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Land-based Learning Journey

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Abstract

Indigenous faculty and staff saw the need to prioritize Indigenous ways of learning within our university setting that brings us outside of classroom settings and on to the land. The creation of a regionally accurate land-based learning structure within our educational institution provides Indigenous pedagogy with students and holds space and place for the post-secondary education community to see and experience. The vision of this structure was provided by Art Petahtegoose from Atikameksheng Anishnawbek whose ancestral land is where the current educational institution is situated. Together we (faculty, staff, students, and Atikameksheng Anishnawbek) built a wiigwam which is culturally accurate within this region.

Through Wabie's (2017; 2019) sweetgrass story weaving methodology (Body, Mind, Spirit), staff and Indigenous Social Work students' voices were honored as they shared perspectives on the building of the wiigwam, the effect it has had on them (including counselling skills for students), and what they would like to see for it in the future. In the end, an Indigenous pedagogical structure for students, staff, and faculty was created surpassing a mainstream educational learning environment; we have, in spirit, created a living being.

Dedication

Our friend, Tamerra London passed onto the Spirit World suddenly in the fall of 2020. We miss her caring spirit, infectious smile, and her ability to make us feel like we are special. Please support Black Lives Matter, Sudbury in her honour. www.blmsudbury.ca

Introduction

In 2018, faculty, staff, students, and Elder Art Petahtegoose created a regionally accurate land-based learning structure within our educational institution in order to provide Indigenous pedagogy with students and to hold space and place for the post-secondary education community to see and experience. The building of the wiigwam included all four colors (in the wheel) of humankind - students from many backgrounds and nationalities were brought together to do this work. We extended our invitation to the community as well as to the neighboring reserve, Atikameksheng Anishnawbek, to gather the natural materials required for the build. The vision of this structure was provided by Art Petahtegoose from Atikameksheng Anishnawbek whose ancestral land is where the educational institution is situated. Together we built a wiigwam which is culturally accurate within this region. Regionally, wiigwams are dome shaped structures built from tree saplings and covered with birch bark or canvas within the area.

The planning of the location took place over fifteen years ago when a tipi was built in the same space. This tipi, although not regional, was symbolically a place to hold space that would be unique and identifiable as Indigenous. This preparation was significant, and we want to honour the hard work that went into the original mapping and building of the tipi and its meaning. In 2017, the tipi poles blew down in a storm and there was discussion amongst the Indigenous department, faculty, and staff that this was our opportunity to create a space that was more regional and aligned to the culture and traditions of this area. It is this trailblazing work that was completed prior to the building of the wiigwam that allows the current space to be held.

In 2018, Indigenous faculty and staff submitted and successfully received an internal research fund. We were able to gather the voices of Indigenous staff and Indigenous Social Work students who shared the impact the building and use of a wiigwam had on them, and what they would like to see for future use. The wiigwam is currently maintained and used by Indigenous faculty, staff, and students on campus to ensure their holistic care and learning are taken care of and reflected within the institutional landscape. The holistic care and learning is included in the building and care of the wiigwam which is reciprocally nurturing. As we care for the wiigwam, they care for us. We treat them like a family member; in this relationship we learn about the connectedness between body, mind, and spirit. There is an interrelated learning and caring that occurs when we sit with the wiigwam for classes, learning inside with a sacred fire and one another, and also as we walk by and see a bit of home on campus. Land-based learning with Indigenous

peoples has been used since time immemorial to ensure survival and intergenerational knowledge transfer occurred within their communities. Land teaches and can be considered as the first teacher (Styres & Zinga, 2013 as cited in Tuck, McCoy & McKenzie, 2014). In the end, an Indigenous pedagogical structure for students, staff, and faculty was created which surpasses a mainstream educational learning environment; we have, in spirit, created a living being.

What is known?

The terms "Indigenous" and "Traditional" amongst Indigenous peoples must be recognized, as oftentimes these terms are used to display contrast to mainstream "Western" culture in a highly industrialized society (Takano, 2005). While there has been much research on Indigenous teachings, few researchers have taken into consideration the connection between Indigenous teachings and education whilst on the land. The basis of an Indigenous teaching model is bidirectional, meaning personal relationships with students are formed through the mentorship of knowledge keepers by sharing personalized narratives and experiences through storytelling (Radu, 2014). The process of learning can be evidenced through these prolonged interactions with Elders and knowledge keepers whilst being on the land, as it restores the connection to the land by establishing the outdoors as a learning environment. Connection to land and healing is cultivated in spaces in which social and familial bonds are formed and strengthened (Radu, 2014). This method of learning guides individuals by providing the necessary resources needed to live in harmony with the environment, with each other, and with oneself (Alfred, 2014; Takano, 2005). An individual's intimate and reciprocal dialogic relationship with nature and spiritual elements provide ethical and moral foundations of the lifelong journey of learning, through the mind, body, and spirit (Radu, 2014). Indigenous land-based learning systems are commonly unsupported and invalidated systems of Indigenous knowledge practice by most Western academic institutions (Simpson, 2014). Land-based learning highlights the importance of education that occurs from the roots upwards, from being grounded and enveloped with the land (Simpson, 2014).

Indigenous students must have a connection to the land as it fosters responsibility in their community/territory and when young people have connections to the land, they become practitioners, preserving and promoting culture by resisting imposition (Simpson, 2014); as well as countering the disintegration of traditional modes of knowledge transfer as a result of colonialism (Takano, 2005). Being on the land is fundamental in helping students express the

connection between their identity, culture, and language with the land as well as promoting intergenerational knowledge transfer for subsequent generations (Radu, 2014). The land provides a space for self-reflection, in addition to strength and resilience that helps individuals deal with community life and social issues (Takano, 2005). Decolonization and the creation of Indigenous spaces cannot continue if generations of young people are not educated and/or connected to the land as community-based intellectuals are necessary for the regeneration efforts within Western academic or industrial systems (Alfred, 1999; 2005). The primary concern in fostering a connection to the land and "educating" young people is to nurture a new generation of Elders and knowledge keepers committed to living out culturally inherent meanings of being Indigenous within thought systems (Alfred, 1999; 2005). Through storytelling from Elders, young Indigenous students can situate themselves within their understanding of the land, apply culturally specific interpretations, and in turn share their understandings. Moreover, concepts of wellness and spirituality, as well as intergenerational knowledge transfer are central to healing and can be learned from the land (Radu, 2014).

Indigenous healing is neither monolithic or static, instead, it is a process involving a system of values reflected in one's community and self-collective process (Waldram, 2014). Healing is a continuously renegotiated developmental process in which the mind, body, and spirit are integrated social determinants of health and development as it reflects conceptions of identity, place, culture, empowerment, and responsibility (Radu, 2014). Furthermore, in Indigenous cultures, healing from an imbalance is oftentimes referred to as a journey, with the outcome being an ongoing transformative process. The Indigenous model does not embody the goal of healing as a curative method, common of that in the "Western" biomedical method of treatments. Instead, the main objective of healing is the change and empowerment of the individual to make different life choices (Radu, 2014). Additionally, in Indigenous culture, healing functions as a social movement in response to social suffering caused by colonization and land loss by strengthening and renewing their physical and spiritual bond rooted in the personal connection to land and ecosystem whilst reaffirming their identity (Radu, 2014). Reaffirming of identity can resemble venturing as a group or alone into the bush, participating in a sweat lodge, fishing and trapping, cooking traditional foods, and many other cultural practices that also promote healing (Waldram, 2014). Indigenous counselors and healers were simultaneously patients on their healing journey who invariably used their personal experiences as well as their healing processes as a teaching tool (Waldram, 2008).

Through embodying healing as "role models", Indigenous healers provide the necessary coping skills and validate the healing process itself (Waldram, 2008).

Healing practices foster cultural belonging by strengthening intergenerational bonds and the transfer of knowledge (Radu, 2014). Positive relationships are important in establishing transition programs from home to school or between different levels of formal education (Simpson, 2014). Without support from fellow Indigenous academics or spaces for Indigenous students to feel safe, many Indigenous students tend not to continue within these institutions (Waldram, 2014). Indigenous students feel more inclined to stay in Western Institutions when there is a presence of a safe space allowing students to maintain continuity from home/family to educational institutions (McNair et al., 2012). Furthermore, students should be facilitated in a supportive transition by promoting engagement, providing a sense of belonging within the school community, acceptance of their Indigenous identity, as well as positive relationships between the school and the educators (McNair et al., 2012). Through decolonizing academic institutions, Indigenous academic staff, counselors, and Elders can be utilized as a means of supporting the transition from a traditional to navigating within a Western society (Gerrett-Magee, 2006).

Additionally, an increased prevalence of Indigenous Units or Student Centers can be used as a proxy, serving as an accessible source for resources, support, and access to local communities for Indigenous students (Radu, 2014). Communities and cities within settler states impose power over Indigenous communities through the generation of colonial spaces, thus displacing Indigenous relevancy and memory, removing it from the urban landscape (Nejad & Walker, 2018). These resources are necessary means for preserving the identity of Indigenous students, which is in turn vital to their success and sense of belonging in these institutions (Gerrett-Magee, 2006). When Western learning institutions decolonize the curriculum, they are respecting the role of Elders and knowledge keepers in Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of learning (McNair et al., 2012). Relationships are enhanced by the use of culturally appropriate ways in schools and an increase in the employment of Indigenous teachers and Indigenous methodologies (McNair et al., 2012). Visibility of Indigenous cultures and ceremony in public Western "settler" spaces are important (Nejad, & Walker, 2018), as these spaces offer a safe space in which individuals can share personal experiences and the land offers a place for healing and connecting/grounding oneself (Radu, 2014). The built environments and how it frames a sense of place create a medium through which the community's rich and vibrant culture can be reflected (Waldram, 2014).

Furthermore, these structures transmit social and cultural traditions through its spatial forms, reflecting the way of the Indigenous Peoples, the way they see the world, and their respect to the natural surroundings on the land (Nejad, & Walker, 2018). Despite the displacement and dispossession of Indigenous' claims to the production of space and encroachment of settlers, the land continues to provide traditional foods essential for good health, a space for self, required in everyday life and learning through interactions with nature and topography (Radu, 2014). The creation and presence of Indigenous structures is a tool used to take up space within Western societies and used as a means of providing a positive, prominent structure/symbol recognition and representation of the land and Indigenous placemaking (Nejad, & Walker, 2018).

What did we do?

As Indigenous faculty and staff who work directly with students, we saw the need to prioritize Indigenous ways of learning within our university setting that brings us outside of classroom settings and on to the land. Simpson (2011) asserts that we need to rebuild our culturally inherent philosophical contexts for governance, education, healthcare, and economy. We need to engage in Indigenous processes since according to our traditions, the processes of engagement highly influence the outcome of the engagement itself (p. 17). The wiigwam continues to offer Indigenous processes in learning, healing, empowerment, and relating to the land in a way not found within a classroom setting. Interestingly, Baskin (2016) emphasizes that rarely do Indigenous Peoples need buildings to conduct ceremonies or offer prayers. When answers to questions are sought or healing is needed, many Indigenous Peoples go off by themselves and sit with their Mother [Earth]. Tuck, McCoy, & McKenzie. (2014) contends that land and land education are not considered to occur only outside cities, or in 'green spaces' within the urban. Rather, it focuses specifically on urban land, making the case for the need for pedagogies that examine and experience the urban as storied Indigenous land. There are stories within the land that should continue to be shared as legitimate ways of living mino-bimaadiziwin (the good life).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) Calls to Action include Education for Reconciliation, specifically #62: Funding and Curriculum-Aboriginal Education which in part, states:

> We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms; and provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms. (p. 7)

Although this Call to Action states integration of Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in the classroom, we pushed past this boundary and included land-based learning as imperative for Indigenous students, staff, and faculty to operate, utilize, and share with others via the wiigwam.

Our activities that took place within this research project were threefold.

1. Wiigwam build

Firstly, Indigenous Social Work students, School of Architecture students with Elder, Art Petahtegoose, and university community built the wigwam which took place over several weeks in the autumn of 2018. An Indigenous faculty member from the School of Architecture created a drawing for the wiigwam prior to the build, in consultation with the Elder (Figure 1).

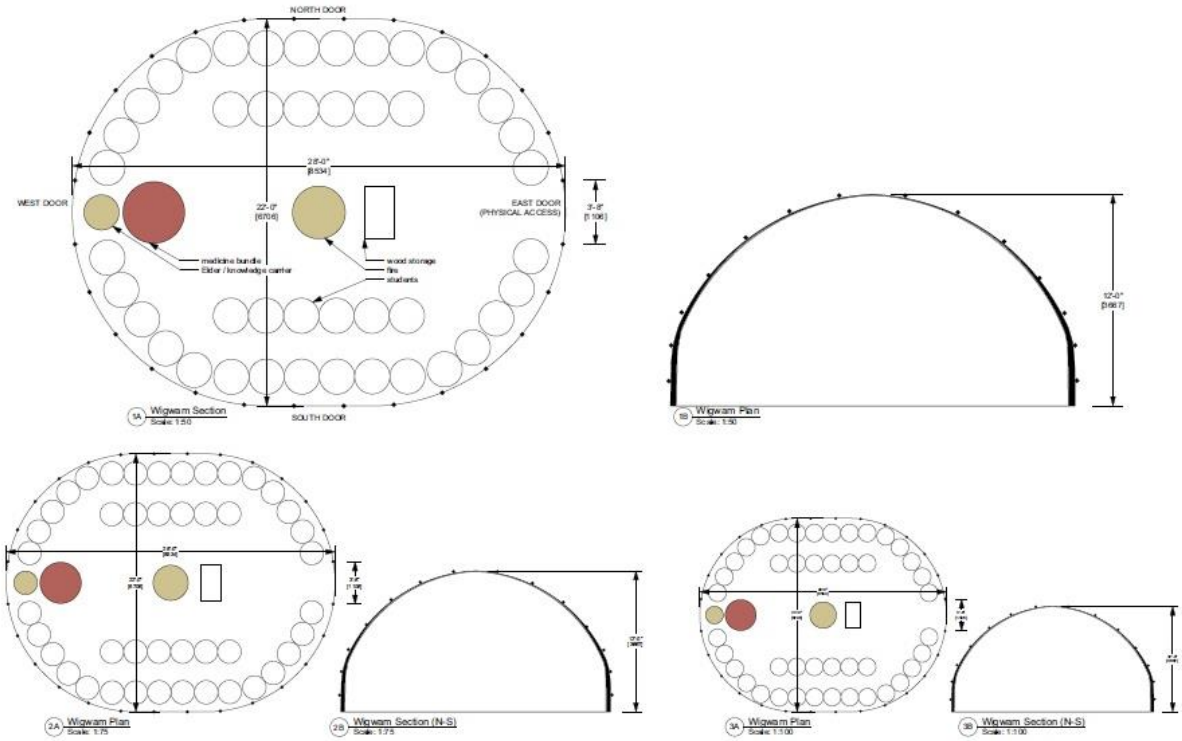

Figure 1. Wiigwam specifications.

Before the build took place, all interested faculty, staff, and students were given teachings on the wiigwam by Elder Art Petahtegoose and traditional knowledge keeper, Julia Pegahmagabow. This was completed on-site in a circle with the opportunity to ask questions or share their thoughts. Following the teachings and circle, the faculty, staff, and students prepped the saplings for the wiigwam frame and dug the holes ensuring cultural protocols were followed. As the Elder began preparing and measuring the saplings on site, it was apparent that mainstream measuring tools were not used, resulting in the wiigwam drawings being revised on the spot. The wiigwam framing was completed over three full days, with the canvas covering being placed on the frame later in the autumn, before the first snowfall.

2. Wiigwam use

The wiigwam was used by the Indigenous Social Work professor and students for five land-based learning activities throughout the year. The students who took part in the activities were all part of the Indigenous Social Work program and registered in a core counselling skills course. The land-based activities that took place with the wiigwam were:

- Building of a traditional wigwam
- Fasting teachings
- Snowshoeing and setting snares
- Fire and water teachings
- Trapping and skinning a beaver

Each land-based activity included a traditional knowledge keeper, a fire in the wiigwam, a sharing circle, and an experiential component. Students were able to build a wiigwam, learn about fasting, how to set a snare, build fire, receive teachings on water & fire, snowshoe in the bush, and skin a beaver. Each activity was coupled with a sharing circle that related back to the course itself: counselling and the helping relationship they hold with individuals, groups, and families.

3. Sharing circles with Indigenous staff & students

Two sharing circles were held, one with Indigenous staff and another with Indigenous Social Work students on their experiences and feelings about the wiigwam. Each person was provided with tobacco before beginning and provided an honorarium for their time and expertise. A third sharing circle was held to present the research results and gain feedback from participants.

How did we do it?

The research itself was created from the Indigenous faculty and staff's need to see themselves and the students, reflected in their learning environment. We ensured this journey centered on an Indigenous research framework using Wabie's (2017) sweetgrass story weaving framework which comes from Indigenous Grassroots Theory. Lavallée (2009) describes Indigenous research frameworks as grounding, manifesting itself in her everyday practice through a community-based approach, incorporating the values and beliefs of Indigenous communities in its design, methods, and analysis. According to Wabie (2017), Indigenous Grassroots Theory begins with Indigenous Peoples' voices being heard and validated as authentic thought and seen as decision-makers in charge of their own destiny at the community, family, and at the individual level. Indigenous Grassroots Theory (IGT) may look very similar to grounded theory in its many forms and variations. According to Creswell (2007), grounded theory is the process of developing a theory, not testing a theory. "In a grounded theory study, the researcher generates an abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon, a theory that explains some action, interaction or process which is grounded in the views from participants in the field" (p. 239). The difference between these two theories is Indigenous Grassroots Theory goes below the ground, it digs deep into the Body, Mind, and Spirit of Indigenous peoples and allows their voices to be heard, individually or collectively.

Through the IGT, we held two sharing circles to honour the stories (gather the data). Sharing circles have been practiced within Indigenous communities and by Indigenous Peoples for generations but are scarcely detailed in scholarly, peer-reviewed outlets (Tachine, Yellowbird, & Cabrera, 2016). We followed the protocols for sharing circles, moving in a clockwise direction (Anishnaabe territory), use of a sacred item for the speaker, and facilitated by an Indigenous social worker who is also a knowledge keeper. The guiding questions for the sharing circles were:

- How were you involved in the process of building the wiigwam?

- What were your experiences (body, mind, spirit)?
- How does the wiigwam affect you personally (now that it is built)?
- What would like to see happen next with the wiigwam?
- Students only: What do you think you have been able to learn about land-based learning specific to the helping relationship course itself?

The first question asks participants how they were involved in the building of the wiigwam offers the reader a situating of the participant. The second question connects to the first through eliciting their thoughts on their wiigwam building experience from a physical (Body), mental/emotional, (Mind), and spiritual (Spirit) connection. The participants spoke freely, and the words were grouped within their respective strand.

The third question relates to the prior one by bringing the participants back to their experiences building the wiigwam, then to the present by asking how it affects them today. This question was designed to explore the impact the wiigwam has had on Indigenous staff. Students were also asked this question along with the impact the five land-based activities had on their learning.

The last question is looking ahead to the future and what the research participants wanted to see happen with the wiigwam. This allowed them to provide long and short-term goals for the wiigwam which were shared with the Indigenous department in the educational institution. Visioning ahead also assists us with maintaining the viability of the wiigwam and gives it more purpose and a drive to remain active with Indigenous faculty, staff, and students.

We honoured the voices of Indigenous staff and students using Wabie's (2017) sweetgrass story weaving methodology. According to Wabie (2019), the Body section of the braid involves physical actions and reactions which may be acted out by the person, or they may be the recipient of a physical action so their physical reactions can also be observed. The Mind section of the braid involves mental/emotional actions and reactions similar to the Body section. These mental actions or reactions that are experienced are important additions to the story it is telling. The Spirit section of the braid includes spiritual actions and reactions to experiences around them that may include praying, being on the land and with nature, or participating in their respective cultural traditions and ceremonies. As with all things in the natural world, there is balance. It is important to note that this sweetgrass story weaving methodology can elicit positive and negative, and/or a combination of the two; therefore, it is a balanced research methodology. The interconnectedness of Body,

Mind, and Spirit is the strength of the sweetgrass story weaving methodology. This strength or resilience denotes the holistic nature of an individual, family, community, and/or nation's view of a topic.

The sharing circle discussions were recorded, transcribed, read, and analyzed through the sweetgrass story weaving framework. When the Body, Mind, and Spirit strands of the braid were becoming defined and beginning to tell a collective story, it was integral to us to return to the participants and check in with them to ensure that sections were true to the speaker's message. Lavallée (2009) shares that data dissemination is handled in a way that is appropriate for the community opening with a smudge, an offering of tobacco, and asking for their input before proceeding. A final circle for this research project was held in the wiigwam to present the initial results of their words, ask for feedback, and ensure that it was integrated into the final analysis.

What did we find out?

Land-based teaching is part of transformative education and innovative solutions to address the general well-being of students on campus by taking students out of the classroom and on to the land, who is our first teacher. Our expected outcomes were: 1) Indigenous students are able to access an Indigenous-led initiative through the wiigwam build and learn on their first teacher: the land; and 2) Indigenous students will be able to reaffirm their identity and the importance of land as an effective teaching method within a mainstream educational institution. We asked 7 Indigenous staff and 5 Indigenous Social Work students:

- How were you involved in the process of building the wiigwam?
- What were your experiences (body, mind, spirit)?
- How does the wiigwam affect you personally (now that it is built)?
- What would like to see happen next with the wiigwam?
- Students only: What do you think you have been able to learn about land-based learning specific to the helping relationship course itself?

The results through thematic analysis of Body, Mind, and Spirit are presented in a table format below, followed by the words and stories from Indigenous staff and Indigenous Social Work students.

Table 1

Wiigwam Sweetgrass Weaving

Indigenous Staff Experience		
Body	Mind	Spirit
Connection to place Taking space	Creating dialogue Collaboration	Elder involvement Coming to life
Effect on Indigenous Staff		
Body	Mind	Spirit
Care of the wiigwam Fire	Indigenous knowledge Feeling safe Narrators/Storytellers	Teachings Grounding
Indigenous Staff's Perception of Impact on Students		
Body	Mind	Spirit
Calming Setting Retention	Unknown impact Curiosity Pedagogy	Connection to land
Effect on Indigenous Social Work Students		
Body	Mind	Spirit
Experiential learning	Land-based teaching Sense of community	Elder
Impact on Social Work Skills		
Body	Mind	Spirit
Setting	Counselling skills Support Knowledge	None
Indigenous Social Work Students' Suggestions for Future Wiigwam Use		
Body	Mind	Spirit
Use it more	Indigenous knowledge	Indigenous knowledge

What does it all mean?

Staff

Indigenous staff shared how they were involved with the wiigwam. Different staff members were involved with the planning, grant application, coordinating the Elder to guide the build, while other staff members' roles were ensuring the educational institution community, neighboring reserve, and the larger community were involved through social media, and visits. Some of the staff shared that they played more of a supporting role by staying behind in the office and ensuring the office was operational for students. One staff member shared that part of her role is to travel and recruit students and she was able to share the building of the wiigwam with prospective students which garnered genuine interest. Another staff, who counsels students, shared that students are discussing the wiigwam build when visiting the common space within their department. Also being shared with another staff member who was not physically involved with the wiigwam build, is that through reviewing students' assignments, they are writing about the wiigwam and she is able to witness their writings.

Experience

Seven staff members from the Indigenous department within our educational institution participated in a sharing circle, facilitated by the lead researcher with support from the research assistant. Indigenous staff were part of the wiigwam experience in different ways: some were hands-on, while others played a supportive role. Each role is important and adds depth to the research that was completed with them. Through the Body strand, the staff described their involvement in the process of building the wiigwam as a *connection to place* and *taking space*.

One staff member shared her view on connection to place:

> ...we don't really see a lot of institutions or any schools or anything like that that have wiigwams, it's always a tipi, so I feel like we're being frontiers on that and we're leading the way and getting back to what's really our roots in those areas.

Another strong experience was the concept of within the educational institution of taking space: "...we're stepping up to the plate making those powerful changes for our students and for our community and showing another way of telling, having a gathering space."

Within the Mind strand, *creating dialogue* was experienced by Indigenous staff. One staff member said: "For me it was amazing, just leaving during the day and watching students up on the top [of the wiigwam], even the Elder being way up there and just really engaging with the students and sharing his knowledge", while another one of the staff shared:

> Students are writing about the wiigwam, they're writing about their experience, they're writing about how they feel, positive feeling about that connection they're making now to it [the wiigwam] ...maybe they didn't have that connection but now that structure's there, they're finding that connection and they're writing about it.

Radu (2014) believes that the cultivation of spaces for social and familial bonds to form happens when a connection to land and healing is apparent. A sense of *collaboration* was seen within the process of the wiigwam build, evidenced by one staff commenting, "I did enjoy watching the circle that was created prior to the building of the wiigwam and seeing different cultures around the circle." Another staff observed that "they're looking forward to being able to have that space in the spring and have more teachings out there and more collaborations with other projects".

Furthermore, within the Spirit strand, *Elder involvement* was key since it was noted that watching the build was witnessing it *coming to life.* A staff member described the build:

> But for me watching it be built was very powerful. To see that coming to life in our space and the different students being a part of it and maybe it wasn't exactly how I envisioned it might be but it comes from the community and all of their hands went into making that so all of that teaching with those students who were involved.

The guidance from Elder Art Petahtegoose was noted as integral to the process of the wiigwam build. A staff member who works closely with the traditional program shares how fortunate she feels being able to "listen to the Elder's stories...to hear those stories and feel that connection... with the students going out to Atikameksheng Anishnawbek …it was a big process".

Effect on self

As we transitioned discussion about their involvement to the effect the wiigwam has had on them, staff members shared that they want to ensure the *care of the wiigwam* continues, and the *fire* itself holds significance. Through the Body strand, looking at the care involved with the wiigwam was important to the staff as they acknowledge the need to "start thinking about how we're using it, how can use it, and start to think about the parameters around that", and "how are

we going to take care of [the wiigwam] ... and monitor it so nothing bad happens in there and that people respect it the way that it should be respected and taken care of. The fire area within the middle of the wiigwam holds significance and has a positive impact on the staff. Staff explained, "I like the fact that even if we're having a sacred fire in there or there's something happening that you don't have to feel like we you're not welcome in there, you're always welcome", while another shared:

> ...if I smell that smoke, if there's a fire in the wiigwam, it kind of just makes me feel stronger to go do the work that I need to do. That is a good reminder when we're working in this space that I'm here with my ancestor.

Exploring the Mind strand with staff involved sharing the value of Indigenous knowledge, feeling safe, being narrators of the wiigwam history, and decolonizing. A staff shares the value of *Indigenous knowledge*: "...we are still relevant and that our knowledge is still relevant…especially in a place where we understand in the world of academia that science is revered and it's at the top of the hierarchy." Respecting the role of Elders and knowledge keepers in Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of learning happens when Western learning institutions begin to decolonize the curriculum (McNair et al., 2012).

Other staff claim *feeling safe* when using the wiigwam stating, "I think that it's important for us to have our space on campus where we feel safe and where we can have our safe and sacred areas," and "It feels more alive, it feels safe, it feels calming." There was discussion around who the *narrators/storytellers* of the wiigwam history would be. One staff member who has access to departmental social media accounts observed:

> I have even noticed that even just retweeting or tweeting out some of the things that we're doing, we are getting a lot of questions and interest, giving us a chance to explain where the tipi went or why we have a wiigwam now. I feel as though it's creating a lot of conversations.

Further to the interest and creation of conversations surrounding the wiigwam, one staff wants to ensure there are Indigenous voices sharing the story and history of the wiigwam:

> ...It's a teachable space in just its existence, but how do we do that more in signage and even in telling of the story of the wiigwam and how it came to be? I think we need to become more narrators of the history of Indigenous peoples at [or educational institution].

When looking at the third strand, Spirit, we shift to the importance of teaching and the feelings of being grounded when actively using the wiigwam. *Teaching* others about the space where the wiigwam and educational institution sits is integral to the situation of the real history of the area:

> I'd like to see someone like Art [the Elder] come in and talk about this place and what was this place before any of this came to be: Whose trapping grounds and hunting grounds were these? And when we start to think about things like that, I think we can start doing our part a little bit more in the decolonizing kind of work, that it's going to help us do that and understand everybody better and our relationship to place and the people.

Regional teachings about the land the wiigwam sits upon can help us answer the question posited by a staff member: "How can we use it better...as a classroom space? In addition, how do we use it respectfully and teach others to do that same? One staff member remembers the tipi that was there before and their role in caring for it, "I feel responsible for the wiigwam or even when the tipi was here and it's not, I think it's all of our roles to ensure that it stays in a good way and healthy". Another staff agreed and echoed their sentiments, "how are we going to take care of that and how are we going to monitor it so nothing bad happens in there and that people respect it the way that it should be respected and taken care of?"

Staff also talked about the *grounding* effect the wiigwam has on them spiritually through connection to the land. One staff explained, "you're right on the ground and that's awesome because that's where we feel connected, on Mother Earth", while another believes that "the wiigwam is more so that connection to that actual ground". One staff member recalled her colleague coming back in from being out at the wiigwam smelling like smoke from the fire and how she felt:

> ...it's like quite the grounding when you can just smell that even though you might not be out there or not attached to it, just the smell of somebody walking in your office or walking past, you're just right away calm, you feel grounded.

Impact on students

Within the sharing circle, staff shared their perspectives on how they believe the wiigwam is impacting students. Their discussion included conversations on calming, setting, retention from the Body strand; unknown impact, curiosity, and pedagogy through the Mind strand; and lastly, through the Spirit strand, they shared a recurring theme: connection to the land.

Staff mentioned *calming* as a possible impact on students, "I think that it is good like I was saying calming way for students to, you don't necessarily need to come in here [to the office] ... they can be on the ground and kind of experience things from a different way in a university setting". The *setting* within the wiigwam also was mentioned as an impact on students. One staff who counsels students affirms that being in the wiigwam with students allows them a space to open up more, "I felt that compared to being in my counselling office with the four walls, that student opened up to me more in that setting, shared a lot more with me than that student has in the past year."

Another staff added to the importance of setting with students being able to utilize the wiigwam as a place for them to be their authentic selves:

> ...having the wiigwam, it's private and it would be private to no matter how many people went in there to use, so it's more of a respected area for all students to go into. And I think anyone that walks through the doors or the gate way of the Wigwam would actually feel that everybody that's in there will feel respected and will not be judged or looked at in a different way. I think that will make some changes as well for the students now.

Retention was seen impacting Indigenous students in a positive way as part of the supportive services they offer. A staff shares her reasoning:

> I see them coming into the university and I see that they want something that they can live. Their space has to be attached to their cultures and for a lot of students up until now when they come in, they haven't seen that and for us it's a retention issue if they don't attach to something, they don't have a base or a home or some kind of grounding we lose them. So I think it's going to be really great for that because I have already had conversations with students who have said that, "Hey I kind of feel that now I can have my culture here, now I can go to school.

These stories echo Waldram (2014) who contends that many Indigenous students tend not to continue within institutions without support from fellow Indigenous academia or spaces that Indigenous students feel safe in. Another staff member remarked, "I think that it might have helped me integrate in there a little bit and might have helped me with my emotional and spiritual journey through my university years," which mirrors what her colleague observed. Confirming this impact on students is a third staff member, asserting, "...having the wiigwam here is something they can identify in part of their own community. Having that connection to what they're familiar seeing, going into, and being part of would make them feel like they're connected to their community."

Looking at the impact from the Mind strand, one staff member talked about an *unknown impact* and how they were unsure if there was going to be an immediate one, "I don't even know if students really know how it's impacting them as well, sometimes we don't articulate feelings and sense of belonging … but I think that we're talking about all students not Indigenous students but all students." Another staff member added how hard it was to articulate the impact, because, "...students aren't really coming out and expressing their feelings about how it impacted them."

The creation of the new structures on campus always brings about a sense of *curiosity*, but the creation of an Indigenous structure in such a visible place brings about a deeper curiosity of the unknown. A staff member illustrates, "I think that it's a good thing just that it's out in the open and that it's happening and that it's creating curiosity. I actually haven't heard one negative thing, just more curious things." They also pointed out, "It's not just the students … It's faculty from other departments, it's staff, it's custodians, it's the Tim Hortons people we have to take into account, that many people witnessed the building of the wiigwam and it's going to impact all of them differently." Their colleague agreed with their sentiments, adding that there is a greater impact, "on Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals in our situation due to a lot of curiosity as to what is that? or why is it there?"

Similar to the strand involved in teaching others about the wiigwam and its purpose shared earlier in the article, staff members shared the importance of *pedagogy* through and with the wiigwam:

> I think that the major thing that will impact the students Is having the classes down there, the land-based teaching, just the way in which you are taught, the settings that you bring into place will really affect them and will open them up to a different way of learning and a different worldview and a different way of seeing things.

Alfred (1999; 2005) writes that community-based intellectuals are necessary for the regeneration efforts within Western academic or industrial systems. Another staff confirms this pedagogical shift, "We're actually looking, or our aim is towards this re-shaping of what postsecondary education should look like. We re-defined how it should be taught, especially in this space...so everything that gets incorporated along with the wiigwam on campus".

In agreement with how the wiigwam will impact how we teach within our educational institution is a third staff member, asserting:

> I think the wiigwam is and is going to continue to be a great learning institute. I would love to bring students there as well. I'm hoping that it gets utilized a lot for teaching and

> counselling, and for all students, diverse culture here. I would love to do something for pride week for the two-spirited.

The Spirit strand is the third and final section of the student impact discussion. Takano (2005) observed that self-reflection, in addition to strength and resilience that helps individuals deal with community life and social issues can be found on the land. Connection to land was seen as being on the main impacts. A staff member informs us:

> I think I see them differently in a different state of mind when they're on the land and I think that's something that we really need to get our students used to. You really need to go back to the land, it's safe for you, it's okay, and Mother Earth is going to carry whatever you're spilling out, or getting rid of, Mother Earth is going to take care of that."

These sentiments were echoed by another staff member who observed: "...getting our people more connected with the land, and I think in regard to looking at mental health, which is my role of helping students when they're struggling, is getting them back to that land".

Indigenous Social Work Students

Upon completion of their academic year, six Indigenous Social Work students participated in a sharing circle facilitated by the research assistant with the lead researcher in a supportive role. The students who participated all completed a second-year core counselling course which ran from September to April. They participated in the build, and five land-based activities associated with the wiigwam. The questions that were asked of them were the same with the additional question asking about land-based learning specific to the course itself.

Their experiences building the wiigwam included working with Elder Art Petahtegoose and the School of Architecture students in a partnership which they remarked, "We actually used the tools with the School of Architecture and we had a nice teaching with Art [the Elder] and it was great," while another student added:

> It was nice to see so many different people coming together for it and all working together on this one big project because there were students not just from our class, but from all different classes too. So, we all have to come together for that one purpose of creating this traditional structure and it was nice to hear Art [the Elder] talk about the teachings and the significance of the wiigwam because it's so much deeper and has so much more meaning than just the physical structure of it.

The wiigwam build itself was open to the community, on and off-campus, which brought many people out to either observe or participate at different times. We had an Indigenous grassroots

school, Akinomooshin Wiigwam Inc. from Atikameksheng Anishnawbek participate with their students, others who showed up when we posted on social media for people to participate, and also people passing by who showed interest were invited to join if they were comfortable.

Effect on self

Within their sharing circle, the students discussed the effect the wiigwam and its accompanying land-based teachings had on them. Through the sweetgrass story weaving methodology, they shared the main effects: *experiential learning* from their Body, *land-based teaching*, and a *sense of community* from the Mind, how they learned from the *Elder* which is the Spiritual strand.

One student recalled being informed in their first class that they would be participating in a wiigwam build and having land-based teachings incorporated into the class. They recalled:

> When I found out that we are going to have classes outside I automatically felt a sigh of relief. I was relieved in a way because I was never the kind of person to be able to just sit there. I'll always have this anxious feeling when I'm in a classroom because I know that I'm going to drift off somewhere if I sit there for too long.

Another student emphasized the experience as claiming, "It's amazing and instead of just learning theoretically, you learn it hands-on and you see it, and you feel it, and you smell it, and you touch it, like it's you get all your five senses in there." The experience of being respectful of the materials the students were working with, allowed a student to observe, "I think this course allowed us to learn how to use the land to our full advantage and without hurting the land."

Indigenous land-based pedagogy offers a way of fostering individual and collective empowerment for students by re-embedding them in the land-connected social relationships that settler-colonialism, through education and otherwise, sought to destroy (Henderson, 2000; Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher-Fox & Coulthard, 2014). The students communicated the impact that *land-based teachings* had on them and the "connection with the land" as being integral to their learning within this course from the Mind strand. One student revealed: "It absolutely was a life-changing experience … experiencing actual traditional learning with connection to the land and obtaining the skills that we were shown throughout the course," while another explained, "I think that land-based learning should be incorporated into every class in my opinion because I think it teaches you something that you simply cannot teach in a classroom setting."

According to Simpson (2014), land-based education occurs from the roots, moving upwards, and comes from being grounded and enveloped with the land. One of the students reminisced about their childhood, linking it to land-based teachings, within the sharing circle:

> The land-based learning building the wiigwam and all the experiences that we had; it brought me back to my childhood. I feel like that's really important to go back to the ways of learning with the land because you remember as a kid when you're out there playing like in the sand or outside playing hide and go seek or building things castles or playing with I had this tractor toy or whatnot, it just a brings you back to experiencing things that you used to do as a kid and building a pond, making mistakes outside on the land and learning from those kinds of things. I feel like you get in touch with your inner self doing that kind of learning and building the wiigwam going out for snowshoe walks going out and building a fire those are shelter, scavenging, and surviving and those are all like really important skills to have and to remember and it's very important to learn those kinds of things.

Within the Mind strand, the students claim they felt a *sense of community* while building the wiigwam, understanding that it takes many people to complete such a large task. One student recalls, "It was nice to see the positive within the community with people who were Indigenous and people who were non -Indigenous working together", while another student explains, "Another thing that I learned was that I would never be able to do that by myself, so it shows how important community is and how important it is to have those people around you to help support you". There was agreement about the sense of community within the sharing circle, with a third student commenting:

> I would say that this class with the building of the wiigwam has definitely allowed me to receive the relationships or to build the relationships that I was looking for with my life and receiving that sense of community that I was lacking for some time.

The involvement of the *Elder* from Atikameksheng Anishnawbek impacted the students from the Spirit. The learning process is seen through prolonged interactions with Elders and knowledge keepers whilst being on the land. Elder Art Petahtegoose was involved from the planning of the wiigwam, to the build, and continues to be present. His continued and authentic involvement has brought knowledge to the students which has had a profound impact on them. One student recounts the time she spent with him while they were prepping the saplings: "He gave me a little teaching which was very nice and important for me to hear that." Another student endorsed the meaningful involvement of the Elder:

> It was nice to hear Art [the Elder] talk about the teachings and the significance of the wiigwam because it's so much deeper and has so much more meaning than just the physical structure of it, and there's no way we could understand all of that in one day because it's just Indigenous ways of learning and catching those traditional teachings is a process.

A third student shared, "I'm still learning from Art [the Elder], hearing him speak we're learning from the knowledge that he has and when it's done in a way such as it was, it's more meaningful and impactful."

Impact on social work skills

The Indigenous Social Work students' activities were always linked to the helping relationship with a sharing circle embedded within it for the students to discuss with each other. Within this section, the strands recognized are the Body: setting, and Mind: counselling skills, support, and knowledge.

The social movement in response to social suffering caused by colonization and land loss is rooted in the personal connection to land and ecosystem (Radu, 2014) which can be found in the *setting*. A student discussed the importance of the Body strand via the physical setting and connection with each other as future colleagues through the significance of relationship building with the wiigwam and land-based activities:

> I think we just have to decide as a society what we want from education because if we foster environments where we actually connect to each other and care for each other instead of being so competitive and not even knowing the person who sits next to you for six months. There's differences and the connection is way more important especially if we're going to be social workers we should know how to have that.

They also showcased the Mind strand through the wiigwam experience stating it helped them understand how to use their *counselling skills* more effectively. One student said, "I think that it kind of made me realize that I can do a lot more than I think I can do … I want the people I work with to see that as well." It also helped the students understand the myriad of ways to use counselling skills, as one student explains:

> I think it also provided in terms of the class specifically, the learning relationship. It allowed us to see different ways to interact with the people we will work with in the future and especially as someone who already works in the field, it was really beneficial in helping me get ideas to do different things with the residents in the home that I work in. So, I think that was really beneficial in that aspect.

Another student discussed the importance of environment when employing their counselling skills and the impact it may also have on the clients they will work with:

> I felt relaxed. I felt in my element and I think that when we're working with others in a counselling fashion, why does it always have to be in an office? Being on the land and in a helping relationship you feel automatically more on an equilibrium with your client, even if you have more of, you know, you obviously have that power differential because you are in a position of power, but it really helps to diminish that I guess and to being the other individual on the same level because I see the earth as being grounding and there's one level, there's no up higher or lower.

Another impact the students shared was the feeling of *support* from each other through the wiigwam build and teachings on the land. This was succinctly shared by a student in the wiigwam building phase:

> There was one part when we were constructing the wiigwam and we were all in a big circle and we're all holding up the sticks, the trees; the holes were dug and we had all the trees inside of the holes and these trees were I don't know 15, 20 feet high and we're all facing each other in a circle and I had this feeling in the stomach where it was very beautiful and wonderful because I was connected to all of my fellow classmates and visitors.

Another student who participated in the same part of the wiigwam build used it as an analogy for supports:

> If I think of an analogy, if we had those branches I guess, the sapling when we were holding it; having people who were going to help you hold that up rather than have people who were going to try to knock it down from you. That's what I think of when I think of that. You have those supports in your life that aren't necessarily positive and when you're trying to put it up there going to try to bring it back down, but if you have people in your life if you're struggling to put it up and you're trying to do better for yourself and to have people who are actually going to help you push that up is going to be really beneficial and I think that's really important to at least try to find that individual to be that person who's going to help them push that sapling up.

The *knowledge* gained from land-based learning, the wiigwam build, and the debriefing that happened after was apparent through the student's experiences they talked about in the sharing circle:

> I think that we learned a lot of valuable knowledge that we couldn't learn in a classroom setting. Different things that sometimes I didn't realize I was learning until afterward or after when we were talking about it I'd be like oh yeah I know how to do that or I've heard about this teaching before, things like that so I think that was really valuable.

Other types of knowledge were also gained, as one student remarked that they felt they were getting in touch with their inner self through experiential learning with the wiigwam and land-based activities such as, "going out for snowshoe walks going out and building a fire. Those are shelter, scavenging, and surviving skills that are all like really important to have and to remember."

Another student believes in the upkeep of the knowledge they have learned, "I just kind of kept up with what all those teachings were, and I learned a great deal about my culture and what those different teachings are within wigwam. Just learning my own rules as an Indigenous person." Although there was no definitive Spirit strand elicited within this section, it is easy to understand the interconnectedness of the Body, Mind, and Spirit through what the students were sharing.

Future of the wiigwam

The sweetgrass story weaving methodology could be applied to this question with the two suggestions which are to use it more (Body) and to appreciate Indigenous knowledge (Mind & Spirit strands). Radu (2014) described the utilization of healing practices as fostering cultural belonging which speaks to the significance of using it more to strengthen intergenerational bonds and the transfer of knowledge. Students shared they hoped to "see it being used as more of a classroom" and possibly, "even have a complete course where you're learning in the wiigwam." Another student suggested, "classes where the teachers are more aware that they are able to use it and maybe have a class in there." The students agreed on the importance of the wiigwam, the teachings, and they, "hope even people even profs in this program [Indigenous Social Work] use it more." They would like to see the wiigwam "utilized more because we have such a beautiful campus here at Laurentian University and that there's so much more potential to land-based learning here."

Waldram (2014) suggested the reaffirming of identity can resemble many different cultural practices that would fall under healing, such as being on the land together or with a group, participating in ceremonies, hunting, and cooking wild game. Indigenous knowledge and its application for future use was seen as imperative and needed for Indigenous Social Work students which set it apart from mainstream social work programs. This was evident through students stating, "You'll literally get first-hand experience of Indigenous knowledge and ways of doing things," which they further explained, "you'll see and experience actual events, actual things going

on like, I would just like to see continued use of Indigenous ways of knowing because they are extremely important."

Moreover, another student insists that "everyone gets something different from specific teachings and when we get to share, you get even more because not only are you getting what you've learned but you're getting what other people learned as well," which speaks to the experiential learning that takes place within this core counselling course. Lastly, we would like to leave you with the validity of Indigenous knowledge and its impact on a student who asserts: "I think we should start listening to traditional teachings and start making sure to understand that they are valid and that they work."

Summary

Indigenous peoples have their own ways of helping as they strive towards living mino-bimaadiziwin (the good life). Indigenous peoples have their own intellectual traditions which are becoming more visible within academic settings. Simpson (2008) shares Indigenist academics, writers, and revolutionaries' beliefs in the restoration of Indigenous intellectual traditions but also highlights the tenuous relationships which some Indigenous academics hold due to their Indigenous beliefs and the role of historical and contemporary colonialism within the institution they work in (p. 16, 17). Moreover, Barnaby (2010) explains that Dene Elders believe the way to maintain a respectful relationship with the land is to continue the traditional lifestyle which is a common theme threaded throughout many Indigenous nations. We, the authors, believe that land-based pedagogy for students will benefit them greatly as it is a return to the land as the first teacher.

Tuck, McCoy & McKenzie (2014) endorse land education as it puts Indigenous epistemological and ontological accounts of land at the center, including Indigenous understandings of land, Indigenous language in relation to land, and Indigenous critiques of settler colonialism. It attends to constructions and storying of land and repatriation by Indigenous peoples, documenting and advancing Indigenous agency and land rights (p. 13). A return to the land and use of Indigenous land-based pedagogy will be beneficial for students and also for the institution through housing a visible Indigenous centered, created, and led wigwam. Henderson (2000) states that Indigenous thought and identity are centered on the environment in which Indigenous people live and that one task of decolonization is to replace the sameness of universality with the concepts

of diversity, flexibility, and equity (p.252, 267). As many Indigenous Peoples continue to showcase their resilience and empowerment to better Turtle Island (Canada) land and waterways, we can also use this to illustrate the diversity and the flexibility of our educational institution and their support of efforts towards reconciliation.

Limitations

The limitations of this study include: 1) following Indigenous cultural protocols within a mainstream institution, 2) the novel use of the sweetgrass story weaving methodology, 3) the regional group of research participants, and 4) maintenance of the wiigwam. The ability to follow Indigenous cultural protocols in the planning and creation of the wiigwam could have been more intently respected. Our relatives (the saplings) gave their lives for the wiigwam frame and they were not all used. Upon retrospect, we need to make reparations and explain to our relatives *why* we didn't use everything we gathered. We actually took a very western approach to determine how many saplings were required and that calculation was too high. When that happens, someone needs to go to the bush and make offerings to repair the relationship and explain the unnecessary taking of life. This all circles back to the teaching of reciprocity and respect and the teaching of the One Dish, One Spoon agreement with our physical and spiritual relatives so we can have a good mind.

Secondly, the use of a novel methodology means it is still evolving to ensure its efficacy within qualitative research. The sweetgrass story weaving methodology is in its infancy and was created through an Indigenous grassroots theory with an Indigenous scholar who works closely with the community. The stories shared were analyzed thematically which meant pulling them apart which changed the essence even after braiding them back together. The research team wants to honour stories that require more reflection moving forward as it moves from infancy to full growth.

Another limitation can be seen in the regional group the research participants are from which is a northern province within Canada. We have access to nature within our backyards which may not be the case for all interested in building and maintaining regionally accurate Indigenous built structures within their educational institutions. We also have regional teachings that are specific to this area which may be different within other nations and communities.

Lastly, the limitation we noted within our research was the assignment of continued care and maintenance of our wiigwam. Care and maintenance are crucial to the health of our wiigwam

which was maintained without assigned roles and responsibilities which, in turn, created overlapping and miscommunication of tasks. The designation of roles and responsibilities would ensure the wiigwam is getting uninterrupted care from those who were responsible for wiigwam maintenance. We have moved forward within our build to include a birch bark cladding system with Atikamkesheng Anishnawbek, the School of Architecture, the Indigenous Social Work program, and the Indigenous Student Affairs Department. Genuine participation of the whole community helps to build respect for the wiigwam as a living entity and place for learning. This requires strong facilitation, leadership, and conflict resolution by the ceremony makers to maintain physical safety and ensure that participants feel safe.

Policy Recommendations

It is imperative there is an *Indigenous presence at the executive level* within educational institutions when building regionally accurate Indigenous built structures. We were fortunate to have strong Indigenous leadership within the executive team throughout our journey which has been instrumental in keeping the movement of Indigenous knowledges and pedagogical practices at the forefront. The wiigwam has also assisted in creating dialogue across campus and collaboration. The Indigenous leadership has provided a trickle-down effect to other departments which in turn have provided support to the work that is being done with our wiigwam. An example would be the role of Facility Services who have been partners with the Indigenous department; firstly, with the tipi, and continuing on to the changing of structures into a wiigwam. They have been an essential partner within this research project, have offered advice and support, and this relationship continues to the present day.

Another recommendation is the inclusion of Indigenous built structures on campuses being included into the *main operating budgets* of educational institutions. The creation of this wiigwam which includes, materials, honorariums, and research assistance, was provided through a one-time research grant. Since the use of the funds has been exhausted, the Indigenous department, Indigenous Social Work department, and School of Architecture have discussed ways of caring and maintaining the wiigwam within their existing budgets. With a dedicated budget for Indigenous built structures on campuses from the operating budget, this can alleviate the stress on our existing budgets while valuing Indigenous knowledge, assisting with Indigenous student retention, and promote land-based pedagogical frameworks.

Incorporation of *land-based learning* for Indigenous students, programs, and departments within educational institutions is the last recommendation. The research from Indigenous staff shows the importance of connection to space and place, collaboration, Elder involvement, and feeling safe on the land and in the wiigwam. The Indigenous Social Work students also shared the way that experiential learning, land-based teaching, sense of community, and Elder involvement helped them connect their counselling skills with Indigenous knowledge in a supportive and effective way. This policy recommendation can be enacted through program/course development, and delivery which would also aid in the retention of Indigenous students.

Where do we go from here?

Our building and maintenance of the wiigwam is one that is deeply connected to the land, culture, traditions, educational institution, and one another. The visibility and respect the wiigwam elicits is not without its institutional hurdles, but the benefits to the faculty, staff, students, and community members outweigh these. This research has revealed that taking space, connection to place, and creating dialogue about and with the wiigwam are vital to its livelihood and health. The collaboration that has taken place amongst faculties, programs, and within the community can be seen as the wiigwam came to life under the guidance of Elder Art Petahtegoose.

The setting of the wiigwam has provided a safe feeling, being grounded, and calmness when sitting by the fire or seeing it on campus which has also created a sense of curiosity amongst many. Our Indigenous knowledges are enveloped within the wiigwam and vice versa; these knowledges can be seen when we create dialogue, pedagogical strategies, and in sharing and being the narrators of our own stories. The impact of the wiigwam may be currently unknown and may only be felt in years to come, but we do know that the connection to the land is strong. This connection is in the experiential and land-based learning for Indigenous Social Work students aiding in retention when they are able to see themselves reflected in their current educational landscape. Indigenous land-based pedagogy offers a way of fostering individual and collective empowerment for students by re-embedding them in the land-connected social relationships that settler-colonialism, through education and otherwise, sought to destroy (Henderson, 2000; Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher-Fox & Coulthard, 2014).

The wiigwam setting and Elder involvement has also impacted the students' counselling skills, along with the support from their peers and knowledge from the land-based teachings which

they found invaluable. The wiigwam build and subsequent land-based activities also assisted the Indigenous Social Work students in creating a sense of community that could not have been found solely in a classroom setting. The Indigenous staff and students were both in agreement that the wiigwam should be used more within their programs and courses which will assist with retention and honour Indigenous knowledge systems.

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