Coming Full Circle:

Evaluating the Success and Sustainability of our "Pathways for Indigenous Learners" Model

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Centre for Policy and Research in Indigenous Learning

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

Background

In 2013, Indigenous educators from Confederation College, First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI), and Trent University established a partnership that sought to increase access to postsecondary education for Indigenous learners across the province of Ontario. In particular, the "Pathways for Indigenous Learners" project was launched, and agreements signed that established three postsecondary pathways across the partnering institutions in the fields of Indigenous Studies, Social Work, and Environmental Studies. These pathways were grounded in a commitment to Indigenous learners, and included unique elements such as: relationship-building between partnering institutions to encourage prospective learners to access new and existing pathways; curriculum mapping based on Indigenous Learning Outcomes; a wraparound support services Model (Appendix A); and a transition program, Biishkaa, coordinated by Trent University (CPRIL, 2013-2016). In 2013, Presidents from each partnering institution met in person at FNTI to sign a Memorandum of Understanding demonstrating their support for this work. Further, each partnering institution received beaded panels as seen in Figure 1 to further signify the partnership.

Figure 1: Picture from the day that Presidents from Confederation College, First Nations Technical Institute, and Trent University signed the Memorandum of Understanding (left), and a picture of the beaded panels that each President received to signify the partnership (right).

The Project Steering Committee

This project has since undergone second and third iterations, embracing "Second" and "Third Circle" partners; the full circle of partners now includes 16 colleges and universities and an Indigenous Institute, from across Ontario and who constitute the project Steering Committee. Shared values, practices and commitments, relationship building, building common ground, and collaborative and informed action ground the Steering Committee's Model of collaboration and partnership.

Figure 2: Image of the First, Second and Third Circle Partners

First Circle: In 2013-2016, through relationship building and partnership, the Pathways for Indigenous Learners project emerged between Trent University, First Nations Technical Institute, and Confederation College. First Circle partners also act as the Advisory Committee project, providing guidance and direction.

Second Circle: In 2016-17 the First Circle of partners grew their model by inviting additional postsecondary institutions to join the project. In this phase, eight additional postsecondary institutions joined, comprising the "Second Circle" of partners.

Third Circle: In 2017-18, wanting to build off the success of the first expansion of the Steering Committee, five additional colleges and universities joined the Third Circle of partners, bringing the group to a total of 16 postsecondary institutions from across Ontario.

The Model – Ayaakwaamisiiwin

Ayaakwaamisiiwin, the name of our "Pathways for Indigenous Learners" Model (see Figure 3), is an Anishinaabemowin word that means to be carefully prepared for what you encounter, and able to overcome what you experience so that you are able to move forward. This applies to Indigenous learners following a pathway; it applies to the pathways in place; and it applies to an institution supporting a pathway. For the learner, it means that they have everything they need to navigate a pathway and succeed, and they are equipped to overcome any obstacles that they may face. For the institution, it means that they have everything in place to support a pathway and they are equipped to respond to the needs and experiences of Indigenous learners. This model reflects all of our elements and processes for creating and supporting pathways for Indigenous learners.

Figure 3: The Pathways for Indigenous Learners Project model, Ayaakwaamisiiwin for partnership and collaboration (*slightly modified version from CPRIL, 2016*)

Work to date has resulted in the identification of a lengthy list of pathways for Indigenous learners across partnering institutions. Further, this work has led to partnerships that support Indigenous learners, such as through curriculum sharing in the field of Indigenous education and by generating multi-institutional commitments to breaking down barriers to pursuing or following pathways. Not least of the positive outcomes of this work is the establishment of a province-wide network comprised of Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners with diverse roles and responsibilities within an array of postsecondary institutions. Due to the trusting relationships that have been built by our engaging with one another across institutes, colleges and universities, there have emerged new champions and advocates for Indigenous learner pathways and learner success in Ontario. This five-year collaboration has also contributed to a greater ease with each other and a comfort level with challenging conversations. Such conversations range in topic from breaking down silos across postsecondary institutions to underlying competition in postsecondary education, not to mention systemic barriers and systemic racism. In other words, relationships amongst the participants in this network have been one of the greatest successes of this work.

These same relationships have led to candid conversations and a growing awareness of some of the challenges we face in establishing pathways. While the working group has succeeded in identifying an expansive list of pathways, only six pathways agreements have been created (although there are more near implementation). This reality highlights that, despite our successes, it was incumbent upon us to explore those challenges to getting pathways in place and sustaining them. Thus, with three iterations of project partners and a desire to understand project successes and areas for improvement, the CFC Project undertook research to critically examine the success and sustainability of our model for creating pathways for Indigenous learners. Through this evaluation we have had an opportunity to tell the story of our work and the people involved. While, we highlight our accomplishments, we are honest about the

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areas that we need to improve. Specifically, this project has two main objectives: 1) Evaluating the effectiveness of our process in terms of *creating* pathways for Indigenous learners; and 2) Creating an evaluation framework for measuring and monitoring the success and sustainability of *pathways that have been implemented* across our partnering institutions.

Guiding Research Questions

In the early phases of project development, members of the First Circle Steering Committee met to reflect on previous phases of the Pathways for Indigenous Learners work, and to discuss next steps. The group identified evaluation as a critical next step, and then framed the following as guiding questions:

1. How well has our process worked for creating pathways for Indigenous learners across our partnering institutions?
    - What were the challenges and supports to implementing pathways across our partnering institutions and how were these challenges overcome?
    - How many pathways have been successfully implemented across our partnering institutions?
    - What are the experiences of Indigenous learners who have followed the pathways developed through this initiative?
    - How do we ensure the sustainability of these pathways for Indigenous learners across partnering institutions?

2. What evaluation framework should be used to measure the success and sustainability of our pathways for Indigenous learners?
    - What are appropriate methods for collecting data?
    - What are the indicators of success?
    - How will these indicators be measured?

Literature Review and Environmental Scan

To begin our evaluation process, we undertook a literature review on relevant topics including: Indigenous models of project and program evaluation; monitoring and evaluating pathways (transfer and mobility) in postsecondary education; pathways for Indigenous learners and conceptualizations of success for Indigenous learners in postsecondary education. Results of the literature review helped to ground the project and guide the development of research materials; for instance, the literature review informed the development of an interview guide, as well as providing some measures or indicators to include within our final evaluative tool for monitoring pathways.

An environmental scan was conducted alongside of the literature review. The purpose of the environmental scan was to search for and review research reports and tools that document processes for monitoring student transfer mobility, and the success of pathways, in Ontario and in British Columbia. In particular, critical research and project reports from the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer and the British Columbia Council on Articulation and Transfer (BBCCAT) websites were identified and reviewed. Further, key informants from the project's partnering institutions were asked to share information on their institutions' methods for monitoring transfer and mobility. Through the environmental scan and the literature we identified relevant knowledge, key challenges, wise or promising practices for monitoring pathways, and for monitoring and supporting pathways specifically for Indigenous learners.

Transfer and Mobility in Ontario

Pathways are characterized as "…routes that students take to move between and among levels of educational credentials, institutions, and programs" (Ontario Policy Statement for Ontario's Credit Transfer System, 2011). An enhanced transfer system increases accessibility to postsecondary education and training and, ultimately, employability, which provides a good argument for supporting the prioritization of pathways (BCCAT, 2007). British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec have led the way in supporting transfer and mobility across postsecondary education. While Ontario may be behind in terms of transfer and mobility, pathways are becoming increasingly popular across the province (Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2011; Gawley and McGowan, 2006; King, 2015; ONCAT, 2015; Ontario Government, 2011; Popovic, 2012). For instance, Ontario saw an increase of 160 pathways involving 46 institutions between 2009 and 2012 (Colleges Ontario, n.d.).

While many formal articulation and credit transfer agreements across institutions exist, Ontario does not have a provincial process or system in place for credit transfer and student mobility across all postsecondary environments (Ontario Government, 2011). We are still at an institutional level, and not a systems level in terms of transfer and mobility. Moreover, the current design of the postsecondary education system in Ontario presents challenges to implementing pathways. Whereas some education systems are intentionally designed for the integration of pathways, Ontario is designed as a binary where institutions such as colleges and universities have different vocational and learning outcomes (OISE, n.d.). As such, the alignment of programs, courses and learning outcomes require time and resources to map out, and must often be approached on a case-by-case basis. Further, as a binary system, Ontario's postsecondary structure creates different governance models, funding models, language/terminology,

and quality assurance mechanisms for colleges and universities. Therefore, regarding transfer and mobility, our current system demands a series of unique articulation agreements that are dependent on the communication and relationship-building of partnering institutions. Sometime this results in considerable coordination, time and resources expended in order to develop agreements and maintain partnerships at the institutional level (Kettle, 2018; Lennon et al., 2016).

In Ontario, there are bi-lateral and multi-lateral transfers being negotiated between and among colleges and universities, with the most transfers occurring between two colleges, or between a university and a college (CSA, 2011; Popovic, 2012). The most common forms of pathways in Ontario include the transfer of identified credits from one program to another, or the transfer of an entire credential for a block of credit towards another credential (e.g. certificate, degree or diploma). A common example of the transfer of entire degree is the "2 + 2" agreement, where a student can transfer their two year diploma and receive a credit of two years towards a four year undergraduate degree, therefore only requiring two more years of study at the university level (Popovic, 2012).

Previous research thus points to some areas for improvement within Ontario's current system for transfer and mobility. First, the lack of consistency, and in some cases, inability, to transfer credits from one institution to another is a barrier to mobility (Popovic, 2012). Second, the lack of clarity in the credit granting process is a challenge; university students with previous college experience indicated a need for better orientation sessions at the university around admission processes and criteria, including opportunities for advanced credit (Henderson et al, 2017). Lastly, communication of existing pathways is identified as an area for improvement. This was found in a study in which a number of students in a college who aspired to go on to university reported not knowing that there was a formal transfer agreement in place, indicating the need for greater communication and marketing of pathways.

Third, quality assurance remains a barrier in credit transfer processes. For instance, previous research indicates that, in Ontario, it is not always possible to combine a college diploma with two years at a university, as not all college programs have learning outcomes that can be recognized in a four-year degree. The Education Policy Institute has characterized credit transfer as "knowledge currency", wherein institutional bodies like Senates are "knowledge banks", and have the authority to recognize—or not— credits, to determine their relative value. Thus, an overall lack of "knowledge consistency" has resulted in the challenges in mapping transfer credits (Education Policy Institute, 2009). ONCAT argues that learning outcomes may help with mapping curriculum and ultimately finding alignment and quality assurance between programs and institutions (2015). This was also found to be the case by Confederation College and Trent University during the establishment of pathway in Indigenous studies, in which Indigenous Learning Outcomes were essential to content mapping between programs (CPRIL, 2014).

The perceptions that institutions have of each other can also present a challenge; in some cases there is competition between institutions, or worry that unsuccessful transfer students will reflect poorly on the receiving institution. Likewise, institutional attitudes may present a barrier in that not all institutions give equal consideration to pathways as a priority. Of course, the response in either case is that institutions need to work together to ensure responsible pathways (Lennon, 2016).

There are a lot of provincial efforts in place to support the improvement of our transfer system. For instance, Ontario, with the support from ONCAT, is working towards supporting a more integrated

system. Additionally, in Ontario there are a number of resources that have been developed to support institutions with pathways, including a credit transfer guide. There are also councils and organizations that support the success of the credit recognition, such as COU, and ONCAT. While all of this is essential work, it is important to get the buy-in and support of individual institutions.

Overall, more and more transfer agreements between institutions are occurring, and processes for transfer and mobility are improving. If we are to move towards a more system level approach (e.g. BC) we will have to address some of the current challenges to creating pathways, including managing different systems of governance, different language, different credentialing. A systems approach also may present challenges such as to unique programming that set institutions, or programs at institutions apart (BCCAT, 2007; Education Policy Institute, 2009). Research also suggests that governments, if they wish to see dramatic improvements to pathways integration, need to be aggressive in the approaches to stimulating progress. Overall, improving the transfer system requires political prioritization and support, aligning systems and technology, determining common definitions and measures and supporting cooperation across diverse institutions (Education Policy Institute).

Pathways for Indigenous Learners

While closing, there remains a gap in enrolment in the attainment of postsecondary education between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners. For instance, according to Statistics Canada (2011), nearly half (48%) of Indigenous people from ages 25-64 had postsecondary qualifications as compared to 64.7 percent of non-Indigenous people ages 25-64 (Statistics Canada, 2011). Closing this gap is essential to reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). It is also essential for supporting the rights, success, and well-being of Indigenous people in Canada, as illustrated by a number of critical documents. For example, the UN states that Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize their cultures and customs. They also have the right to improve their economic and social conditions, including education, employment, and vocational training (UNDRIP, 2007). The National Indian Brotherhood echoes these goals in their statement:

> We believe in education…as a preparation for total living; … as a means of free choice of where to live and work; … as a means of enabling us to participate fully in our social, economic, political and education advancement (1972).

Likewise, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) reiterated the need for Indigenous self-governance in education, in order to promote self-sufficiency for Indigenous communities and to enrich cultural and linguistic identities (2010). The AFN also calls for increased Indigenous representation in education, Indigenous worldviews in curricula, funding for Indigenous education, and wrap-around supports for Indigenous students.

Responding to the needs identified above, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities developed an *Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework* (2011), which aims to close the educational attainment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and is intended to improve Indigenous learners' achievements in education. The authors recognize that educational attainment is essential to reducing the socio-economic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and

communities. The framework adopts a wholistic approach based upon the Indigenous concept of interconnectedness. This idea is supported by the fact that higher education leads to higher socio-economic status and overall emotional, mental, and physical wellness. Therefore, incorporating wrap around supports will lead to higher rates of Indigenous learners and success in postsecondary education and will ensure that Indigenous learners have the appropriate skills and formal education to participate in the evolving economy (MTCU, 2011).

These initiatives are fully compatible with an enhanced transfer system, as such a system increases accessibility to postsecondary and ultimately employability and employment opportunities (Kettle et al 2018). Previous research indicates that pathways help to increase accessibility to postsecondary education, especially to underrepresented or more vulnerable groups amongst the wider population (Lennon et al., 2016). For instance, colleges have been perceived as gateways to higher education, where traditionally disadvantaged groups of the population tend to have higher enrolment. Through College-University transfer agreements, access to University programming is increased for traditionally disadvantaged groups (Lennon et al., 2016). Further, research indicates Indigenous learners are among the sectors most likely to transfer (Kettle et al., 2018). For instance, one study illustrated that a larger percentage of Indigenous students in university had previously gone to college, compared to their counterparts (Henderson et al., 2017). Lastly, a study completed by Brown (2003), in the United States, illustrates that Tribal Colleges played a critical role as a stepping-stone in the transition from secondary to postsecondary education.

More and more work is taking place in Ontario on increasing access to postsecondary education for Indigenous learners through transfer and mobility initiatives. In particular, ONCAT has funded a number of projects seeking to improve pathways for Indigenous learners, and pathways within Indigenous Studies. For instance, through their work on Pathways for Indigenous learners across Ontario's postsecondary landscape, the Centre for Policy and Research in Indigenous Learning (Confederation College), First Nations Technical Institute, and Trent University have been working together to create opportunities and increase accessibility to postsecondary education for Indigenous learners. This partnership has developed a framework titled "Shifting the Landscape: A Framework for Creating Pathways in Indigenous Education" which aims to assist institutions in increasing transfer and mobility for Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners pursuing pathways within Indigenous education (CPRIL, 2018). Canadore College is also undertaking research on understanding and improving Indigenous program pathways in Ontario by conducting an inventory of such pathways, as well as developing an Indigenous Program Pathways Action Plan (2017).

Indigenous learners may face unique barriers in their pursuit of postsecondary education, such as historical barriers, educational obstacles, social, economic and geographic obstacles, cultural and pedagogical obstacles, and financial obstacles (Preston, 2008). It is essential to identify the different barriers that exist among Indigenous learners and to find wholistic methods to student supports, such as wrap-around services (Association of Community Colleges, 2010; Preston, 2008; Wesley-Esquimaux, n.d.) Wrap-around supports aim to support the wholistic well-being of a student, including their social, spiritual, mental, emotional, relational, financial, and physical wellbeing (Shifting the Landscape, 2018). Additionally, several reports have found that bridging programs have been instrumental in aiding learners' transitions from one learning environment to another, especially in instances where programs are ongoing throughout the year (Hill-MacDonald, 2015). Bridging programs were identified as

particularly helpful for learners who were moving to a new city, who have been out of school for a while, or who were entering into western postsecondary learning for the first time (Hill-MacDonald, 2015; Medovarski, 2015). This was also found in the earlier Pathways for Indigenous Learners work, where Trent University's "Biishkaa" bridging program assisted the transition for transfer students from Confederation College's Aboriginal Community Advocacy program into the Indigenous Studies program and university life at Trent (CPRIL, 2014).

Lastly, it is critical to note that Indigenous institutes will soon be in a stronger position to support pathways for Indigenous learners. In particular, the provincial government has provided Indigenous institutes with funding to increase capacity so that they can deliver their own certificate, diploma and degree granting programs (Ontario Government, 2017). This will formalize the position of Indigenous Institutes as a third pillar of postsecondary education in Ontario, opening opportunities for more partnerships and pathways development.

Tracking/Monitoring Pathways

The Ontario Government has been working to understand and improve tracking and monitoring of transfer and mobility in Ontario. Currently, rates of transfer and mobility amongst Ontario's postsecondary institutions are difficult to measure and, surprisingly, there is limited information available from such significant sources as Statistics Canada. In some cases, patterns of transfer and mobility could be extrapolated using a cross-section of data sources. For instance, large databases exist in Ontario, e.g. the Ontario Education Number (OEN), Ontario Applications University Centre (OUAC); however, public access is not available, and there are still limitations to the data to analyze (Education Policy Institute, n.d.).

This is to say that the way our postsecondary system is designed presents challenges to tracking and monitoring the transfer and mobility of students across Ontario's postsecondary institutions. Similar to the identified challenges in finding alignment across programming from institution to institution, tracking data on pathways faces obstacles due to the nature of Ontario's postsecondary structures. In particular, as a binary system, systems, methods, and codes for tracking data vary from institution to institution.

As previously noted, British Columbia is leading the way on monitoring transfer and mobility. British Columbia also has diverse data sets to draw upon for monitoring transfer and mobility. For instance, similar to the Ontario Education Number (OEN), British Columbia has the Provincial Education Number or PEN. In one study, the BCCAT indicates that "a system for tracking mobility must have the ability to follow a student's progress through a particular program taken at two or more institutions, or to follow the student as they move from program to program, institution to institution" (2007, p.9). As such, the B.C. government has been actively working on aligning and improving data systems, to better share and align key data sets including enrolment data at the institutional and program levels, PENs, student personal information/demographics, and student aid (similar to OSAP). Again, a number of barriers were identified similar to what could be expected in streaming lining Ontario's data sets. These challenges include data structure diversity, coordination of data collection timing, different governance models, operational structures, variety in program lengths and inconsistency in credit values. Recommendations from this work include that some type of standardization needs to happen; for instance, institutions need to

develop systems for using the same program codes and data structures. Further, this work needs to start with a pilot project involving a subset of program across institutions (BCCAT, 2007).

The literature also indicates that we need to better understand students' perspectives on pathways, and in particular their interest and demand for mobility. In particular, we do not sufficiently understand if, or why, students want to transfer/move from one institution or another, or their perception of the benefits (Education Policy Institute, 2009).

Lastly, many advocates have expressed the need for improved data collection methods on Indigenous learners so that reliable and consistent data can be collected to evaluate the success of initiatives and programs. In the report, titled *Achieving Results through Partnership: First Progress Report on the Implementation of the Ontario Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework* (2015), the MTCU acknowledges the progress in funding, program delivery, and Indigenous consultation and control within Indigenous Education, but stresses the need for improved record keeping. Additionally, voluntary and flexible Indigenous learner self-identification procedures can provide more accurate statistics on Indigenous learners and the programming they are enrolled in (MTCU, 2015). Better data collection will enable more effective evaluation and monitoring initiatives.

Project Design and Methodology

This project used a multi-methods design, employing both qualitative and quantitative research approaches to evaluate how well our process has worked for identifying pathways and the success and sustainability of pathways that have been implemented (Creswell, 2014). In addition to qualitative and quantitative methods, our methodology also integrates Indigenous values and principles of evaluation and research (Kovach, 2012; Wilson 2008). Indeed, the Pathways for Indigenous Learners projects are all grounded by Indigenous methodology. Ceremony has informed much of our project activities. Each project begins with a customary feast where partners come together to share a meal, reflect on previous work, and to discuss the work ahead. Additionally, at our project launches, each partner presented to the group what they and their institution would bring to the work. Through these processes, members are committed to working with an open heart and an open mind in establishing a common ground. Further, relationship building and establishing mutual respect and understanding of our responsibility and accountability to the work are integral characteristics of our project's model. Lastly, reflection is built into every project meeting, and is an integral part of this phase, where through sharing circles and one on one interviews, project partners have shared their reflections on this work.

Evaluation is used to measure the effectiveness of a projects or programs ability to meet its intended outcomes, as well as to systematically gather information for reflection on how well it worked (Stetler et al., 2006). Indigenous methods of evaluation and measuring success were also reviewed and a part of the project model. In her paper on Indigenous methods of evaluation and Indigenous student success Lafrance (2008) describes evaluation research as "Evaluation is about learning from thoughtful reflection and assessment – values that are central to our mission as educators". Lafrance further outlines, "Core values of and Indigenous Framework" that grounded are processes for evaluation. For example, gathered information in multiple ways and from multiple perspectives to develop a wholistic and deep understanding of our context. Lastly, through this work we hope to support the relationships that we have built by building capacity and taking action on what we have learned (Lafrance, 2008).

Specifically, our methodology is broken down into two phases: Phase 1 involved formative evaluation using qualitative methods including a literature review, group reflection and sharing circles, and semi-structured interviews. Here, methods of formative evaluation were employed to assess the operationalization of the original project and its work plan as well on how well the project met its intended goals (Stetler et al., 2006); Phase 2 involved summative evaluation using qualitative and quantitative methods including semi-structured interviews with key informants, alongside our evaluative tool.

The following section serves to provide an overview of our research methodology and the specific methods that will be used in each phase.

Group Reflection and Sharing Circles

As part of the formative evaluation, we held in-person group reflection sessions with partners from the First, Second and Third Circle partners at our regular in-person meetings. Here partners had the opportunity to reflect and share their thoughts and critical feedback on our process for identifying pathways for Indigenous learners. The key areas that the Steering Committee reflected on included: how

well our process worked for creating pathways; appropriate methods for data collection; and how we define a successful pathway.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi structured key informant interviews were used for both formative and summative evaluation. Participants of the key informant interviews include representatives who sit on our project Steering Committee's First, Second, and Third Circle of partners.

The interview guide was informed by the literature review and by members of the project's advisory committee (First Circle Partners). All interviews were semi-structured in that there were particular questions/topics that each participant was asked about, although there was flexibility in the order that they were asked to promote a more natural and fluid dialogue. Most of the interview questions were open ended, aside from the questions that focused on how many pathways were developed and implemented through this work. The first half of the interview explored themes and topics relating to how well our model worked for creating pathways for Indigenous learners. The second half of the interview covered topics such as the success that participants had with implementing pathways within their own institutions, and how successful the pathways had been (e.g. student enrolment/completion/ satisfaction) since their implementation. Interviews also explored thoughts and perceptions as to what is required to ensure that this project and the pathways for Indigenous learners that are developed are sustainable. (See Appendix C for a copy of the Interview Guide).

Research Ethics approval was received by Confederation Colleges Research Ethics board on June 28th, 2019.

Respondent Participation

Overall, Steering Committee members from 12 out of the original 15 partnering institutions had the opportunity to share their reflection through either the sharing circles and the key informant interviews, or both. In particular, two sharing circles were held with Steering Committee members at our two in-person meetings, in May 2018 (n=17) and November 2018 (n=19). Additionally, 15 interviews were completed with Steering Committee representatives, who represented 11 of the original 15 partnering institutions. Interviews were completed from July 2018 – January 2019. The target sample was based on interviewing at least one representative from each partner institution, continuing until reaching thematic saturation in the content of interview responses (Bowen, 2008). As a result of conflicting schedules and project timelines, not every original Steering Committee member was interviewed; however, thematic saturation was achieved in that there was consistency in the lengthy list of themes identified among key informant interviews. This next section provides an overview of the results and key findings of the sharing circles, key informant interviews, and evaluative tool application, which are organized as responses to the original overarching research questions.

Analysis of the Data Set

Methods of thematic and content analysis on the data gathered from sharing circles and the semi-structured interviews were employed, resulting in a lengthy list of themes (Saldana, 2009). The research team linked key themes with supportive quotes from key informant interviews, notes from meeting

minutes, and themes identified within the environmental scan and literature review as a way to triangulate the data. In particular, results of the analysis of the key informant interviews, the review of meeting minutes, and the literature review were entered into an Excel spreadsheet to facilitate organization of the data and generation of overarching themes and trends. Triangulation is a useful method in qualitative research to validate and capture different dimensions of a topic. In the case of this research, triangulation of results helped to link different sources of information in providing a wholistic understanding.

Table 1: Demonstrating the Triangulation Method

Challenges to Implementing Pathways			
Theme	Description	Supportive Quote(from key informant or meeting minutes)	Link to theme found in the literature
Navigating Systems	Understanding the different systems and models of governance across institutions	*I think we have challenges with navigating the systems themselves, like in your own institutions, who is responsible for implementing these pathways, who do I need to talk to, which stakeholders do I need to involve…*	Ontario PSE is not designed a binary system, which is a way where college programs are seamless articulated with university programs… programming and alignment varies requiring time and resources to map out program affinity. As a binary system, Colleges and Universities have different governance models, funding models, terminology, quality assurance mechanisms. The way the current system is, is a series of individual articulation agreements that are dependent on the communication and work of partnering institutions (Lennon et al., 2016)
Supports to Implementing Pathways			
Theme	Description	Supportive Quote(from key informant or meeting minutes)	Link to the literature
The asset map	Process of gathering information for the asset map, and the resulting document itself	*I think that the asset map is essential, that has been an awesome tool, if we are just talking about process, I think that the asset map is really helping us see where our strengths are and our weaknesses are, and helping people through these pathways*	Asset mapping is a method used in community development that involved collecting information on a community's strengths, or resources, that support a certain aspect of a community. Through this approach, communities can identify areas of strength, and by deduction, areas of weakness, in terms of developing particular

			strategies or initiatives (Dorfman, 1998).

Development and Application of the Evaluative Tool

Results of the literature review, the sharing circles, and the key informant interviews informed the development of an evaluative tool for monitoring the success and sustainability of the pathways for Indigenous learners that emerge out of this work. The evaluative tool was applied to existing pathways that came out of this project. As more pathways are implemented, it will be distributed among First, Second and Third circle partners to gather quantitative and qualitative summative data on the outcomes of our project, including the following measures: number of pathways created; number of pathways implemented; additional information on pathways (e.g. how pathways are marketed/advertised); and evaluation of pathways outcomes, (e.g. enrolment of learners, completion rates, etc). The tool will continue to help to ensure that key elements of our pathways model are in place to support a successful and sustainable pathway. (See page 35).

There are limitations to our methodology that are important to note. Firstly, there are limited pathways in place, which presented challenges when it came to testing out and applying our evaluative tool. Secondly, this study proposed to interview Indigenous learners who are pursuing our pathways; however, at the time of this study we had limited pathways in place (three), and no Indigenous learners pursuing those implemented pathways. However, results of this work have informed the development of a monitoring tool that, going forward, will aim to gather multiple sources of information, including learners' experiences.

Results and Key Findings – Question One

## Outcomes: Our Intent Versus Our Impact

> *I think everyone was really honest and open in conversations, so even though the group was focused on pathways, and creating pathways for Indigenous Learners, we were also able to produce other things that are really useful, like the position paper, that might have a broader impact, in terms of process…. That crossed boundaries that resulted in different concrete things.*

Collectively this work has succeeded in achieving several outcomes that extend beyond our initial intention of creating pathways for Indigenous learners. When reflecting on our successes, the group characterized these unexpected outcomes as "the impact versus our intention"; this is to say that, while we intended to come together to work on pathways for Indigenous learners, our impact was much greater. Outcomes from our work include the following:

- Establishment of a diverse Network that is committed to working on Pathways for Indigenous Learners
- 6 agreements for Pathways for Indigenous Learners (see Appendix B);
- Diverse list of prospective, and/or nearly implemented, pathways for Indigenous learners
- Partnerships for Indigenous Learners (e.g. an MOU on sharing curriculum in Indigenous education between Sault College and Confederation College)
- A unique articulation agreement integrating key elements of pathways for Indigenous Learners, including institutional commitments, wrap around services, and pathways monitoring (See Appendix E)
- Development of critical documents e.g. principled position on Pathways for Indigenous Learners, and templates (e.g. asset map templates, curriculum mapping samples, etc)

Successes and Benefits of Our Model

Through sharing circles and key informant interviews, we asked Steering Committee partners to identify areas of success and areas for improvement for our model and processes for creating pathways for Indigenous learners. The data generated can be organized according to the themes as identified in Figure 4. The discussion that follows highlights and discusses the three most common responses.
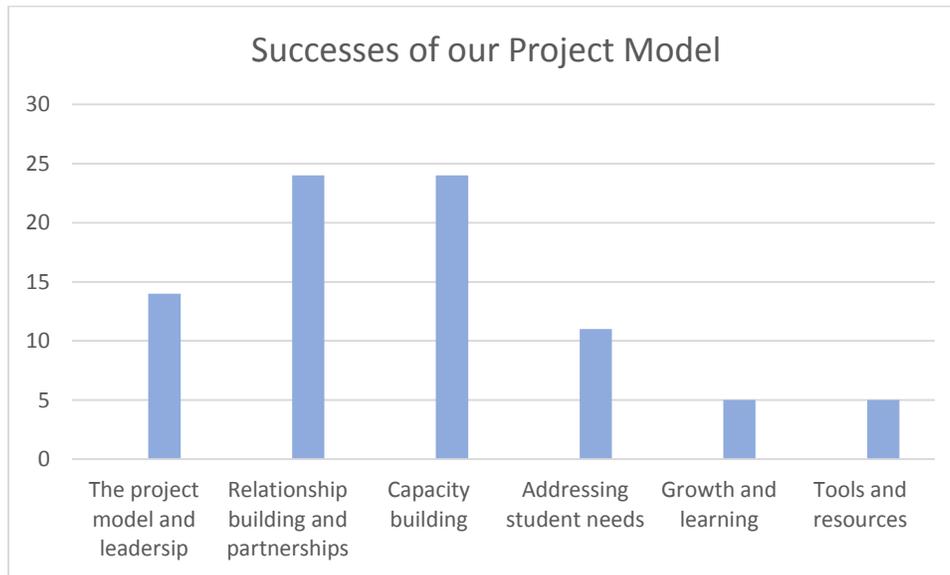
Figure 4: A graph of the themes under project "successes" and the number of times they were mentioned in key informant interviews

- *Project Leadership and Relationship-Building*

Key informants indicated that the leadership of the project's advisory committee (First Circle partners from Confederation College, First Nations Technical Institute and Trent University) was an integral part of the project's success and that

> *…the commitment and relationship piece was very critical… having a clear terms of reference clarifying expectations for the participants, the welcoming feast, incorporating culture definitely was a strength for me, as an Indigenous person, it really created a sense of pride. I think the way that it was incorporated so seamlessly, there was a natural feel to it. It didn't seem unusual. It was really an amazing experience to be a part of an Indigenous led and focused project. You could feel the difference.*

The First Circle's model for partnership focused on relationship-building and was grounded in Indigenous methodologies, values and principles. For instance, meetings were opened by a welcome address and opening prayer, partners spent time getting to know one another over meal sharing, and each meeting integrated areas for practicing reflection. This partnership was also grounded by documents such as Terms of Reference agreements, and Memoranda of Understanding that were signed by the presidents from each partnering institution (See Figure 1). In addition to their model for collaboration and partnership, the First Circle of partners established a model for pathways development. Key elements of

the pathways development model included: building pathways between programs that are rooted in Indigenous knowledge(s), mapping curriculum via Indigenous Learning Outcomes, aligning wrap-around support services, and assisting learners' transitions between programs through bridging programs (i.e., Biishkaa).

First Circle partners also carried relationship-building into the implementation phase, whereby staff and faculty from both institutions met in person in the development of the pathway. Furthermore, faculty and staff from Trent also met with prospective students at Confederation College to share information on pathways with learners, and to understand and address any barriers they would face in accessing the transfer opportunity. This work resulted in a successful pathway in Indigenous Studies between Confederation College and Trent University. Two other articulation agreements were also developed in the fields of Environmental Studies and Social Work.

Further, key informants perceived that the project succeeded in expanding from the First Circle into a Second Circle of partners. The First Circle of partners carried over many of the same processes and values into the Second Circles; new partners were invited to join in a customary feast to learn about the Pathways for Indigenous Learners model. To support a reciprocal relationship, new partners were asked to demonstrate their commitment and contributions to this project. Key informants expressed strong support for the integration of Indigenous methodologies, values and principles and perceived that the integration was a significant factor in the success of the project. In particular, key informants indicated that the continuation of the First Circle approach was integral to successful investment in the project, and partnership development between Steering Committee members:

> *The meetings were good, I think the positive side of getting together in various meetings is that we met face to face, there is nothing like meeting face to face formally and informally.*

> *I mean I sit on a lot of committees and I was very impressed with the organization and thought put into this project.*

Although there are a limited number of pathways that have been implemented through this work to date, Steering Committee members perceived a number of benefits to their participation in our process. In particular, participants expressed that it was beneficial to belong to a large and diverse network that is dedicated to improving access to postsecondary education for Indigenous learners.

> *The network is a huge benefit… the learning… being able to play a role in a project that is so committed to Indigenous education… I loved the variety of roles, it wasn't just the heads of Indigenous initiatives meeting together… it was a bit random in terms the mixing, but I think it was really good and allowed for different perspectives.*

They further identified that the relationships and partnerships that grew out of this network were beneficial in ways that go beyond the formation of pathways. One key informant noted:

> *I think that first, one of the things that went well is that we established relationships among colleges and universities, colleges and colleges, and universities and universities. Our meetings were very interesting in*

> *that way. We can now pick up the phone and say we have some students here for you.*

- *Capacity-Building*

One further success of the project as identified by key informants is capacity-building. In particular, participants indicated that they have a stronger understanding of the different postsecondary systems in Ontario, of the meaning of cross-cultural learning, and of the unique considerations for supporting pathways for Indigenous learners. Key informants stated that they gained specific assets and knowledge through the sharing resources; one example of such is the wrap-around support model. As one informant elaborated, *"I think it opened a lot of people's eyes… opened up whether it is about wrap around services, whether it is about opportunities for Indigenous Learners…"* On the same point, our informants expressed gratitude for the learning that they acquired in the various discussions that were held in our meetings, even on difficult topics such as systemic racism and the underlying assumptions that institutions held towards each other. Steering Committee members seem to be aware that this project has supported their own personal growth and learning, in part from having the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions with the group, and in part because of their access to new tools and resources that grew out of this work. The following statement sums up this awareness:

> *Personal learning, being able to learn about different institutions/ roles that people have in their institution, it was an opportunity to share information on best practices across institutions… if you have a problem, another institution may have a way to address it…it was a side benefit that came out of this, you're creating awareness that can be shared across the system.*

It is through this type of capacity building that institutions can better address the needs of Indigenous learners, which key informants also identified as a success of this model. Further, it is important to note that our Steering Committee's shared values of trust and honesty allowed us to create a space to safely have these conversations.

Areas for Improvement
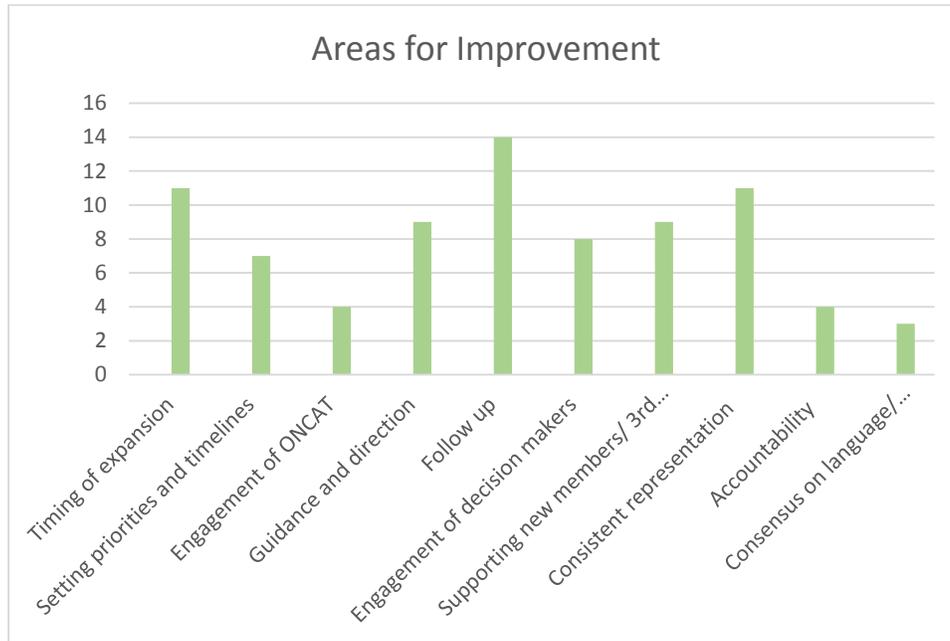
Figure 5: A graph of the themes under "Areas for Improvement" and the number of times they were mentioned in key informant interviews

When interviewed, the Steering Committee members identified a number of areas for improvement in our processes. It needs to be observed that one of the critical gaps as identified by key informants was, simply put, the need for more pathways. Indeed, it can be said that all of the identified "areas for improvement" that follow are factors in the overarching concern with the relative lack of fully implemented pathways.

- *Guidance to New Members and the Third Circle Transition*

Supporting different stages of transition and providing guidance to new members of the group was identified as a common concern by key informants. For instance, while the First to Second Circle transition was perceived as a success, key informants suggested the inclusion of the Third Circle could have been better timed, as indicated here:

> *The transition from First to Second Circle seemed really smooth to me… the Second to Third I think felt a bit more cumbersome, there was a lot more people, and a lot of people who are at different places and understanding.*

In particular, Second Circle key informants felt that they could have used more time to work on the pathways that they had identified in earlier phases of the work before exploring new partnerships with Third Circle partners. As one member explained:

*The third circle institutions that joined were great and I learned
a lot from them and there is a lot of potential…. But if there is
anything that could be changed, I think maybe leave more time
for the Second Circle stuff to come to fruition.*

In similar fashion, Third Circle key informants indicated that they could have benefited from more time, guidance and direction. One key informant noted:

*I guess just be a little more mindful of the third circle, and how far
behind we were. Like the asset map itself is an undertaking. We
couldn't come to the table and have fulsome conversations because
we hadn't done the asset map that was a challenge as Third Circle
member.*

Upon reflection, some of our informants indicated that timing and the size of the group could have contributed to challenges to the Second and Third Circle transition of partners. To facilitate the introduction and integration of new members, it was suggested that the advisory committee "creates more process documents and onboarding process for new people at new institutions… so each member is fully ready for meetings". Lastly, key informants indicated that defining key terms, and ensuring common understandings of certain terminology, would have been beneficial, especially in bringing new members fully into the work.

- *Commitment, Prioritization and Accountability*

The interviews we have conducted suggest that, in some cases, commitment, prioritization and accountability by Steering Committee members could be better. Our general approach in this project was to be as inclusive as possible, and to continue to invite other institutions to the table; however, not all partners may have realized the level of commitment required in order to participate meaningfully. One key informant observed, "People maybe don't understand the amount of work that goes into this, and keeping it successful." Another agreed, stating that

*[i]t is easy to say that you want to do a pathway, but once you get into
the weeds, it is much more challenging, there are many obstacles. We
did this ambitiously but as we move through it, it is like what did I
commit to? … People maybe bit off more than they could chew.*

In a similar vein, key informants indicated that while the commitment of Steering Committee members at project meetings was apparent, the members needed to improve on the follow up and communication after the in-person meetings. By way of example:

*I think it was probably not so much not the project management
side, more on the side of the participants in terms of making sure
they were following up and meeting their commitments. At meetings
there was eagerness but then partners go back to their institutions
and things start crashing down and things fall to the wayside.*

Key informants further proposed that participating institutions should provide consistent representation at the project meetings. It was understood that

> *[t]his might be hard to control, but the consistency in representation at the table, I think that is really important... I think it is ok to bring new people, as long as the core is still there, and then you can bring new people up to speed before they come, but having the core is important*.

This was viewed as especially important as many partners have competing priorities, and project meetings were intended to provide the time and space to get the work done; when the representation is inconsistent, time must be allocated at each meeting for bringing new participants up to speed. Lastly, key informants indicated that the Steering Committee members could do a better job of setting short and long term priorities and timelines for pathways implementation:

> *...timelines, like setting realistic timelines of what pathways development looks like... like at a university in particular, it could be our faculties, they may only meet once a month, so you are talking maybe two months of time just to get the first level of approval.*

A related theme was the lack of communication or follow up between partners, both in terms of implementation processes and the wider mandate to communicate the importance of pathways for Indigenous learners within partnering institutions. In particular, key informants indicated that they need to find better methods for communicating this work within their institution to promote interest and buy in from other staff and faculty, as follows here: "Make sure you schedule in person follow up meetings when together, and ensure those meetings are in person". Whereas another key informant had this to say:

> *Well I think improving the communication after the meetings. In some senses you we shouldn't have to do this, but if somebody could coordinate, phone to follow up on an institution working on an articulation agreement and offering help with the process.*

- *Developing a Higher Profile for Pathways for Indigenous Learners*

In another variation on the theme of communication, key informants discussed how more work needs to be done to improve the profile of pathways for Indigenous learners across the province and in their home institutions. In part, this could be addressed by improving our methods for informing senior leaders and decision-makers about our project and by engaging them in our processes. For instance, in our "Expanding the Circle" Project (2018), partners signaled the importance of bringing senior administration to our final project meeting to learn about our work; however, although we attempted to extend invitations, we found that a limited number of senior leaders attended. Therefore, championing pathways for Indigenous Learners in our home institutions was also identified as an area for improvement. Upon reflection on our process, one key informant expressed,

I think another important thing is that we had a bunch of people in the room that were committed to learn, but then they were responsible for working with a whole other group of people… and to education them on the project on how important it is and what we are trying to do… and I think most people struggled with this. They needed to do this with senior admin, faculty, the registrar…

The lack of engagement of decision makers may have been a result of competing schedules, or a need for better communication, but it nevertheless indicates that more work is required to determine the best methods for engaging decisions makers and increase the profile of priority of pathways.

Challenges to Implementing Pathways for Indigenous Learners

While our project work has resulted in the identification of an expansive list of potential pathways and related outcomes, it must again be noted that we have implemented fully only a few pathways—three to be exact, and created agreements for three others (six pathways in total). Through the sharing circles and the key informant interviews, we were able to undertake a deep investigation into potential reasons as to why this is the case. In part, the lack of implemented pathways can be attributed to some of the dynamics identified in the section just above: a need for improvements in training, guidance and direction, and a lack of follow up and commitment/accountability outside of our project meetings. Beyond these factors, however, we identified and categorized a number of challenges to implementing pathways for Indigenous learners. These challenges can be characterized as individual, institutional or systemic, and are organized as such in the section below.
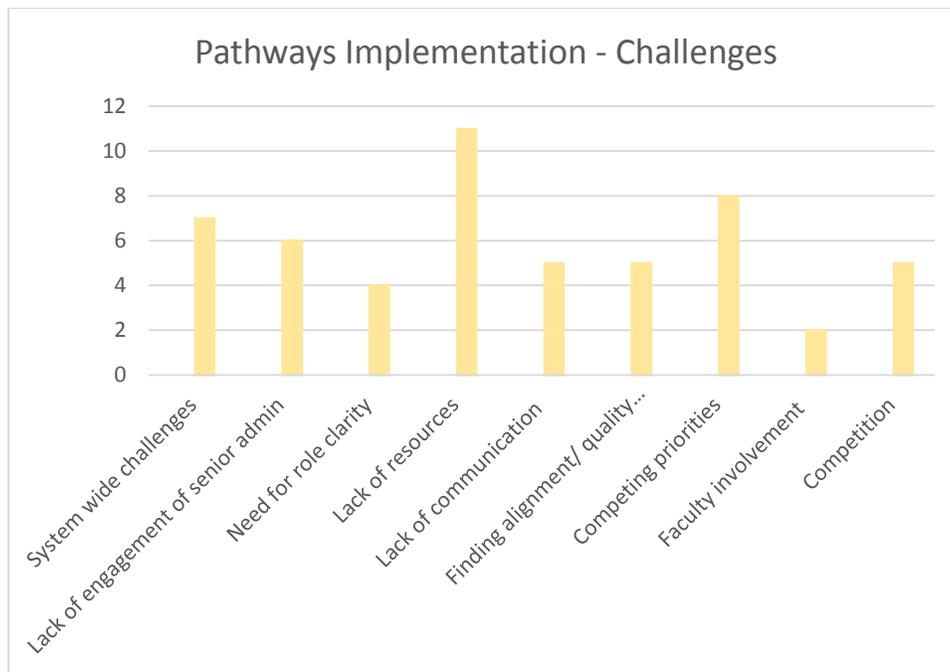
Figure 6: A graph of the themes under "Pathways Implementation - Challenges" and the number of times they were mentioned in key informant interviews

Individual Challenges

- *Competing Priorities*

There were a series of challenges and barriers to implementing pathways that occur at a personal or individual level for participants. The most common challenge identified by key informants was characterized as "competing priorities". Many of the project's Steering Committee members perform several roles within their institution, and this pathways-related project is just one of many other initiatives within their portfolios. For instance, one key informant explained, "A lot of us are involved in a number of projects… it is a challenge finding the time to focus on this."

- *Lack of Knowledge/Understanding*

A second individual challenge for Steering Committee members is their lack of knowledge of critical pieces or processes in relation to pathway implementation. By way of example, some key informants expressed a need for more information about curriculum mapping, or that they didn't know who to engage at the different stages of pathways implementation. To further illustrate, a key informant noted, "I think we have challenges with navigating the systems themselves, like in your own institutions, who is responsible for implementing these pathways, who do I need to talk to, which stakeholders do I need to involve…." Another key informant stated that, "if people aren't familiar with the process, it is even more confusing… I know from the beginning to the end… I realize that it will take two to three months to start".

Institutional Challenges

- *Lack of Engagement of Senior Administration or Decision-Makers*

Key informants have identified a number of difficulties with implementing pathways at the institutional level pertaining to governance and decision-making, and well as to academics and quality assurance. Because of these difficulties, it is critical to have the buy in and from support from senior leaders. However, lack of engagement of senior administration or decision makers was identified as a common hurdle. For instance,

> [y]ou really have to have buy in of your senior admin, ultimately they are the ones that will say yay or nay… part of our challenge, our senior admin wants 2 + 2… and agreements must be 2 + 2… and anything that isn't we are not interested in.

Conversely, when discussing the impact of having buy in from senior administration a key informant noted that "…it makes it so much easier. The fact that as an institution, from the president down creating pathways is one of our priorities, so I have the support administratively".

- *Lack of Resources*

Lack of resources was found to be a barrier to implementing pathways, a factor which may emerge from competing priorities within the institution, but also from the relatively limited pathways development

across Ontario. In particular, key informants identified that oftentimes there is a lack of time, funding, people, and tools such as guiding documents or policies that would be necessary to support pathways development and implementation. As one key informant observed, *"*one of the challenges is that there are no dedicated resources to actually be doing this, it depends on availability". Furthermore, in the context of pathways for Indigenous learners, this is amplified by a general lack of core resources allocated to Indigenous education within postsecondary institutions. This is to say that: *"*It's challenging when Indigenous education is not identified as a priority...it can be challenging if it is a priority for you but not for other areas of your institutions". Indeed, the lack of resources for Indigenous Education is often discussed at our Steering Committee meetings, and has been identified in other research. For instance, in focus groups completed in the Shifting the Landscape study, student respondents indicated that a lack of resources, particularly in terms of student support, needs to be addressed (CPRIL, 2018). Put another way,

> *This work on paper looks like other ONCAT projects, but it is not the same… Partners are in non-sustainable roles, lots of levels to go through, some institutions think this is typical work, some might be in that mindset…but educators, support staff, are in an unsustainable situation.*

- *Lack of Faculty Engagement*

Competing priorities may also lead to a lack of faculty involvement in pathways development, which was identified as an institutional barrier to implementing pathways: "In some cases it can be faculty, to give you a specific example, the faculty are busy and hard to contact, while we are trying to do the liaison, we are really struggling to bring people together". Key informants have signaled that faculty involvement is essential to the success of pathways, as they have the requisite understanding of course and program curricula, and therefore play an important role in curriculum mapping. Additionally, faculty have direct contact with Indigenous learners, with whom they can share information about the existence of pathways. Our informants have confirmed that, while they can identify potential programs for pathways, they require faculty engagement to establish the affinities between programs across institutions, and they most certainly rely on faculty engagement when they reach the phase of curriculum mapping. Faculty have significant "pull" in moving a pathway forward, as one informant explains:

> *I think part of it was that I think the faculty were involved, and that is another overall weakness for us, the faculty aren't so involved. Faculty hold a lot of power in universities. If they know what is going on with this project, and how to do this, that makes a big difference, they will take the initiative. And if administrators see this, I doubt they would block it.*

Stemming from this, faculty also play an important role in quality assurance, ensuring that the curriculum is fully mapped and that credits awarded from courses or programs provide the learner with sufficient knowledge and skill to enter into another program.

- *Need for Role Clarity*

Key informants identified a need for role clarity in terms of distinguishing specific accountabilities within the institution on pathways implementation. They express that clarity is required around who they need to engage, and in particular, concerning who is—or who should be—responsible for the various elements of pathways implementation:

> *… the other thing is role clarity, which really isn't It has been a bit of barrier in our institutions, only because there has been so much change all the time, and who is responsible for what, [for leading pathways work], we are trying to work on that.*

- *Student Enrolment Issues*

Key informants also identified student enrolment, either too high or too low, as a potential issue in pathways implementation. On one hand, you need sufficient enrolment of learners to justify and sustain the implementation of a pathway, or for it to be perceived as successful. On the other hand, one key informant suggested that high volume could be a barrier; if a pathway or program has too many students enrolled, more faculty and resources will need to be allocated to that pathway and program, which may not be possible. One key informant expressed the dynamic in these terms:

> *Enrolment has been a challenge for some, too much enrolment to match the faculty complement. So when you talk about a partnership that will increase enrolment that becomes an obstacle to them because then they need another professor*.

- *Competing Timelines and Priorities*

Timing and, in particular, the aligning of schedules, was identified as a further barrier at the institutional level. Similar to competing schedules at the individual level, institutions have different schedules and timelines for critical meetings in which decisions are made. Since such meetings may only occur at certain times of the year, partners who have missed such a meeting may have to wait some time to receive approval on something, as explained here:

> *When I am thinking of a completed project, I am not necessarily thinking of the approved project because the approval takes over a year, because it has a series of steps. And so many committees that it has to go through, and these committees might only meet once a month, and if you miss the month, then your bumped to the next month. For me to complete an articulation, it is done, but not yet going through the approval process and that is just time.*

- *Competing Priorities*

Again, many of the abovementioned challenges could be attributed, at least in part, to competing priorities within the institution. Pathways development, or even supporting Indigenous education or access to postsecondary education for Indigenous learners, may not be the highest priority of senior leadership and decisions makers within the institution. Institutional priorities need to shift for there to be faster and greater success in the areas of pathways development and Indigenous Education.

Systemic Challenges

- *Misaligning Systems and Structures across Ontario Postsecondary Institutions*

Key informants further identified that, while Ontario has prioritized improving transfer and mobility across its postsecondary landscape, and, despite the critical work done by key organizations like ONCAT, there are still inherent systemic challenges to implementing these priorities. Transfer and mobility is still a fairly new thing in Ontario, as one key informant outlined: "The details for pathways is all so new in Ontario, it hasn't even been a decade, we have so much to figure out around creating pathways, monitoring pathways". As we have seen, the diversity in systems and the lack of consistency in approach are barriers to mobility. As a binary system, Colleges, and Universities have different governance models, funding models, language and terminology, and quality assurance mechanisms. As a result, the current transfer system functions as a series of individual articulation agreements that are dependent on the communication, commitment and work of partnering institutions (Lennon et al., 2016). In the context of our group, key informants agreed that navigating systems of governance and organization is still challenge. Similar to the need for greater role clarity within institution, key informants identified the need for greater understanding of the processes, and who to engage, and when, across our different institutions. As one key informant stated: "I think some of the challenges are trying to navigate between the college systems and the university systems themselves".

- *Competition Among Postsecondary Institutions*

Lastly, competition between postsecondary institutions was identified in several different forms as underlying barrier to supporting pathways for Indigenous learners across our partnering institutions. First, one key informant noted, "some more relationship building needs to happen between colleges and universities, some folks may be holding cards closer to the chest, and are still feeling things out". Second, key informant interviews indicated that there are still perceived inherent biases regarding the type of learning that occurs in Indigenous institutes, colleges and universities; and specifically, the notion that applied and technical learning at colleges is not as theoretical or scholarly as that which is offered at universities. Conversely, in some cases there is a perception that universities work in silos, and that they are also competitive, and as a result, do not want to award fair credits to programming offered at other postsecondary institutions. For instance, a key informant explained, "Trying to navigate between the college system and the university system, I think some of the challenges are… I don't think the university system recognizes the quality of the college graduates".

Alternatively, another informant outlined that, "There have been delays, sometime the colleges don't understand the importance of leveraging an articulation with a university, I don't know if colleges are committed to that". Key informants also discussed competition for learners and enrolment as a potential barrier to implementing pathways, especially in cases when there are a number of postsecondary institutions within a geographic area. The notion of competition across postsecondary educations institutions and pathways development is supported by other research. For instance, negative perceptions of other institutions was identified as challenge in cases where institutions still perceive particular institutions to be more "scholarly" than others. Additionally, worry that unsuccessful transfer students will negatively impact the reputation of the receiving institution was identified (Lennon, 2016).

Supporting the Implementation of Pathways for Indigenous Learners

Alongside the investigation into challenges and barriers to implementing pathways for Indigenous leaners, we also explored wise practices and external and institutional mechanisms that have supported implementing pathways across our partnering institutions.
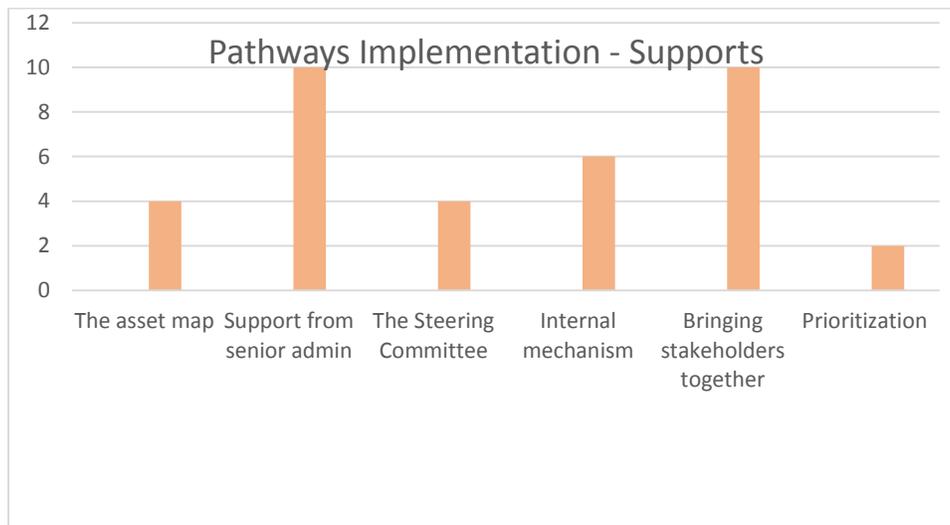
Figure 7: A graph of the themes under "Pathways Implementation - Supports" and the number of times they were mentioned in key informant interviews

- *Provincial Prioritization*

While the current status of transfer and mobility at the provincial level has been identified as a challenge to pathways implementation, our key informants have been encouraged by the fact that improving transfer and mobility across Ontario's postsecondary landscape is a provincial priority, and continued support from organizations like ONCAT is likewise encouraging. Our informants are hopeful that pathways will remain a priority of the provincial government, and that hopefully, this ongoing support trickles down into the priorities of postsecondary institutions. Moreover, the key informants indicated that to further support the prioritization of transfer and mobility within Ontario's postsecondary institutions, the provincial government needs to offer some sort of incentives to support this work. It is also critical that the government continues to support ONCAT as they actively promote pathways through the funding of projects that seek to build pathways and enhance transfer and mobility systems. In fact,

the literature suggests that governments, if they wish to see dramatic improvements to pathways integration, need to be aggressive in their approaches to stimulating progress. An umbrella of incentives for institutions were identified as a potential approach (Data on Student Mobility; Education Policy Research Institute, Lennon, 2016).

- *Institutional Mechanisms*

Our key informants have identified institutional mechanisms that would facilitate the implementation of pathways within their institutions. Such mechanisms included greater support from senior administrators and decision makers, the formal engagement of faculty, the creation of pathways coordinator positions, and the establishment of a cross-sector committee for pathways implantation. When discussing the advantage of having a pathways coordinator, one key informant expressed a need for *"…making sure that there is someone to bring the pathway alive, take care of students, leading it and making sure it doesn't get dropped".* Additionally, key informants indicated that creating a dedicated space for all those who are involved in pathways implementation to meet would also be helpful. Such a space would include the registrar, recruiters, student support staff, faculty, students, and even community partners. One key informant explained it thus: "The only thing I can think of is developing that pathways committee and assigning the committee key people in the institutions… and that it is a part of their regular work. And build capacity among new committee members" while another key informant noted, simply, the benefit in "[h]aving all the people… frontline, instructors, decision makers… involved. The main players were all in the same room".

In addition to such institutional mechanisms, key informants listed some wise practices from our pathways work as ideal supports for pathways implementation. For instance, key informants identified that Steering Committee expertise, and in particular the breadth of knowledge present within the committee, facilitated the implementation of pathways. Further to this, key informants celebrated the relationships formed among the Steering Committee members, and even within their institution, as a result of our process. Additionally, key informants expressed that in-person meetings is a much-valued aspect of their work on pathways development, as it provided them with a time and space "to get work done" and to facilitate the development of critical relationships, i.e. "Relationships are a big one, so spending time in those in person meetings, having the relationship with our partners, we know who to contact we know who to make connections with". Building trust was also identified in the literature as an integral part of the transfer process, required at many levels (e.g. in development of agreements, with prospective learners) (Lennon, et al., 2016). Through relationship building, our Steering Committee has been able develop trust in each other.

- *Development of Guiding Tools and Resources*

Particular tools and resources were perceived as useful to the pathways implementation process. For example, key informants indicated that while the process of completing the asset map[1] was time consuming, it was an invaluable tool, as it set the foundation for pathways development and highlighted institutional strengths and weaknesses. Indeed, as one key informant put it,

> *I think that the asset map is essential, that has been an awesome tool, if we are just talking about process, I think that the asset map is really helping us see where our strengths are and our weaknesses are, and helping people through these pathways.*

- *Development of "Responsible" Pathways Agreements*

Lastly, key informants identified wise practices in the development of pathways agreements that facilitate the pursuit and success of pathways at the learners' level. Such wise practices include joint admission agreements, "2 + 2" models, and partnerships between institutions that share the same geography, cohort models, and bridging programs. In the final Steering Committee meeting, partners also identified elements of our pathways that make them "Responsible", and that these elements are critical to include within our articulation agreements. Such elements include a plan for relationship building and engagement

Supporting the Sustainability of our Pathways

When queried as to how we can support the sustainability of our pathways for Indigenous learners, the overarching theme of informants' responses was relationship building and maintenance throughout all levels of our pathways.

> *Relationships between this diverse group are very powerful. I will be leaning on them in the future. I want my students to go to a place where they are going to have the highest change of succeeding. I can call people up… five years ago I would be rolling the dice on whether or not it is a place where I know they would succeed.*

This begins with building and maintaining relationships between partnering institutions and all who are involved with the implementation of a pathway (e.g. academic units, registrars, support services staff,

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[1] Asset mapping is a method used in community development that involved collecting information on a community's strengths, or resources, that support a certain aspect of a community. Through this approach, communities can identify areas of strength, and by deduction, areas of weakness, in terms of developing particular strategies or initiatives (Dorfman, 1998). In the context of our work, communities of focus include individual institutions, as well as the community that was created through our steering committee group, that includes reps from each partnering institution.

marketing and recruitment, etc.). One key informant put it, "I mean from our perspective, I hope we can continue [this project] because it does facilitate the creation of, but also the maintenance of those relationships that we need to make the initiatives successful". Relationship-building and maintenance also help to support accountability, which is critical to the success of our pathways. As we learned from our interviews, and the literature, pathways take time, resources and coordination. They involve a lot of people within patterning institutions and often undergo multiple phases to their implementation. It essential everyone who is involved in a pathway is accountable to their role or responsibility. We must be accountable what we commit to bring to this work. Robin Wall Kimmerer puts it in these terms:

> *Each person, human or no, is bound to every other in a reciprocal relationship. Just as all beings have a duty to me, I have a duty to them. If an animal gives its life. If I receive a stream's gift of pure water, then I am responsible for returning a gift in kind. An integral part of a human's education is to know these duties and how to perform them.* (2013)

Further, establishing mechanisms to support this relationship maintenance, and accountability is essential to the sustainability of a pathway. Key informants identified a series of possible mechanisms to support sustainability, including establishing a pathways coordinator position, and a pathways committee within the institution. Other mechanisms included setting out plans for in-person meetings and regular communication. Lastly, key informants indicated that monitoring pathways, and establishing a process for annual review is also critical to support the sustainability of a pathway so that they stay active and relevant: "You need to work on pathways on an annual basis, work with your partner, departments, set meetings, you can't neglect them".

Relationship-building and maintenance also extends to Indigenous learners within our institutions. For instance, through relationship-building, staff and faculty within institutions can communicate and market pathways to prospective transfer students, as well as invest time in understanding and addressing the barriers they may be facing in their pursuit of a pathway: "Putting resources to the front end and middle part, and have all the various people and institutional things in place faculty, to the marketing, to application, to recruiter, to support services like helping them move". The Indigenous Studies pathway between Confederation College and Trent University is a great example of this. In the development of this pathway faculty and support services staff from Trent University met with prospective pathways students at Confederation College to provide information on the pathway, student life at Trent University, and to understand some of the concerns that students might have, such as adjustment to student life at a university, moving logistics and costs, and finding a place to live. Through this reciprocal process, they were able to address barriers that may have prevented students from following a pathway, and also provided students with a familiar face, a person to contact when they made the move to Trent. This example also illustrates the importance of wrap-around supports, which our research also indicated as critical to supporting the sustainability of our pathways.

Key informants indicated that building a community of practice within our institutions, where supporting pathways for Indigenous Learners is a priority and a part of the institutional culture, will help to support the sustainability of this work. Put another way: "[F]or us, it means that they're rolled into our normal

business, if it becomes part of the norm, no one questions it. It can't be seen as something a part from or in addition to, it is a part of our normal operation".

Lastly, key informants also indicated that more robust funding must be allocated to supporting pathways implementation for Indigenous learners. Funding is necessary for supporting the work on monitoring our pathways, to support travel for in-person meetings between institutions and with students, and for supporting learners who are pursuing our pathways. One key informant asserts, "We need external funding… if we don't have that external funding, who coordinates the work, and no one will assume it because we don't have the funds to do it".

Results and Key Findings: Question Two

WHAT EVALUATION TOOL SHOULD BE USED TO MEASURE THE SUCCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR PATHWAYS FOR INDIGENOUS LEARNERS?

Through sharing circles and key informant interviews, we asked Steering Committee partners to identify appropriate evaluation tools for measuring the success and sustainability of our pathways. The data generated can be organized according to the following themes:

Assessing Pathways: Appropriate Methods for Data Collection

Discussions focused on ways to monitor pathway, appropriate methods for data collection, metrics to include, and challenges to monitoring pathways. This next section serves to provide a summary of the topics and themes discusses, and an overview of the evaluative tool.

Firstly, "success" must be broadly defined to capture western and Indigenous notions of what it means to succeed in postsecondary education. When measuring success, it is important to include empirical measures such as pathways enrolment, retention and completion rates as well measures that address self-determination and autonomy,

Overall there was a consensus that processes for monitoring pathways need to improve at institutional and systemic levels. The following points represent statements made by our key informants:

- Beyond western approaches, must involve Indigenous methodologies
- Data should showcase our process, Illustrate our wise practices
- Data should gather information on student stories/ experiences, perceptions, needs, assumptions, gaps, challenges
- Data that is collected should be confidential
- Should help to show where there are gaps/ opportunities
- We need to determine who is able to access the data/ results
- Modes/ sources of data should include steering committee members, decision makers on pathways (e.g. senior leadership, registrars), learners, registrars, student support services
- Accessing existing data sources OUAC, ONCAT, OEN…. Streamlining data collection
- Direction from senior administrators
- Need to support the alignment of systems

Monitoring Pathways for Indigenous Learners--Metrics and Indicators of Success

Overall, there was consensus at Steering Committee meetings and among key informants that there is a need for tools and resources to guide and monitor our pathways. One key informant expressed a need to, "Somehow develop tools that will hold people to the fire. At every stage… maybe three or four instruments, you know like a questionnaire that has to be filled out that guarantees there is follow up. One at the faculty level, maybe even one at the students". Another noted, "We need a checklist... is this is where you are at... then do this… a checklist, action plan, and who it is assigned to".

Results of a literature review and environmental scan on methods for tracking student transfer and mobility, and key interviews also informed the development of a tool for monitoring our pathways for Indigenous learners. Specifically, the monitoring tool was built in a way to address the gaps and barriers in relation to implementing and supporting pathways for Indigenous Learners, and to also integrate the strengths or supports. The metrics and "checklists" that were developed fall under the following four themes: Relationships and Accountability, Student Experience, Academic/ Mainstream Metrics and Wrap-Around Supports, as indicated in the following table.

Table 2: Evaluative tool for monitoring our pathways for Indigenous learners

Relationships and Accountability *Sources of information: Internal and external to the institution*	✓	Notes	Academic/ Mainstream Metrics *Sources of information: Academic units/ faculty, the Registrar*	✓	Notes

• Relationships established between internal and external pathways partners
  o Academic units
  o Registrars
  o Recruitment
  o Student services
  o Prospective Indigenous Learners
• Capacity Building
• Wrap around support streamlined
• Transition plan created/ plan for the hand off
• Pathway signed off and implemented
• Resources are in place
• Pathways marketed to students
• Annual review complete
• Plan for follow up with alumni established
			• # of applicants
			• Enrolment
			• Academic performance at sending institution
			• Academic performance at receiving institution
			• Persistence/ retention
			• Graduation
			• Next steps (e.g. employment or future studies)		

Student Experience *Sources of information: Students, Faculty, Student Services*	✓	Notes	Wrap Around Supports *Sources of information: Student services*	✓	Notes
• The transition • Barriers experienced and addressed • Satisfaction and success			• Plan and follow through for ongoing check ins • Wrap around support provided and received		

This evaluative tool was applied to one of our existing pathways, which is a 2 + 2 pathway agreement from Confederation College's Aboriginal Community Advocacy Program into Trent University's Indigenous Studies Program. First, we applied the tool to when the pathway was first implemented in 2016. When we applied the tool to the 2018 version of the pathway, our findings were drastically different. While this is only one case, we are confident that the front end effort put into the relationship building between partnering institutions, and with prospective Indigenous Learners, and into the support for Indigenous learners via a transition program and wrap around services, led to the initial success of this pathway. In later years, this relationship building and maintenance did not occur, which, to use the words expressed in a key informant interview, resulted in the pathway not "coming to life", and "falling on the shelf" (See Appendix D).

Recommendations and Next Steps

The following are recommendations for implementing and supporting the sustainability of pathways for Indigenous learners within your institution:

1. Demonstrate your commitment and prioritization of pathways by allocating core resources to pathways development and support, and Indigenous education;
2. Inform senior administrators and decision makers on our Pathways for Indigenous Learners project and engage them in our processes;
3. Meet with Indigenous learners in the development of pathways to understand their interests, barriers, needs and priorities;
4. Inform faculty on our Pathways for Indigenous Learners project and engage them in our processes;
5. Use the asset map to guide the alignment of wrap-around support services to your pathways;
6. Review and implement recommendations from the document titled "Shifting the Landscape" (CPRIL, 2018);
7. Bring together key participants including senior administrators, faculty, support services staff, the registrar, etc. for a meeting on current and prospective pathways for Indigenous learners; develop an implementation plan; confirm roles and responsibilities regarding pathways implementation;
8. Review "Challenges to Implementing Pathways" section and determine challenges to implementing pathways for Indigenous learners within your own institution; establish a plan for addressing these challenge (see p. 43 for potential supports);
9. Establish internal mechanisms for supporting work on pathways for Indigenous learners such as developing a pathways coordinator or a pathways committee; set regular and in person meetings; review pathways implementation plans and set long and short term goals; align implementation plans with timelines within partnering institutions; assign responsibilities to participants involved with pathways implementation.
10. Integrate the tool for monitoring pathways for Indigenous learners (p.35) into your pathways implementation plans, and be sure to use this tool to guide the annual review of pathways;

Conclusion

This five-year collaboration of creating pathways for Indigenous learners has resulted in a broad range of outcomes for supporting pathways development, Indigenous learners, and Indigenous education across the province of Ontario. Through this phase of our collaboration, we have gained a deeper understanding of the challenges to implementing pathways as well as the limitations that exist within our own model. Our most critical learning is that as this group gets larger and as more pathways are created, we cannot lose sight of the original processes and values instilled by the First Circle partners. We have to ensure that pathways meetings are grounded by our commitments to Indigenous learners and the shared processes and values instilled among the First Circle of partners. Through this process, we have also identified wise practices and lessons learned that will inform improvements to our model of creating pathways for Indigenous learners. For instance, in moving forward we must ensure that we are establishing mechanisms that guide, as well as ensure, our accountabilities and commitments to building successful pathways. Important mechanisms include creating opportunities and spaces for relationships building among all those who are involved in a pathway, as well as implementing tools, such as our evaluative tool, to inform and monitor our work.

In the next phase of our work we aim to address and integrate our key findings. We also aim to promote knowledge mobilization through the creation of a resource guide for implementing pathways for Indigenous learners, and by working with external Indigenous communities, groups and organizations to exchange knowledge on this work and on increasing access to postsecondary education for Indigenous learners across Ontario.

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Appendix A: Wrap Around Support Framework

"a framework … is the enactment of a respectful relationship with the rest of creation which shares this earth with us a framework is never a noun never simply a metaphor… it is more than any words which attempt to detonate it a framework is a journey/ing with"
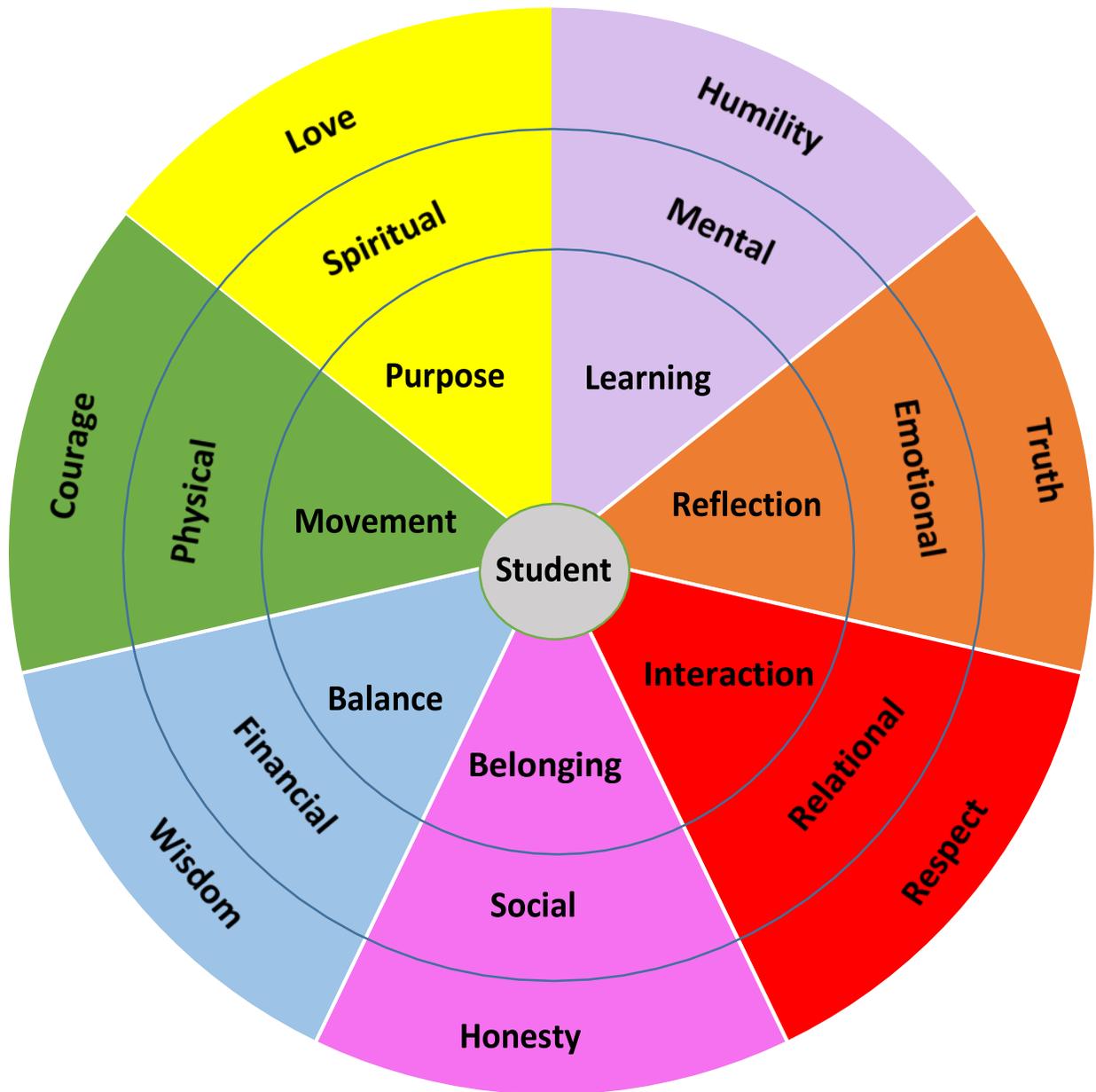
Spiritual – Purpose – LOVE - *We are given strength to walk through all that comes our way as we seek to understand the Creator's purpose for our lives.*

- Accessing Elders – on and off campus
- Aboriginal counselling – on and off campus
- Opportunities for cultural practices
- Opportunities for spiritual practices

Mental – Learning – HUMILITY -

- Academic bridging course – intensive 1 or 2 week module – adaptation of Trent's research and writing course
- Adapting to systems in new post-secondary institution
- Acknowledging and accepting Indigenous cultural difference

Emotional – Reflection - TRUTH

- E-portfolio – (to be developed)
- Completion of transition questionnaire/assessment – (to be developed)
- Weekly check ins with peer mentor/advisor
- Managing time (transfer shock)
- Self - direction (self-care, self-advocacy)
- Counselling

Relational – Interaction - RESPECT

Promotion of Articulation Agreements – Navigators – College Recruiters

Develop promotional materials: brochures, postcards, etc.

- 1st year ACA, NCFS, ET– class visits
- 2nd year ACA, NCFS, ET – class visits
- Access programs – class visits
- Alumni base – call/email/mail promotional material
- High Schools
- Career fairs
- Virtual tours
- Website promotion and information

Meeting with students who are pursuing and meet criteria of Articulation Agreement

- Introduction to receiving institution staff and faculty

- Assist with application process

"Checking in not out" once at receiving institution

- Weekly check ins with peer mentor/advisor
- Follow up by support staff to faculty
- Faculty engagement
- Advocacy

Social – Belonging - HONESTY

- Maintenance of cohort
- Summer orientation – "Biishka", Kiikokanawge
- Community connections – friendship centres,
- Family connections

Financial – Balance - WISDOM

- Income source
- Funding logistics
- Employment opportunities – pre, mid, post
- Moving costs
- Budgeting
- Bursary applications

Physical – Movement – Self direction – COURAGE

- Housing/accommodations
- Daycare, children's schools
- Safe neighbourhoods
- Health care – doctors, dentists, optometrists
- Diet and exercise

Appendix B: List of pathways and Their Status

Sending Learning Community	Receiving Learning Community	Status of implementation
Aboriginal Community Advocacy (Confederation College)	Indigenous Studies (Trent University)	Implemented
Environmental Technician (Confederation College)	Bachelor in Indigenous Environmental Studies (Trent University)	Implemented
Social Service Worker, Native Specialization (Sault College)	Bachelor in Social Work, Algoma University	Joint admission agreement. Articulation agreement completed and awaiting final sign off.
Indigenous Students in any 2-years or 3-year Program, Canadore College	All undergraduate degree program, Lakehead University	Partnership – MOU for Indigenous Students – Canadore College to Lakehead University Agreement Draft MOU created, waiting for signatures to prepare for pilot.
Indigenous Wellness and Addiction Prevent (IWAP) 2-year Program , Canadore College	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) 1-year Program , Sault College	Pathway Identified – Next Steps sharing of curriculum – end of Nov 2018 and start mapping curriculums – 2019
Social Service Worker 2-year (SSW) Program, Sault College	Community Diabetes Worker 1-year Post Diploma Program, Canadore College	Pathway Identified – Next Steps sharing of curriculum – end of Nov 2018 and start mapping curriculums – 2019
Business Program, Canadore College	Bachelor of Business, Laurentian University	Pathway exists – Adding Canadore to agreement – On Hold in February no date when it will be implemented
IWAP 2-year Program, Canadore College	Indigenous Studies undergraduate degree Program. University of Sudbury	Pathway Identified- Mapping of curriculum and draft articulation agreements completed– Next steps is senate approval (Available to students September 2019)
SSW 2-year Program, Canadore College	Indigenous Studies undergraduate degree Program. University of Sudbury	Pathway Identified- Mapping of curriculum and draft articulation agreements completed– Next steps is senate approval (Available to students September 2019)

Mental Health and Addictions (MHA) 2-year Program, Canadore College	Indigenous Studies undergraduate degree Program. University of Sudbury	Pathway Identified- Mapping of curriculum and draft articulation agreements completed– Next steps is senate approval (Available to students September 2019)
CJS (CJS) 2-year Program, Canadore College	Indigenous Studies undergraduate degree Program. University of Sudbury	Pathway Identified- Mapping of curriculum and draft articulation agreements completed– Next steps is senate approval (Available to students September 2019)
PFP Program 2-year Program, Canadore College	Indigenous Studies undergraduate degree Program. University of Sudbury	Pathway Identified- Mapping of curriculum and draft articulation agreements completed– Next steps is senate approval (Available to students September 2019)
ECE Program 2-year Program, Canadore College	Bachelor of Arts – Folklore et ethnologie (3 years) program, University of Sudbury	Add Canadore to Existing Articulation Agreements – Finalizing documents (Available to students January 2018)
Social Service Worker, Native Specialization, Sault College	Indigenous Social Work, Laurentian University	We have arrived at a 63 of 120 credit agreement if both sides agree. Next steps – approval of proposal from Sault College, department approval at LU, Faculty approval at LU, Senate committee approval at LU.
Aboriginal Community Advocacy, Confederation College	BA Community & Economic Social Development, Algoma University	Articulation Agreement created. Awaiting final sign off. Projected fall 2019 enrolment.
Aboriginal Community Advocacy, Confederation College	BA/HBA Political Science, Lakehead University	Curriculum reviewed and proposal moving through Senate approval process (Available to students September 2019)
Aboriginal Community Advocacy, Confederation College	BA/HBA Sociology, Lakehead University	Curriculum reviewed and proposal moving through Senate approval process (Available to students September 2019)
Aboriginal Community Advocacy, Confederation College	BA/HBA Indigenous Learning, Lakehead University	Curriculum reviewed and proposal moving through Senate

		approval process (Available to students September 2019)
Native Child and Family Services, Confederation College	Anishinaabemowin Immersion Certificate	Curriculum shared and under review
Native Child and Family Services, Confederation College	Social Service Worker, First Nations Technical Institute	On hold. New SSW program standard across the province. Curriculum was previously shared and under review.

Appendix C: Interview Guide

(1) From your experience, how well has our process worked for creating pathways for Indigenous Learners?

    a. How has our "pathways for Indigenous learners" Model informed the development of pathways for Indigenous learners?

        i. What went well?

        ii. What could have gone better?

        iii. What would you have changed?

    b. What do you think were the benefits of the three years of our process of attempting to create pathways for Indigenous learners (i.e. first, second and third circle)?

    c. How could our process be improved?

    d. What are the outcomes that resulted from your participation in this project?
(E.g. pathways, partnerships, relationship building, establishing a network, etc).

    e. How many pathways were identified by our process that involve your institution? Are any of these pathways implemented?

        i. If yes, what pathways?

        ii. If not, why weren't any pathways implemented?

    f. What were challenges to implementing pathways?

    g. What has facilitated the implementation of pathways?

    h. There were not many pathways that resulted from our process. Why do you think that was the case?

(2) How do we measure the success and sustainability of the pathways for Indigenous Learners across our partnering institutions?

    a. What are the experiences of Indigenous learners who have followed the pathways developed through this initiative?

    b. How does your institution currently monitor pathways?

    c. Who is responsible for the implementation of pathways?

    d. How should we measure the success of our implemented pathways? What metrics should be included within our evaluative tool?

    e. How do we ensure the sustainability of the pathways that have been developed?

    f. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

Appendix E: Application of the Evaluative Tool

Application of the evaluative tool to the pathway between Confederation College's Aboriginal Community Advocacy and Trent University's Indigenous Studies, 2015 versus 2018

2015 Pathway

Relationships and Accountability Sources of information: Internal and external to the institution	✓	Notes	Academic/ Mainstream Metrics Sources of information: Academic units/ faculty, the Registrar	✓	Notes
Relationships established between internal and external pathways partners		Staff from Trent University and Confederation College met several times throughout the development and implementation of the pathway	Applicants	✓	6
- Academic units	✓	Trent staff and Faculty met at Confederation	Enrolment	✓	6
- Registrars	✓		Academic Performance atSending Institution	✓	Students met GPA required for pathway
- Recruitment	✓	Trent staff and faculty travelled to Confederation College to meet with prospective students;	Academic performance at receiving institution	✓	Anecdotal - students were the top of their classes
- Student services	✓	Team from Trent communicated with student services	Persistence/retention	✓	4
- Prospective Indigenous learners	✓	Team from Trent met in person with prospective students from Confed	Graduation	✓	4
Capacity Building			Next steps e.g. employment or future studies		
Wrap around supports streamlined	✓	Wrap around supports were discussed			
Transition plan created/ plan for the hand off	✓	Students were enrolled in the Biishka transition program			
Pathway is signed off and implemented	✓	Yes, Trent, Confed, and FNTI presidents met for an official signing			
Resources are in place	✓	Yes			
Pathways is marketed to students	✓	Yes			
Annual review	✓	No			
Plan for follow up with alumni		No			

Student Experience Sources of information: Students, Faculty, Student Services	✓	Notes	Wrap Around Supports Sources of information: Student services	✓	Notes
The transition	✓	Students participated in the Biishka transition program	Plan and follow through for ongoing check-ins		Not formally established
Satisfaction and success		Not formally established	Wrap around supports provided	✓	Wrap around supports model was in place
Barriers experienced	✓	Trent team met with students to discuss and address barriers e.g. moving costs, finding an apartment			

2018 Pathway

Relationships and Accountability Sources of information: Internal and external to the institution	✓	Notes	Student Experience Sources of information: Students, Faculty, Student Services	✓	Notes
Relationships established between internal and external pathways partners		New faculty and staff at both Trent and Confed, there was no pathway follow up	The transition		
- Academic units			Satisfaction and success		
- Registrars			Barriers experienced		
- Recruitment					
- Student services					
- Prospective Indigenous learners					
Capacity Building					
Wrap around supports streamlined	✓				
Transition plan created/ plan for the hand off					
Pathway is signed off and implemented	✓				
Resources are in place	✓				
Pathways is marketed to students					
Annual review					
Plan for follow up with alumni					

This articulation agreement represent an exemplary Pathway for Indigenous Learner. It uniquely integrates core elements of our model including relationship building and commitment of partnering institutions, incorporation of a wraparound services model, and a commitment to monitoring.

DIPLOMA-TO-DEGREE EXCEPTIONAL TRANSFER AGREEMENT [COMMUNITY ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT] BETWEEN

Algoma University (hereinafter 'AU')

Sault Ste. Marie, ON
and

Confederation College (hereinafter 'CC')

Thunder Bay, ON

1.0 **General Provisions:**

I.   This articulation agreement sets forth guidelines for the partnership that will exist between AU and CC. This agreement describes the standard transfer credit

pathways for one-year Ontario College Certificate programs, two-year Ontario College Diploma Programs and three-year Ontario College Advanced Diploma Programs;

II. The goal of this agreement is to provide maximum opportunity for students to achieve the benefits of combining a college diploma and a university degree;

III. The fundamental means embodied in this agreement is the recognition of prior learning and a credit transfer system in the province of Ontario that optimizes pathways and minimizes unnecessary duplication of students' learning and barriers to student mobility;

IV. The agreement shall be continuous from year to year; however, either party may terminate the agreement if notice in writing is given at least six months prior to the date on which the termination becomes effective. Students enrolled at the time of notice of termination will be given the opportunity to complete their degree studies based on the terms of the agreement when they commenced their studies;

V. AU and CC will assign members to an Advisory Council to actively monitor the implementation of the pathway, using co-developed evaluation methodology and tools.

1.1 **Block Transfer Credit Agreement Specifications:**

i. CC diploma and certificate program graduates must meet AU admission requirements defined as the successful completion of a two or three-year diploma program or a
one-year certificate program with a minimum overall average of B (3.00 GPA) to be eligible for block transfer credit recognition. The following CC diploma program will be considered as part of the exceptional transfer credit framework:

- **Aboriginal Community Advocacy Program [ACA – two-year]**

(Appendix A summarizes credit recognition based on the transfer agreement between AU and CC)

ii. Successful applicants from the aforementioned two-year diploma program with a minimum overall average of 3.00 GPA (B) or greater will receive recognition as follows:

- **57 transfer credits towards the three-year Bachelor of Arts in Community Development program [BA3.CDEV];**

- **60 transfer credits towards the four-year Honours Bachelor of Arts in Community Economic and Social Development program [BA4.CESD];**

- **45 transfer credits toward the three-year Bachelor of Arts in Community Economic and Social Development program [BA3.CESD]**

iii.   CC diploma graduates from the aforementioned program with a 2.50 – 2.99 GPA (C+) will receive transfer recognition for a maximum of 15 credits towards the Bachelor of Arts in Community Development and Community Economic and Social Development degree programs; students with a 2.49 GPA or less (C-/C) grade will be eligible for admission, but will not receive transfer credit.

iv.   In the case of course code changes, AU and CC agree to update the agreement accordingly.

v.   Each CC graduate admitted to AU via this agreement will receive an individualized diploma to degree completion chart outlining the number of transfer credits received and the courses required for completion of the designated degree program.

1.2 Institutional Commitment

Algoma University and Confederation College agree to implement a wrap-around support model for this exceptional agreement. The agreement is designed to facilitate the seamless transfer of students, and in particular Indigenous learners. The wrap-around support model involves active participation by both institutions at all stages of the student experience. AU and CC agree to assign a Working Group with representation from both institutions for this pathway agreement to explicitly identify which wrap-around supports will be provided in accordance with the model below. The success of this agreement will be monitored by the Working Group by examining student success and support provision using the wrap-around framework. In addition, the parties agree to the following:

AU will:

- Collaborate with CC to provide information to students in their first year of study at CC regarding the transfer pathway.
- Encourage pathway preparation by providing information to advisors at CC on college courses that will maximize transfer credit for this pathway.
- Assign an Anishinaabe Student Success Advisor to work with CC students while they are in the CC diploma program.
- Ensure applicants from CC receive priority entry to the university through a joint admissions process.
- Waive the requirements for a completed transfer application and the transfer application fee.
- Collaborate with CC to connect students and faculty to university resources while in the CC diploma program (faculty, library, learning resources, housing, etc.).
- Provide AU pathway scholarships to eligible students.

CC will:

- Collaborate with AU to provide information to students in their first year of study at CC regarding the transfer pathway.
- Encourage pathway preparation by providing opportunity for advisors and faculty at CC to learn about college courses that will maximize transfer credit for this pathway.
- Assign an Advisor to serve as the primary liaison for CC students interested in the AU pathway while they are in the CC diploma program.
- Collaborate with AU to connect students and faculty to university resources while in the CC diploma program (faculty, library, learning resources, housing, etc.)

Both parties agree to work collaboratively to build a strong inter-institutional working relationship to facilitate seamless transfer using a wrap-around support model that puts the student at the centre.
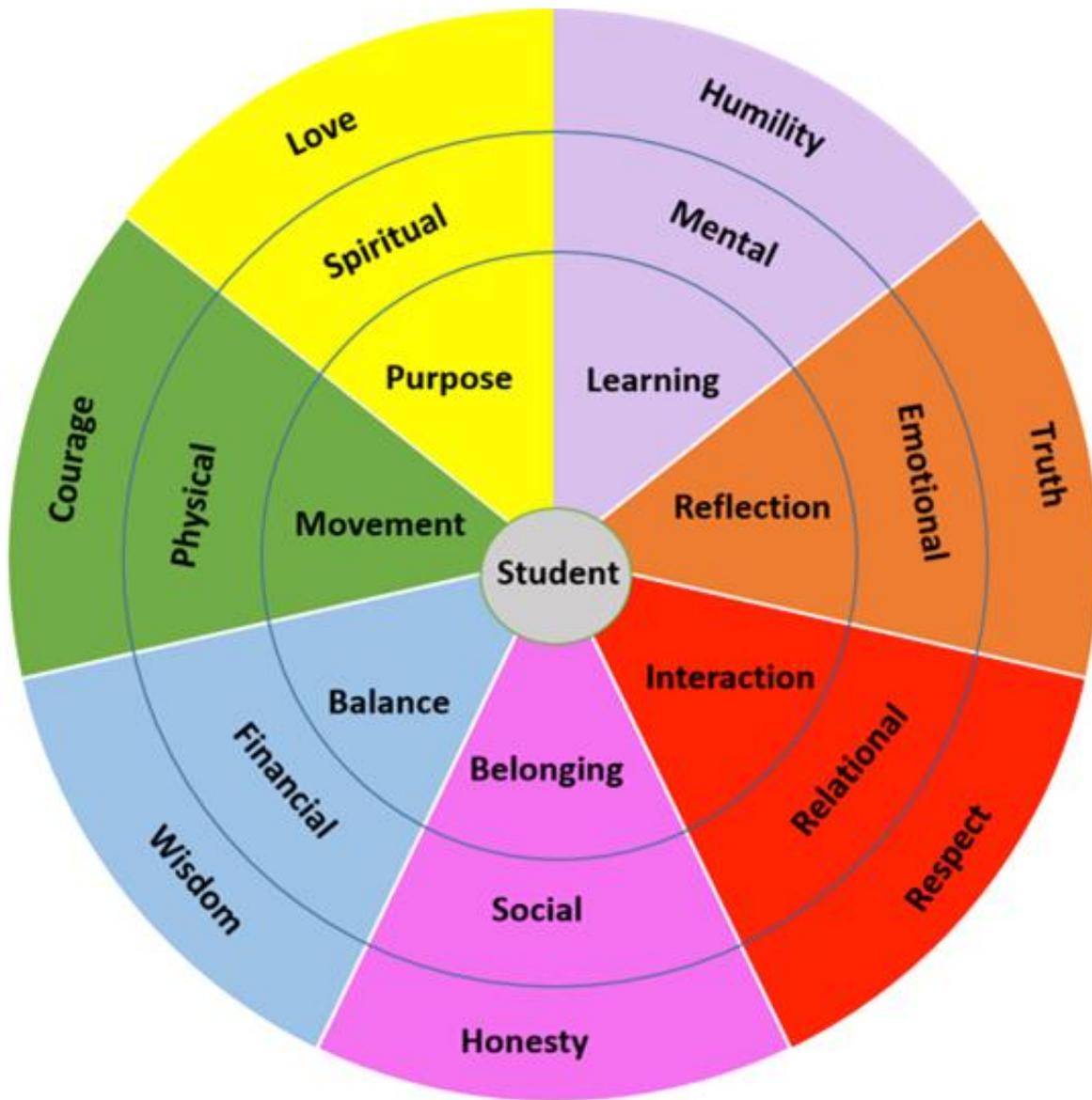
Signing Authority

The parties have each assigned an individual to be responsible for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Diploma-to-Degree Transfer Agreement:

For Algoma University (AU),

Asima Vezina

President and Vice Chancellor

1520 Queen Street East

Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6A 2G4

Canada

For Confederation College (CC),

Kathleen Lynch

President and CEO

1450 Nakina Drive

Thunder Bay, ON P7C 4W1

Canada

IN WITNESS WHEREOF we have executed this Transfer Agreement by our duly authorized officers,

Signature of authorized representatives of AU and CC:

_____

Asima Vezina, President and Vice Chancellor, AU

_____

Date

_____

Kathleen Lynch, President and CEO, CC

_____

Date

Appendix A

Confederation College – Algoma University
Diploma-to-Degree Exceptional Transfer Agreement

For maximum transfer credit, a minimum final GPA average of 3.00 (B) is required for the exceptional agreement. Students who complete the Aboriginal Community Advocacy program (two-year) at CC will receive course recognition as follows towards the Bachelor of Arts in Community Development [BA3.CDEV]:

Bachelor of Arts in Community Development (BA3.CDEV)
Course Recognition
ANIS 1006
ANIS 1007
CESD 1006
CESD 2607
CESD 3456
CESD 3906
CESD 3907
COSC 1701
HUMA 9100 [6 credits]
HUMA 9200 [6 credits]
SOSC 9100 [6 credits]
SOSC 9200 [9 credits]
SWRK 9200 [6 credits]
57 credits

all courses have a weight of three (3) credits unless otherwise noted

For maximum transfer credit, a minimum final GPA average of 3.00 (B) is required for the exceptional agreement. Students who complete the Aboriginal Community Advocacy program (two-year) at CC will receive course recognition as follows towards the Honours Bachelor of Arts in Community Economic and Social Development [BA4.CESD]:

Bachelor of Arts in Community Economic and Social Development [BA4.CESD]
Course Recognition
CESD 1006
CESD 3017
COSC 1701
GEOG 1027
POLI 1007
SOCI 1016
SWRK 1006
HUMA 9100 [6 credits]
HUMA 9200 [9 credits]

SOSC 9100 [9 credits]
SOSC 9200 [15 credits]
60 credits

all courses have a weight of three (3) credits unless otherwise noted

For maximum transfer credit, a minimum final GPA average of 3.00 (B) is required for the exceptional agreement. Students who complete the Aboriginal Community Advocacy program (two-year) at CC will receive course recognition as follows towards the general Bachelor of Arts in Community Economic and Social Development [BA3.CESD]:

Bachelor of Arts in Community Economic and Social Development [BA3.CESD]
Course Recognition
CESD 1006
COSC 1701
GEOG 1027
POLI 1007
SOCI 1016
SWRK 1006
SWRK 2127
HUMA 9100 [6 credits]
HUMA 9200 [6 credits]
SOSC 9100 [6 credits]
SOSC 9200 [6 credits]
45 credits

all courses have a weight of three (3) credits unless otherwise noted

Appendix B

Confederation College – Algoma University
Diploma-to-Degree BLOCK & EXCEPTIONAL Transfer Agreement
COURSE LIST

ANIS 1006 Anishinaabe Peoples and our Homelands I

ANIS 1007 Anishinaabe Peoples and our Homelands II

CESD 1006 Introduction to Community Economic and Social Development I

CESD 2607 Community Engagement and Strategic Planning

CESD 3017 Directed Studies CESD Practicum

CESD 3456 Community Advocacy and Social Justice

CESD 3906 Community Economic and Social Development: Selected Topics I

CESD 3907 Community Economic and Social Development: Selected Topics II

COSC 1701 Computer Applications I

GEOG 1027 Introduction to the Physical Environment

POLI 1007 Political Science II: World Politics

SOCI 1016 Understanding Society I: Principles and Processes

SWRK 1006 Introduction to Social Welfare in the North

SWRK 2127 Introduction to Social Work Research

HUMA 9100 Humanities, first-year non-equivalent [6 credits]

HUMA 9200 Humanities, second-year non-equivalent [6 credits]

HUMA 9200 Humanities, second-year non-equivalent [9 credits]

SOSC 9100 Social Science, first-year non-equivalent [9 credits]

SOSC 9100 Social Science, first-year non-equivalent [6 credits]

SOSC 9200 Social Science, second-year non-equivalent [6 credits]

SOSC 9200 Social Science, second-year non-equivalent [9 credits]

SOSC 9200 Social Science, second-year non-equivalent [15 credits]

SWRK 9200 Social Work, second-year non-equivalent [6 credits]

all courses have a weight of three (3) credits unless otherwise noted