t necessarily get **“down to the local level”**:

Participants spoke about challenges experienced by students whose funding is caught between deadlines. A participant described a case of a student who was still in high school when they applied, so the coordinator used funds from a K-12 allocation. “But by the time I received the invoice from the

institution, the student had been accepted.” A general observation was made about how to properly allocate a “**set amount of funding** that doesn’t really relate to anything.”

The participants also discussed the burden on smaller nations to make necessary changes to policy or to administer processes. They noted that: **(Community) capacity** (to change policies) is more of the challenge, **people are already maxed out**. The nation has to make decisions based about what will benefit the most people.

**Inconsistent policies about requirements** for different students may be a result of different programs or different funding sources. The University deals with many different Nations, which can have very different policies and procedures. These differences can cause challenges. Examples cited were inconsistencies in policies about **progress reports**. Some bands only require progress reports **on students that are on probation**. Others require progress reports on all students. Another example is medical withdrawal: Some nations restrict medical withdrawal to a few times for an individual student.

Participants saw both strengths and weaknesses in individualized application of some policies. While there was general support for human-centred, flexible interpretation of policies insofar as possible, a concern was raised: *“Policy interpretation is sometimes done at the individual level, which is at times punitive for students. While there are reasons for this, it can sometimes feel like less than a supportive approach.”*

The principal challenge regarding policies and systems that participants identified was a misalignment between policies and systems within communities and within the university or other organizations.

### Strategies for Policies and Systems

*“It’s an opportunity to write the future of your community.”*

*“This new time of reconciliation allows for change.”*

Participants discussed strategies to align policies and systems with the “**values and vision**” of Indigenous communities, sparked by the presentation from two Nuu-chah-nulth educational leaders, who shared important ideas about their own community’s work to tie policies and practices back to Nuu-Chah-Nulth values that “everything is one” hishuk-iish tsawalk; “respect” hee-shook-eesh lisaak (or eeso-lack); and “taking care of” uu-a-thulk (or ew-ah-thluck).

In their presentation, the two educators described how they had reconceptualized “what policy can do for our people.” They stated, “we need to act on our values and come from that place.” They described moving policies to “**a softer language**.” They noted that the policies remain “somewhat intact” because if policies are not sufficiently rigid, one may lose the money. But softening the language enabled barriers to drop; and adding “grey zones” in existing policies can be helpful. Participants noted that the University also could be flexible with policy.

## Good Practices: Policies and Systems

Participants in the workshop made many observations about good practices to strengthen the policies and systems that support Indigenous students' capacity to thrive at VIU, beginning with a reminder of the importance of knowing the implications of policies determining students' funding eligibility.

Other ideas included:

- **Supporting apparent Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) openness** and flexibility to “shifting,” “letting go of the reins”, such as “learning about local policies” and “lifting longstanding rules about citizenship”;
- **Seeking support from FNEESC** for capacity building, training, workshops on policy, web content on policy development;
- Seeking opportunities to make or change policy that will **benefit a community's specific needs**;
- **Developing better policy models**, which might then be supported by multiple governments;
- For small communities, **relying on someone else's policy** is sometimes the best practice;
- **Reassessing punitive policies** that require students to redo a course at their own cost;
- **Avoiding “locking yourself into policy absolutes”** (as funding is limited anyway);
- Keeping policies as open as possible, because education coordinators **need the flexibility** to interpret them effectively; and
- **Identifying (policy) barriers and formulating strategies** to overcome them.

## 2.2 Supports and Services

### Foundational Value for Supports and Services

*“Healing-centred engagement” takes into consideration all environmental factors around a person(student). This helps us see and analyze the conditions that are creating barriers.”*

### Challenges in Supports and Services

Challenges in Supports and Services Values: “Healing-centred engagement” takes into consideration all environmental factors around the person/student. This helps us see and analyze the conditions that are creating barriers.

Some students face what one participant called a “**cycle of challenges**” requiring significant, integrated supports and services. Among these challenges are **insufficient cultural supports** provided by community and peers. In some cases, an urgent situation, such as a mental health crisis, can require a “huge resource mass” and the coordination of resources provided by university staff and community members. Participants particularly addressed the importance of **mental health supports** for students, emphasizing the need for more supports for students in trauma and addiction

A more basic gap in supports and services can be a lack of familiarity, incomplete documentation, or a need for assistance amongst some potential students for **application processes** for admission and funding. Participants noted that some **deadlines are becoming barriers**, especially for certificates that have multiple start dates. Some band educational coordinators lack **accurate information** about program and course **requirements**.

Some students are struggling financially, because they do not meet the **criteria for funding**. One participant noted that Nation/VIU **funds cannot be used for deposits**.

A number of participants commented on the need for **funding for dependents**. Even with subsidized housing, a student might be able to afford only **groceries and rent, requiring a weekend job** to make ends meet. These financial pressures are compounded for students who are from other territories and lack local family and community support.

Participants spoke of a **lack of awareness** by some students about the **availability of supports** provided by the university, such as Community Cousins, Elders and other supports and services that can be accessed through the Gathering Place. At the same time, participants described various resource or capacity constraints at the university in meeting significant, varied and complex needs.

A participant noted that it can take a lot of time to see a counselor, even in an emergency. The challenges noted were as follows:

- The need for **accessible “drop-in” spaces** offering a mix of services, especially after hours;
- Difficulties in **accessing the Indigenous counselor** on campus, owing to insufficient numbers of **Indigenous counselors** on campus; and
- More infrastructure with **support for students in trauma and addiction**.

### Strategies for Supports and Services

*Share stories to help others know they are not alone. ‘This is what happened to me.’ Being able to share truth is powerful.*

An important overall strategy for overcoming the challenges identified is early attention to the effects of these challenges on the capacity for students to thrive. In order to overcome challenges posed by policy misalignments and gaps, financial precarity, social isolation, insufficient cultural supports, academic obstacles, intergenerational trauma and other consequences of colonization, participants advocated for shifting one’s approach.

As part of the **“continuum of care,”** community engagement was identified as central in developing a strategy to provide **“wrap-around support”** for the student. A “continuum of care” strategy would include plans for providing funding, because “if we can’t fund them in one area, we can in another.” An effective “wrap-around strategy” requires strong **communication, connections** between the student, VIU and the band. It flows from a commitment to finding a way to **“make everyone part of the solution: parents, grandparents, educators, support systems.”** At the core of this approach is “the community observation of the gift that the student has, our vested interest in guiding the student to where they should be going.”

### Good Practices: Supports and Services

The participants emphasised the importance of asking students what they need. “Participants noted the importance of “reminding students that they are important” by providing “safe spaces” and giving “guidance” and “love.”



Participants addressed the importance of effective bridging at transition points. Participants pointed to the value of a comprehensive orientation process, beginning with **“preparation in community** (before arrival) for workload, racism, street safety and loneliness.” One participant expressed a concern that students who come to VIU from very small communities **“don’t have the skills they need”**.

Opportunities for monthly **one-on-one advice** on how to balance all that is required: courses, family, travel time, food; Participants discussed the importance of **information-sharing** practices as tools for supporting students more effectively. This requires consent forms, but students need to be informed that permission by the student to allow for open communication is located on all the forms.

## 2.3 Academics

### Foundational Values for Academics

*“Departments are usually put into silos. Education, language and social wellness are often treated as different areas. This is not actually how it works; they are all interconnected.”*

### Challenges in Academics

In addition to probing what “success” means from the perspective of different Indigenous communities, participants wrestled with the practical challenges that students are facing. A good deal of attention was addressed to the fact that, as one participant put it, “success...is **difficult when taking 4-5** courses per semester; a **reduced course load** can set the students up for success.” Yet funding requirements, family or community pressures, peer pressure and students’ own expectations, can cause students to take on more than they should. In some cases, a student might not understand how many courses are required.

**Gaps in preparedness** – particularly, but not only on the part of students and their families – surfaced as a significant challenge. Participants noted:

- **Gaps in understanding of what awaits students**, especially the amount of written work required;
- **Preparation for impact** on “all aspects of life”: coursework, family, travel time, getting food;
- Students **“shocked” by workload**;
- **Culture shock**; and
- The impact of **summer session (limited course availability and lack of living allowance)**.

Participants identified various academic challenges experienced by students, including a **lack of confidence** regarding **writing** assignments, the volume of writing required, being “critiqued by faculty,” fear associated with doing class presentations or even speaking up in class. One participant put it like this: *“We torture people by trying to make them fit into the same mold.”*

## Strategies for Academics

*“Pursuing education affects our family. We can show our kids, grandkids that education is possible. It hasn’t been a thing on the radar for many families. It is important to try and go back as an adult.”*

Most of the attention that was focussed on strategies related to the academic mission seemed to arise in the context of discussions about supporting students, or the need for curricular enrichment in response to UNDRIP and decolonization imperatives. A few other strategic academic considerations also surfaced, including:

- Offering more **accessible, relevant programming for communities and in communities;**
- Offering **first-year programs in community;**
- Providing **training funds** for people with certain **roles in communities** to mentor others;
- **Support for roles needed in communities**, e.g., “professional” mourners, speakers;
- **Faculty immersion in communities;** and
- Co-creating opportunities for students who are “disconnected from their history” to **learn about their history** in the relatively “neutral” space of the university.

## Good Practices: Academics

*Full-time status is defined by the institution. Full time status now is a 60% course load. There is a minimum standard of three courses for first year students. When we see first year students taking five classes their first semester, we give them a call to check in. The aim is to help them see the reality of course load. Five courses per week is a full-time job and more.*

Participants discussed a very broad range of helpful practices pertaining to academics, including:

- **Trade programs** are quite beneficial: ABT, medical office assistance, carpentry;
- **Practice assessment packages** are given to students; and
- **Taking a moment and explaining** what the paperwork is.

Participants also suggested:

- **Teaching about short-term sacrifice** as a life-skill and an employment skill;
- **Clarifying program pre-requisites and university entrance requirements;**
- **Clarifying and clearly conveying the purpose of the student academic progress reports;**
- Navigators **delivering VIU’s “University 101” in the community** and as a **dual credit;** and
- Bringing first- and second-year **university into the community.**

Other suggested practices to support students’ academic success include:

- Before postsecondary begins, **starting to talk about roles, responsibilities and accountability**, so that students are not shocked by workload and other pieces of being a student;
- **Offering “individualized” learning support**, rather than a probationary, “punitive” or generalized approach;
- Teaching about **public speaking, budgeting and study skills**;
- Offer **quiet spaces** or a set of **headphones**;
- Offer instruction about **other life chores** so that students don’t have to leave studying to 1:00 am;
- Teach about **different ways of studying**;
- Help students **learn what kind of learner** they are;
- **Navigators can refer** the instructor to the **letter of release** that students fill out to enable navigators to discuss their progress; and
- **Meeting with instructors to explain the consequences for students** if the progress report is not completed.

## 2.4 Decolonization

### Foundational Values for Decolonization

*“Culture is what we do. Learning how to sit, listen, mentor, lead is embedded in life. It will never be like it was, and we need to accept that. We have not been given the opportunity to bring forward what we need: governance, potlatch, accessing our lands. We need to look at how we re-indigenize; otherwise, it is just an accommodation of oppression. Education can be a tool to break it down. We must allow people the safety to be here (at VIU). It is not safe to be Indigenous in some spaces.”*

### Challenges in Decolonization

*“How to we **fast-track indigenous knowledge** in the Academy? I have a wealth of knowledge, but the Academy determines its value. Who decides what is important? The **value of Indigenous knowledges** today by the Academy gets validated by those who have no understanding of the knowledge.”*

Several participants raised concerns about students who are **“disconnected from their history”**. One participant noted: *“There is **little time to teach culture** at home. Kids are tired, parents are exhausted from work. What are schools doing to **instil a sense of pride** in indigenous students?”* Participants spoke of a shared sense of responsibility for the work of decolonization and cultural renewal: *“(It is) up to us to **bridge connections** back from students, when they have lost connection to language, family, community, culture, songs.”*

Participants noted that many nations **lack sufficient capacity to support economic development**. In such contexts, some students experience more than a lack of support from their home community or family; in some cases, they are struggling with **“villages that put barriers** in front of students.” One

participant characterized this as a re-enactment of “oppressive practices”. Some students experience a **lack of family support** for their pursuit of a post-secondary education. Generally, participants characterized these cases as ones in which a postsecondary education is “not a family priority” or is seen as a “waste of resources”; in rare cases, students are dealing with family opposition that reaches the level of “toxicity”.

Several participants addressed the need for more trauma-informed supports and services. One participant went so far as to characterize the postsecondary academy context as “**depersonalized, dehumanized.**” A participant spoke of the importance of the efforts of many in the room to personalize and humanize the postsecondary experience.

The risk of a student falling off the radar is amplified by what one participant described as **siloed, “budget-driven” services and supports**, rather than integrated services and supports. *“Departments are usually put into silos. Education, language and social wellness are often treated as different areas. This is not actually how it works: they are all interconnected.”*

### Strategies for Decolonization

Participants emphasized the importance of engaging deeply with communities, drawing on the wisdom and other resources of Indigenous teachings, Elders, councils and school districts.

Participants noted the opportunity to “**hold governments accountable**” to engage with “**big, credible partnerships**”. Partners who are willing and able to **use and cultivate relationships** at school districts, financial institutions, human and social resources, bring resources to communities. Partnerships with **school districts** have been beneficial. It is widely recognized that partnerships take a lot of advocacy and lobbying for success.

Participants provided an **example of a successful partnership**:

“We currently have a project that involves ITA, VIU and NIC to deliver a program in Kyuquot. ITA has come forward with additional funding, and the Province has been willing to meet with us to discuss the needs when bringing programs into community.”

Building further on the implications of UNDRIP, participants thought together about the value of partnerships with various kinds of organizations, including philanthropic organizations like MasterCard, school districts, and other major institutions, as a strategy for moving these recommendations forward.

We are starting to see a **shift in some of the funding** from multiple resources being redirected directly to First Nations communities. This could be further expanded as an example, Aboriginal Service Plan **funds could be going directly to Nations** in the future, not flowed through post-secondary institutions. This is the time for many institutions to **review current policies**.

With increasing stability and predictability in funding streams, nations can “take into their own hands” questions regarding “what will benefit them”. More nations will be able to develop **community plans** and plug in student education and career paths as components of those plans.

Participants also identified opportunities to establish **decentralized education systems** in partnership with communities, suggesting that this might result in the “best of both worlds” by helping communities and students “to deal with standing issues and receive the education they need.” Such an approach “keeps people in their community,” which could have positive effects on family and community.

While thinking about strong partnerships to support the agency of Indigenous communities and institutions, participants noted the importance of strategies for supporting students to develop their own agency. Considerations included:

- **Avoiding “excessive support”** so as to help students to take responsibility for putting in the work as well;
- **Meeting students where they are at** and supporting them from there; and
- **Breaking the cycle of dependency.**

### Good Practices: Decolonization

Participants spoke of the importance of co-creating policies aligned with community values and vision. In order to support this process, participants suggested the following good practices:

- Continuing to create opportunities for **regular check-ins** with the communities;
- Reaching across the boundaries to **have difficult conversations**;
- Making a **“home away from home** for students” by reflecting all Nations on campus;
- Set the intention to acknowledge the community, land and people from the land you are on, doing this every day in every class;
- **Immersing faculty in the community** supports their learning, too;
- **Engaging with communities** to support their self-determination efforts by creating space in coursework, university policies, practices, etc.; and
- **Co-creating opportunities and policy that support those areas as needed.**

Participants noted that each nation has a relationship with the postsecondary institution. The university might be able to provide assistance to nations that are interested in **identifying what the community’s future needs** are going to be, and the economic demands they will face. Communities probably want the students to come back, but they require help to create the infrastructure for the jobs.

Supporting the relationship between a student and the community can benefit the student and the community. This support might entail some of the following:

- Considering how the student is fitting into the **Community Plan, if one exists**;
- Creating a clear path for the student, based on the **economic needs of the nation**;
- Supporting student **awareness of opportunities** if and when they return home; and
- Providing travel **funds to return home.**

***Tribal Journeys** is a valuable opportunity for faculty, students and community members, an experience of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people paddling together.*

## Part 3 Next steps

*“Perhaps drawing on existing funding, e.g., through EleV, we could bring multiple Nations together to share in their learnings.”*

Participants began to explore some possibilities for next steps in this work, including bringing multiple Nations together and providing travel funds for these types of dialogues and meetings. The following Table presents fourteen (14) proposed **Next Steps** (or action areas) to begin in Year 4 (2020-2021). These proposed Next Steps are based on the ideas that surfaced in the workshop dialogues, and which are presented in Part 2, the previous section of the report. The Next Steps are categorized within the Table according to the four themes that emerged: **Policies and Systems, Supports and Services, Academics** and **Decolonization**. In a few cases, a Next Step is included in more than one thematic category, but the objectives and measures are only stated the first time that the Next Step appears.

| Next Step  | Year 4 Objectives   | Success Measures in Year 4 & 5  |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Policies &amp; Systems</b>  |   |   |
| 1) Reach out to others such as First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), NTC to explore the idea of developing and delivery a collaborative policy and process workshop starting with Nations on Vancouver Island PS-1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach to FNESC, ISC, NTC</li> <li>• Outreach to VI Nations</li> <li>• Co-develop / deliver collaborative policy &amp; process workshop</li> <li>• Complete workshop draft report to be reviewed by participants, with final version completed by _____</li> <li>• Establish timeline with annual benchmarks to strengthen policies and processes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of workshop with participating of all VI Nations</li> <li>• Achieve 85% or higher level of satisfaction by attendees</li> <li>• Workshop report reviewed, and final version shared</li> <li>• Establishment of timeline with annual benchmarks</li> <li>• Establishment of community/campus policy &amp; process Working Group</li> <li>• Track/report successes in strengthening policies and processes</li> </ul> |
| 2) Review misalignments between Nation policy and VIU systems with, e.g., VIU Student Affairs, Registration, Financial Services, with the intention to harmonize practices PS-2  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach to Nations and VIU leads with responsibility for policies and systems to introduce task and co-develop plan for review process</li> <li>• Form collaborative FN/VIU contact group to guide process</li> <li>• Preparatory (desktop) review of Nations’ and VIU’s policies and systems to identify misalignments</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secured support by Nations and VIU leads for process</li> <li>• Secured collaborative FN/VIU contact group</li> <li>• Completion of validated findings</li> <li>• Completion of report on recommendations</li> <li>• Completion of multi-year plan to address misalignments</li> </ul>   |

| Next Step  | Year 4 Objectives  | Success Measures in Year 4 & 5   |
|--|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validation (by FN and VIU contact group) of preliminary findings</li> <li>• Present preliminary report on provisional recommendations to address misalignments, including timelines, leads, success measures, evaluation plan</li> <li>• Co-develop adjustments to policies and systems</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of evaluation plan</li> <li>• Operationalizing of communications plan to keep Nations and VIU leads fully informed and involved</li> <li>• Plan developed for qualitative and quantitative assessment of satisfaction benchmarks</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Supports &amp; Services</b>   |  |  |
| <p>1) Indigenous Education Navigators to deliver “University 101,” i.e., introduction to university workshops/classes in-community. SS -1</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach to Nations and VIU leads to co-develop plans for delivery of U101 in communities to pilot this model</li> <li>• Formation of small Task Group to guide the development, delivery and assessment (including developmental evaluation plan) for this pilot initiative</li> <li>• Co-develop plans for implementation of U101 in Spring 2021 (?)</li> <li>• Assess effectiveness, modify models and plan for the next cycle</li> <li>• Identify with Nations the sites for second phase of pilot</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small Task Group formed</li> <li>• Workshops/classes delivered successfully in X number of communities</li> <li>• Developmental assessment report drafted, reviewed, revised and completed</li> <li>• Piloted models revised to account for feedback received</li> <li>• Sites selected for second phase of pilot</li> <li>• Plans co-developed for multi-year assessment of impact of this approach on relationships with communities, recruitment and retention of students, student success</li> </ul> |
| <p>2) Prepare potential students Thuy she’num (preparing oneself to move forward) to engage in post-secondary studies from a physical, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional perspective by working with Elders to implement long- and/or short-term transitions activities. SS – 2</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach to Nations, especially Elders, to guide the development, implementation and evaluation of long-term and/or short-term transition activities</li> <li>• Outreach to students, community educators, VIU faculty and staff to contribute ideas</li> <li>• Co-develop plans, including qualitative and quantitative assessment plans informed by benchmarks (wellness,</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition activities implemented and assessed in Year 4, with involvement of Elders</li> <li>• Feedback obtained from participants and Elders</li> <li>• Transition activities revised to account for evaluation feedback</li> <li>• Plans co-developed for implementation in Year 5</li> </ul>  |



| Next Step  | Year 4 Objectives   | Success Measures in Year 4 & 5   |
|--|---|--|
| <p>3) Align existing summer camp programming to Thuy she'num so that students are receiving similar holistic supports in their transitions to post-secondary. SS- 3</p>  | <p>recruitment and retention, academic progress, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided by small task group of Elders, summer camp staff, wellness leads, and alumni, review gaps, misalignments or other opportunities to strengthen holistic supports in summer camp transitions to postsecondary</li> <li>• Draft program modifications to address learnings from this review, and obtain guidance from small task group on proposed changes</li> <li>• Co-design developmental evaluation plan</li> <li>• Implement program changes in summer 2020 and 2021</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small task group formed</li> <li>• Review identifies areas of improvement and recommends specific changes to be developed by program leads</li> <li>• Holistic supports are implemented by summer camp staff and assessed by small task group after summer camp in 2020 and planned for summer camp in 2021</li> <li>• Modified transition supports are designed, to account for results of assessments</li> <li>• Follow-up assessment plans are co-developed to ensure ongoing developmental evaluation process</li> </ul>                          |
| <p>4) Investigate what healing resources can be made more available to Indigenous learners both in services and curriculum design as well as areas for new development brought into Indigenous program development. SS- 4/A- 3</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare provisional inventory of existing healing resources available to Indigenous learners in services and curriculum design, to support work of small contact group</li> <li>• Form small contact group, including Elders, wellness team, students and others, to review inventory to identify and prioritize gaps, misalignments and opportunities for short-term and longer-term improvement</li> <li>• Develop multi-year plan and secure resources to implement new and strengthened healing resources, as well as to identify new areas for development</li> <li>• Design developmental evaluation plan</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provisional Inventory completed</li> <li>• Contact group formed</li> <li>• Inventory reviewed and report prepared to identify and prioritize gaps, misalignments and opportunities for short-term and longer-term improvement</li> <li>• Wider circle of review completed, including Nations and VIU services and curriculum leads</li> <li>• Multi-year plan reviewed by contact group and resources secured for implementation</li> <li>• Plans completed for recurring assessment cycles supported by qualitative and quantitative data</li> </ul> |



| Next Step   | Year 4 Objectives  | Success Measures in Year 4 & 5  |
|---|--|---|
| <p>5) Identify economic development opportunities in communities and establish networks to assist students in exploring their options and fostering relations for working in-community after graduation. SS-5</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach to Nations to co-develop initiative informed by values, Terms of Reference, identification of key challenges, strategy and planning</li> <li>• Establish Economic Development Opportunities contact group with representation in and by all communities, including students, alumni and other key contacts</li> <li>• With ongoing community involvement, co-develop protocols, process and leads to identify, recruit and evaluate in-community economic development opportunities</li> <li>• Co-develop plan to identify gaps, misalignments and opportunities for improvement</li> <li>• Co-design developmental evaluation plan with benchmarks</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following outreach to Nations, Economic Development Opportunities contact group established with co-developed values, Terms of Reference, Strategy and Operational Plan, including protocols, issues management plan and communications plan</li> <li>• Opportunities identified</li> <li>• Plan implemented</li> <li>• Evaluation of first year of implementation, with recommendations for modifications for the following year</li> <li>• Ongoing evaluation cycle established</li> </ul> |
| <p>6) Develop plan for <b>accessible “drop-in” spaces</b> offering a mix of services, especially after hours. SS-6/A-4</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided by small contact group including Elders, students, alumni and VIU team, identify priorities for accessible, culturally appropriate “drop-in” spaces offering a mix of services, especially after hours</li> <li>• Consult with VIU personnel in facilities, planning, finance and, potentially, advancement, to develop implementation plan and timetable</li> <li>• Complete draft plan and implementation timetable, including short-term and long-term options</li> <li>• Co-develop evaluation plan and issues management plan,</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact group formed</li> <li>• Implementation plan completed</li> <li>• Short-term options pursued and planning underway for long-term options, including site selection, budgeting and other details</li> <li>• Short-term option evaluated, including evaluation of issues management in light of complications inherent in rapid implementation of provisional spaces and services to meet present needs</li> </ul>  |

| Next Step   | Year 4 Objectives   | Success Measures in Year 4 & 5  |
|---|---|---|
| <p>7) Continue to expand and listen to the EleV Youth Mentorship Advisory group to ensure Indigenous youth voices are directing transitions activities for high school students. SS-7</p>   | <p>particularly for provisional, short-term options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirm lead(s) responsible for supporting this group</li> <li>• Review purpose, objectives, Terms of Reference, resources, structure, process and activities of EleV Youth Mentorship Advisory group</li> <li>• Review the above with youth and co-develop with Indigenous youth plans for expanding, strengthening/deepening and evaluating on an ongoing basis the impact of and value for participants in the EleV Youth Mentorship Advisory group</li> <li>• Implement new measures</li> <li>• Evaluate effectiveness of new measures</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead(s) confirmed</li> <li>• Co-developed review completed</li> <li>• Co-developed plan completed</li> <li>• New measures implemented</li> <li>• Evaluation pathways initiated and assessed</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Academics</b>  |   |   |
| <p>1) Create resources (written and digital) guided and informed by Indigenous knowledge holders and communities to further articulate wise practices where the intention is to prepare faculty and staff to work in and with Indigenous communities and students. A -1</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain guidance from Indigenous knowledge holders and communities, to identify priorities for preparing faculty and staff to work in and with Indigenous communities and students</li> <li>• Solicit ideas from faculty and staff about gaps in their own awareness of wise practices and “lessons learned”, including lessons to inform plans and processes for future learning by faculty and staff</li> <li>• Assess existing processes and resources within VIU</li> <li>• Source resources (written and digital) guided and informed by Indigenous knowledge holders and communities</li> <li>• Create needed additional resources, pilot implementation and evaluation plan</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priorities identified with guidance provided by Elders Indigenous knowledge holders and communities</li> <li>• Faculty and staff provide ideas about gaps they observed in their own awareness, and “lessons learned”, including lessons to inform plans and processes for future learning by their colleagues</li> <li>• Assessment of existing processes and resources at VIU completed</li> <li>• Written and digital resources of good practices compiled and, where needed, co-developed</li> <li>• Pilot plan implemented and evaluated by participants, including Indigenous knowledge holders and</li> </ul> |

| Next Step   | Year 4 Objectives  | Success Measures in Year 4 & 5   |
|---|--|--|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-develop a pilot implementation and evaluation plan and timetable with faculty, staff, students and community</li> </ul>  | <p>communities, faculty and staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans drafted for ongoing development, implementation and evaluation</li> </ul>   |
| <p>2) Explore how to co-create opportunities with communities to prepare faculty to teach in community A -2</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach to communities, faculty, students and staff to solicit ideas about co-creation of process, working group participation, terms of reference and protocols, challenges, strategies and good practices</li> <li>• Source models at other postsecondary institutions, with particular attention to regional and continental standouts/peers in this respect, with particular attention to Indigenous faculty and staff working in this way</li> <li>• Consider approaching faculties of education to seek potential collaborators in developing innovative models</li> <li>• Identify potential participants (communities and faculty) in a pilot model <i>with strong foundation in existing relationships</i> and faculty possessing both exceptional subject-matter and strong Indigenous cultural knowledge</li> <li>• Confirm community support for plans, timetable and proposed faculty</li> <li>• Co-develop timeline for planning, preparation, implementation, issues management and evaluation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach and pre-planning process completed</li> <li>• Successful models identified for review by working group</li> <li>• Interest solicited and, where feasible, secured within faculties of education, for potentially supporting co-development, enrichment or evaluation of piloted models</li> <li>• Pilot(s) identified and confirmed: community/ies and faculty</li> <li>• Implementation, issues management and evaluation plan co-developed with communities and faculty</li> </ul> |
| <p>3) Investigate what healing resources can be made more available to</p>                                      | <p>See Supports and Services (4) above</p>   |  |

| Next Step   | Year 4 Objectives  | Success Measures in Year 4 & 5   |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Indigenous learners both in services and curriculum design as well as areas for new development brought into Indigenous program development. A-3/SS-4</p>  |  |  |
| <p>4) Develop plan for <b>accessible “drop-in” spaces</b> offering a mix of services, especially after hours. A-4/SS-6</p>  | <p>See Supports and Services (6) above</p>   |  |
| <p><b>Decolonization</b></p>  |  |  |
| <p>Identify applied research opportunities with advisory groups to further address persistent issues such as transportation, childcare, and housing (e.g., via Community Planning Program, MITACS, CBAIR, etc.) D-1</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided by advisories, designated lead reaches out to Elders, Nations, students, alumni and staff to prioritize and clarify scope, impacts, challenges and opportunities associated with persistent issues</li> <li>• Guided by advisories, research ethics issues are identified and addressed</li> <li>• Applied research opportunities, including potential funding sources and potential research leads, identified</li> <li>• A solid, accelerated feasibility study is undertaken to support the process of securing community support, research interest and funding</li> <li>• The feasibility study would include desktop review of status quo, as well as interviews in-person and by phone with Key Informants, including community advisors, students, staff and other knowledge holders, e.g., with expertise in transportation, childcare and housing systems</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead designated</li> <li>• ToR completed</li> <li>• Community guidance is provided via advisories to inform direction, priorities, scope, impacts, challenges and opportunities</li> <li>• Guided by advisory groups, applied research ethics issues are comprehensively reviewed</li> <li>• A solid, accelerated feasibility study is completed in order to support the application process for significant funding for applied research to address these persistent issues as “grand challenges”</li> <li>• Recommendations for short-term solutions are thoroughly reviewed and, where possible, implemented and assessed</li> <li>• Opportunities are identified for a community-campus applied research project – site, research team(s) and potential funders – to further address persistent issues</li> </ul> |

| Next Step | Year 4 Objectives   | Success Measures in Year 4 & 5  |
|-----------|---|---|
|           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feasibility study would support applications for significant applied research funding to support applied research utilizing good practices, with results to be shared with Nations, advisory, funders, governments and others</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding is sought and, potentially, secured</li> </ul> |

## 2.7 Conclusion

This report synthesizes and summarizes the individual and collective ideas that surfaced during the workshop dialogues at roundtables and plenary sessions. After the Preface, Context and Process in Part 1, the report presents participants’ ideas in Part 2 within four broad thematic categories: **Policies and Systems, Supports and Services, Academics and Decolonization**. We recognize that these thematic boundaries are imperfect, that the ideas and even the themes could justifiably be moved from one category to another or described with different words. For these and other reasons, we seek participants’ reflections on how we have represented and organized their ideas. If we have missed something important, we welcome suggestions about how to make the report better.

In Part 2 the ideas within each theme were discussed according to the following structure. First we presented a **Foundational Value** that surfaced in the notes as an important guide informing participants’ discussion of that particular theme. Then we discussed some important **Challenges** that participants associated with that issue or issues. We then presented some **Strategies** that participants suggested for addressing these challenges. Finally, we identified some **Good Practices** for implementing Strategies to address the Challenges, all guided by important Values.

In Part 3 we presented fourteen action areas: proposed **Next Steps** to move the work forward in building on and implementing the participants’ ideas. We presented these fourteen Next Steps within a Table. The Table contains three columns: **Next Step, Year 4 Objectives**, and **Success Measures in Years 4 and 5**. Each **Next Step** is categorized according to the broad theme in which it surfaced at the workshop: Policies and Systems, Supports and Services, Academics and Decolonization. Readers will see that there are more Next Steps identified within the theme of Supports and Services, and only one within Decolonization; however, one could say that all this work is intended to advance Decolonization.

It is important to emphasize that the workshop and the report were informed by a holistic perspective, and that all of us were and are motivated by the importance of recognizing the gifts that each student possesses. It is also important to note that the complex issues addressed at the workshop require an integrated, systemic approach. For these reasons, we respectfully encourage readers to read the report in sequence and in its totality. Following this Conclusion is an Appendix which contains the anonymized Eight Case Studies, which invited the workshop participants to think together about what is required in very concrete terms in order to enable Indigenous students to thrive more fully at Vancouver Island

Report on VIU EleV Workshop on November 6, 2019.

University. We are deeply grateful to all the participants for contributing to this work their knowledge and their respect for the students.

## Appendix: Case Studies

### **Workshop: Co-Creating Promising Practices for Indigenous Students**

**November 6, 2019 / Building 300 Room 401 / 11am to 4:30 pm**

#### **Case Studies<sup>1</sup>**

##### **Case Study One**

The Loon River First Nation has enough money to send 15 students to university this year. The files are just completed for the students when one of the local universities makes a visit to share information about an opportunity to fund 15 more students from their post-secondary waitlist. It is an amazing opportunity for their community members, but folks in the Education Department know it will take quite a bit of time to learn about the new program and process another 15 students. Additionally, the Nation faces several staff shortages due to a number of factors and there are a number of departments involved in making this happen for the waitlisted students before classes start. There won't be time to fill these shortages before the deadlines. Suggest some ways Loon River could handle this situation.

##### **Case Study Two**

Skownan First Nation is located in a remote part of the province. It's difficult to leave the community due to its location and many don't want to leave the comforts of home and family. Education is a priority for the community as there are several scheduled retirements with no one qualified to fill the positions. However, getting through the first semester at school is really tough for many of Skownan's citizens. A committee is struck to address issues such as housing, finances, childcare, and ways to help students work through feelings of isolation and homesickness. It's clear that universities aren't providing the kinds of supports needed for students from rural or remote areas. Pretend you are the committee at Skownan and work through these concerns together.

##### **Case Study Three**

Sarah has always wanted to be a teacher. She just finished raising three kids who are now at university and one of them is in the Bachelor of Education. Her daughter encourages her regularly to take the leap and get her degree so they can both be teachers at the community school. She decides to do it but learns that she needs to upgrade her English and math as well as take a university history course. Her university advisor tells her she can't take the history course until she's upgraded her English. When she asks her Nation about funding, she's told there is a 12-credit minimum so she enrolls in the English 12, math 12 and an Indigenous Portfolio course (3 credit). After the first month Sarah knows she has too much on her plate and isn't doing well in her classes. Her Education Coordinator tells her that 2 ABE

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<sup>1</sup> All case studies are fictional but based on real situations/issues.

courses and one 3 credit course is not enough to maintain sponsorship. Sarah has classmates who are sponsored through her Nation, where can Sarah find resources to support her request for living allowance?

#### **Case Study Four**

Polly is in her second year of the Criminology program and doing well when she is badly injured in a boating accident. She will be okay but has to take at least the rest of the semester off to recover. She is advised by the university to take a medical withdrawal, but when she recovers and is ready to return to school, she learns she can no longer be funded by her Nation because this is her second medical withdrawal. What are Polly's options?

#### **Case Study Five**

Jason has been accepted into the Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program; he utilized his two years of UCEP funding from his Nation to get into this highly competitive program. Jason is ecstatic; however, he receives a letter from the University stating his deposit is due May 31<sup>st</sup>. His Nation's deadline for funding was just May 15<sup>th</sup>, so he knows that the approval won't be decided for quite some time. He contacts the University, and they are able to push his deposit out by 2 weeks, due to the competitive nature of the program, 2 weeks is the maximum extension. Unfortunately, Jason does not have \$200 dollars and has asked friends and family to no avail. Jason wants to have a conversation with his Education Coordinator, how do you suggest they resolve the issue of the deposit?

#### **Case Study Six**

Cindy is going into her 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) program. She took 9 credits first semester and 9 credits second semester. The BBA program is 120 credits total. Cindy really struggled first semester; she failed her math 151 course which is a pre-requisite to nearly all the upper-level courses in the program. Cindy wants to take 9 credits again for her second year. Cindy is coming to see you, her Education Coordinator, she is asking to take math 151 this summer. As her Education Coordinator, what is your stance on summer session? Help Cindy map out her education at 9 credits per semester and include summer session if you advise her to do so.

#### **Case Study Seven**

Fred has been working with his Dad all summer in the construction field. He loves it and decides to go to the university right after summer and put his application in for the Carpentry program. Fred waits and waits and finally he is told that he has been accepted. He collects all the required paperwork and goes into see you, his Education Coordinator. He is so excited to tell you his program starts this February, and he will be on his way to becoming a journeyman carpenter. You've run into this problem before, the deadline for applications is February 28 of each year. Usually you tell them that their application has to



Report on VIU EleV Workshop on November 6, 2019.

be in a whole year earlier. Also, your policy reflects level 1 funding up to 16 months. Fred told you it takes 4-years to become a journeyman carpenter, how do you approach this problem?

### **Case Study Eight**

Jody is a citizen of the Métis Nation. The Nation is funding the final two years of her Child and Youth Care degree. Like many other students, Jody is required to submit a monthly progress report. Jody has never received a grade below a B and isn't sure why some other students do not have to submit these reports. Jody has an instructor brand new to the university, the instructor does not want to fill out the progress report. Do you think there is a way for Jody to approach her Education Coordinator and her Instructor to come to an understanding?