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# “We Have to Get More Teachers to Help Our Kids”: Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Teacher Education Programs to Increase the Number of Indigenous Teachers in Canada and Abroad

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## Abstract

This paper discusses the findings of a research study that gathered and analyzed recruitment and retention strategies employed by 50 teacher education programs (TEPs) in Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia to increase the number of Indigenous teachers. It discusses several recruitment and retention strategies that were found to be successful in this regard, highlighting the importance of facilitating access, eliminating financial barriers, and offering Indigenous-centric programs.

**Keywords:** Indigenous education, higher education, community-based education, Indigenous student support, decolonizing education

## Introduction

Due to a shortage in teachers in Shamattawa First Nation, a fly-in community in northern Manitoba, students are returning to classrooms without instructors. As students returned to school in the fall of 2018, Kisemattawa Kiskinwahamakew Kamik School had only half of the teachers it needed, and the community was concerned that this year may end up like the last (Caruk, 2018). In 2017, hundreds of students were asked to stay home at the beginning of the term (Coubrough, 2017a) and Grade 3 and Grade 5 classes could only be held every other day (Caruk, 2018). Sadly, Shamattawa First Nation is not an anomaly: their situation the reality for many Indigenous communities across Canada.

As a practical solution, the federal government considered supplying the children with take-home packages (Coubrough, 2017b) to study on their own. Arguably, this is only effective as a temporary and superficial solution, failing to address the root of the problem. This paper addresses the

problem of the lack of teachers at Indigenous schools by outlining practical strategies to increase the number of Indigenous teachers. Specifically, this paper will outline strategies that can be employed by teacher education programs (TEPs) to recruit and retain Indigenous teacher candidates (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Strategies to Increase the Number of Indigenous Teacher Candidates

<b>Recruitment Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bringing the education to the students</li><li>• Removing financial barriers</li><li>• Providing alternative pathways to admission and certification</li></ul>
<b>Retention Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creating Indigenous cohorts</li><li>• Providing specialized support services</li><li>• Providing Indigenous-centric curriculum and program design</li><li>• Drawing from Indigenous pedagogies</li><li>• Hiring Indigenous faculty and educators</li></ul>

In this paper, the term *Indigenous* is used to refer to the original inhabitants (and their descendants) of what is currently called Canada, the USA, New Zealand, and Australia, that is, peoples and nations who have been subjected to the colonization of their lands and ways of being, and whose inherent rights to self-determination have been denied by colonizing societies.

This paper is based on the premise that increasing the number of Indigenous teachers leads to several beneficial outcomes for Indigenous students. Indigenous teachers are more likely to have specific cultural knowledge and hence the ability to teach curriculum from Indigenous perspectives. They are also more likely to understand their students' struggles in balancing home, community, and school life, as well as having first-hand knowledge of the impact of colonialism and racism. This, in combination with having Indigenous peoples in leadership and mentoring positions, as well as having Indigenous thought and practice reflected in the curriculum, leads to higher student engagement, improved educational outcomes, and an increased sense of overall comfort and wellbeing for Indigenous students (College of Alberta School Superintendents, 2019; Council of Ministers of Education, Canada [CMEC], 2010; Kinnane et al., 2014; Malatest & Associates, 2010).

It is worth clarifying that the authors do not believe increasing the number of Indigenous teachers is doing enough, nor an end in itself. The authors also note that the strategies outlined in this paper should not be misused for the mere politics of inclusion, to recruit and draw more Indigenous peoples into the Western, mainstream education system without critiquing and disrupting the system as such, and for attempting to train Indigenous teachers in the reproduction of Eurocentric, colonial modes of teaching and learning. The paper is mindful that inclusion is a colonial tactic (Byrd, 2011; Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2011; Turner, 2006), one particularly prominent in the field of education (Battiste et al., 2002; Cannon, 2018; Episkenew, 2011; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Kuokkanen, 2008), and that colonialism "cannot be ended by further inclusion or more participation" (Byrd, 2011, p. 26). In short, while this paper offers pragmatic and programmatic strategies to increase the number of Indigenous teachers, this is not meant to be used as a guide for mere inclusion. It could, however, be utilised as one for strategic infiltration. It is a practical guide for filling classrooms with Indigenous teachers that gestures towards potentialities for opening

spaces within, creating cracks and fissures, allowing Indigenous peoples to chip away from the inside out. Its aim is to transfer power back to Indigenous peoples.

## Scope and Methods

This paper is a synopsis of a research study that gathered strategies employed by TEPs to recruit and retain Indigenous teacher candidates and place graduates into teaching roles. Research was conducted as a scoping review (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005) to systematically map the range of available strategies, to analyze these strategies according to their outcomes, and to provide a summarized list of corresponding findings and recommendations. The data were drawn from a comprehensive list of TEPs from 36 colleges and universities across Canada, plus select examples from the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. In total, 50 universities or TEPs were included in this study, conducted from November 2017 to March 2018.

In phase one, data were gathered through publicly accessible information via university, college, and TEP webpages. When further information seemed necessary, the authors contacted publicly listed administrative personnel via email or telephone. Data on each program's Indigenous recruitment and retention strategies were organized into a table. The table documented the name of the program, followed by the actions or policies to increase, recruit, and/or retain Indigenous teacher candidates.

In phase two, data were gathered to assess the outcomes of the actions and policies. To evaluate their effectiveness, the authors searched for evidence in grey literature, publicly available program information, government documents, and newspaper reports pertaining to the different TEPs. As measures of *success*, the following two criteria were utilised. The first criterion related to quantifiable outcomes, including a measured increase in the number of Indigenous teacher candidates admitted to and/or graduating from a program. The second criterion used was qualitative feedback directly evaluating certain strategies from: Indigenous teacher candidates or recent graduates on program evaluation and student satisfaction; Indigenous community partners regarding the quality of a partnership or how programs respond to community needs; and university and program administrators on program outcomes or developments.

Once data collection was completed, the researchers analyzed the data table, which was over eighty pages in length. The analysis was performed by summarizing the main objective or goal of each documented strategy or initiative. From there, the range of summarized objectives relevant to each program was thematically categorized. The results produced eleven main themes, which were threads of commonly used strategies drawn from the data. The authors then grouped the eleven strategies into three parent categories. The three categories identified were: a) Recruitment Strategies, b) Retention Strategies, and c) Job Placement and Transition Strategies. This paper discusses the first two categories. The authors did not feel that the findings from these first two categories—Indigenous teacher candidate recruitment and retention—could be accurately represented without properly detailing examples, explanations, and background information on each strategy. To remain digestible as a single paper, the authors chose to focus this paper on recruitment and retention strategies, while the third part of the study (job placement and transition strategies) will be the subject of a paper composed at a later date.

## Findings

The discussion is structured in two parts. Part one focuses on *Recruitment Strategies*, providing suggestions for increasing the number of individuals applying and being admitted to a program. Part two focuses on *Retention Strategies*, providing suggestions for successfully moving Indigenous teacher candidates from admission to graduation. In each of these categories, the paper will discuss the strategies that are commonly used to obtain each objective, using examples from the data. These examples are shared not as endorsements or perfect examples, but for explanatory purposes or because they exemplify some promising aspect. Findings are discussed through actionable language, often phrased as recommendations, striving for ease of implementation to affect programmatic change.

### ***Part One: Recruitment Strategies for Indigenous Teacher Candidates***

There are three broad recruitment strategies that have consistently increased the enrollment number of Indigenous teacher candidates. All three strategies speak to the structure of the program. TEPs successfully recruited Indigenous teacher candidates if they could:

- *Bring the education to the students* via online, in-community, or a blended approach to course delivery
- *Remove financial barriers*
- *Provide alternative pathways to admission and certification*

This section will describe each of these recruitment strategies.

#### *Bringing the Education to the Students*

As is the case for Shamattawa First Nation, it is difficult for many remote communities to recruit and retain qualified and appropriately-trained teachers (Kitchenham & Chasteauneuf, 2010; Monk, 2007). *Appropriately trained* refers to teacher training that focuses on the needs of Indigenous learners and is grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.

Course location emerged as one of the most important aspects that either attracts or deters potential teacher candidates. It is difficult for members of remote communities to leave their homes to attend a distant TEP. Whether teacher candidates can complete courses close to home, or whether they must travel or relocate to do so, is a deciding factor in their consideration to apply. Further, many (if not most) potential teacher candidates are female adult learners who have familial relations and responsibilities they are unable to leave behind (Freeman, 2008; Kitchen, et al., 2010; Malatest & Associates, 2010; Nunavut Teacher Education Program, 2016). For these women, and for many other potential teacher candidates, attending university hundreds of miles away is not only logistically and financially difficult, but often, practically impossible. Addressing this logistical issue means *bringing the education to the students*.

There are several ways to accomplish this. For example, a TEP could be structured according to a *community-based model*. In this model, courses are delivered in-person at off-campus locations. Put differently, instructors and students physically meet close to where the students live. Often, courses are offered in the community through satellite institutions, such as local colleges, or in

*catchment areas*, such as the nearest town within range of multiple communities. Locations are best chosen through collaboration with those communities the program is meant to serve.

The Nunavut Teacher Education Program (NTEP) exemplifies this approach. NTEP is a community-based program for Inuit teacher candidates that exists through a partnership between the University of Regina and Nunavut Arctic College. Nunavut Arctic College operates as a satellite institution for the University of Regina, allowing teacher candidates to remain in the Arctic for the duration of the program. Students can choose to complete courses at the college's Nunatta (Iqaluit) Campus, as well as various community-based sites. More than half of NTEP's students choose to graduate from the community-based option. Community sites are chosen "on a rotational basis" (Nunavut Teacher Education Program, 2016, para. 7). The program is offered "in four communities at a time with single entry year followed through for five years" (Nunavut Teacher Education Program, 2016, para. 7). Iqaluit, which serves as the program's headquarters, has a yearly intake. According to the program facilitator, this community-based model is highly adaptable:

When there is a collaborative partnership with the DEA [District Education Authority], the school principal, teachers, community instructor, and the adult educators the community-programs run very well throughout the duration of the program. As long as there is funding for our community-based program and the willingness of the students, the programs can be offered successfully in any of our remote Nunavut communities. (Nunavut Teacher Education Program, 2016, para. 9)

As suggested by the data from our research, a community-based TEP is perhaps one of the most successful program designs overall for attracting and graduating Indigenous teacher candidates. The success of this model has already been noted in the United States and Australia (Bethel, 2006; Heimbecker et al., 2000; Maher, 2010). In Canada, some of the oldest and longest-standing programs have successfully utilized a community-based course-delivery model. For example, the Indian Teacher Education Program at the University of Saskatchewan has used this model since the 1970s, while maintaining a 90% student success rate (University of Saskatchewan, 2018a). Student feedback suggests that Indigenous teacher candidates prefer the community-based course delivery model over campus-based or online programs (Walton et al., 2010). Indeed, community-based teacher education has been requested by communities themselves (Martin, 2010; Nunavut Teacher Education Program, 2016). Following this trend, most of the newer programs in Canada have adopted this model, including the University of Alberta, University of Saskatchewan, and McGill.

*Online/distance education* is another option for bringing the education to the teacher candidates. Programs that solely rely on this option are limited; yet, some universities successfully offer programs that can be completed exclusively through distance education, requiring no in-person contact between instructors and teacher candidates. A variety of software programs and educational technologies are available to facilitate this form of course-delivery, allowing for a range of different course formats. Examples of formats include: students complete course modules asynchronously, that is, on their own within a set time frame; a cohort of students and their instructors who are physically apart meet virtually during set class times in a virtual classroom where they participate in real-time (i.e., synchronously); a cohort of teacher candidates meets during set class times in a community-based computer lab and the instructor participates synchronously via video conference or live-stream. Some online/distance education delivery formats, such as video conferencing, require specialized equipment, but other options require only

a working computer and Wi-Fi connection. To mitigate financial barriers, such as the purchase of computers or headsets, the necessary equipment can be supplied by universities. Examples include the creation of technologically equipped study centers in the community, as is the case with the Remote Area Teacher Education Program in Australia, reliance on the equipment of satellite institutions, and/or the distribution of necessary equipment to students directly. For example, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Indigenous Teacher Education Program can be completed online and students receive a laptop and small tablet.

The potential benefits of distance education for remote Indigenous communities have been evaluated by a range of authors (Boskic & Hu, 2013; Downing, 2002; O'Donnell et al., 2016; Philpott et al., 2009; Voyageur, 2001). Over a decade ago, Battiste and McLean (2005) identified a "growing interest in distance learning as a means of overcoming the challenges of geography and isolation" (p. 12), and Voyageur (2001) declared that Indigenous students were "Ready, Willing, and Able" (p. 102).

Another successful way for bringing the education to the students is through a *blended approach*, by combining elements of community-based, on-campus, and online courses. TEPs that are offered through a blended approach include those at Queen's University, St. Francis Xavier University, Lakehead University, and Nipissing University. The structure can look as follows: on-campus courses are offered during one term (usually summer), while the other terms are taught in the community. Another approach to blended program design combines in-person community-based and online course delivery. This option does not require on-campus attendance. For example, the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa offers a three-year, part-time, community-based Aboriginal TEP for the Primary/Junior level. The program is offered through partnerships with different Indigenous communities. During the fall and winter terms, courses are offered online. In the summer term, courses are offered in the partnering community.

Given the steady advancement of educational technologies, it can be hypothesized that there will be a rise in more flexible programs that allow for increased customization depending on individual or community needs. Domestic and international data indicate a trend towards increased collaborations and long-term partnerships with Indigenous communities, which will likely lead to more nuanced insights into the needs of communities and individuals, and to strategies that offer a more varied and customizable range of options.

McGill's Bachelor of Education in First Nations and Inuit Education currently provides a range of options through collaboration between McGill and various Indigenous community partners. Aspects of the program, such as dates, location, and sequence of courses, are customized and determined collaboratively by McGill and the community partner to meet the partner's needs and the university's requirements. Courses may be delivered in-person on McGill's campus in Quebec, in the community, or online – fully or through a hybrid format. For example, through collaboration between McGill and the Listuguj Department of Education, twenty students from Listuguj, Gesgapegiag and Ugpi'Ganjig, Mi'gmaq communities on the Bay of Chaleur in New Brunswick, enrolled in McGill's program.

For these students, "courses are being taught in the Mi'gmaq community, in the Mi'gmaq language, by Mi'gmaq instructors—and using Mi'gmaq knowledge and learning styles" (Martin, 2010, para. 1). The program's success is evidenced by the fact that the students chose it over other

community-based programs already available to them. Even though other in-community degree programs exist in their area that allow students to complete most of the degree at home, such as through Cape Breton University and St. Francis Xavier University, these programs do require *some* time away from the home community. Arguably, students enrolled at McGill for the possibility to earn a degree “without ever having set foot on either of the University’s Montreal campuses” (Martin, 2010, para. 4). As discussed in Martin (2010), one of the students enrolled in the McGill program reportedly did so because it allowed her to stay in Gesgapegiag. She shares that she “was drawn to the program because for one, I have a family and was not willing to leave them behind” (para. 5). As described in the *McGill Reporter* (Martin, 2010), it was not “the right time for her to go to university—so the university has come to her” (para. 3).

### *Removing Financial Barriers*

Financial considerations are crucial deciding factors for potential teacher candidates. Programs successfully attract and retain teacher candidates if they provide access to education at no or minimal cost. The less financially burdensome, the more successful programs are in recruiting and retaining Indigenous teacher candidates. Thus, free education would provide more opportunities to recruit Indigenous teachers. This first requires removing financial barriers that are enacted by the institution, including not charging application fees, and most importantly, not charging tuition and other auxiliary fees. Second, this requires providing financial support to cover other costs that arise from pursuing a program, such as textbooks and course supplies. Programs that require on-campus attendance should cover associated costs by providing living stipends, travel allowances, and child care.

This strategy, particularly free tuition, has been successfully utilized in New Zealand, Australia, and the United States, but has found less traction in Canada. Only a limited number of Canadian programs have adopted this strategy. Two examples include the Northern Teacher Education Program and the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program. In Canada, financial assistance is more commonly distributed via scholarships, bursaries, and awards, as exemplified by programs at Lakehead University, Brock University, and Wilfrid Laurier University. These forms of assistance are often awarded on a competitive basis, where financial assistance is not guaranteed, nor available for everyone. Further, the amounts distributed in Canada are significantly lower than comparable assistance in the international context, in some cases amounting to a difference in the tens of thousands of dollars per candidate. While many First Nations students in Canada are technically eligible to receive post-secondary education funding from the government, actual financial support is limited and severely lacking for non-First Nations and non-status Indian students (Bruce et al., 2010). Removing financial barriers therefore is essential for attracting and retaining teacher candidates. Strong examples include New Zealand’s Teach NZ initiative, Australia’s More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative, and several programs in the United States, discussed below.

In recent years, several TEPs have been launched in the United States to counteract a shortage of Indigenous teachers. What these programs have in common is the provision of full support packages to Indigenous teacher candidates. According to the State University of New York, Potsdam (home to one of these programs), the programs are designed to “increase the number of qualified Native American teachers” while providing the necessary funding to “alleviate *any* financial burdens” (2018, para. 4). Some programs even cover costs associated with licensure, as



is the case with Portland State University's American Indian Teacher Program, or reimburse students for their application fees, such as the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Indigenous Teacher Education Program. Many of the fully-funded US programs follow the same structure: a cohort of Indigenous students is admitted and then financially, academically, and culturally supported throughout the length of the program. Once the cohort has graduated, the next fully-funded cohort is admitted. Many of these programs aim to bring the education to the students through online or community-based course delivery. In cases where students must attend classes on campus, the university covers associated fees, including transportation, housing, and child care.

### *Providing Alternative Pathways to Teacher Certification and Program Admission*

Murray-Orr and Mitton-Kukner suggest that Canadian faculties of education can respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)'s calls to action by working "in long-term partnerships with Indigenous communities to support community members to obtain B. Ed. [Bachelor of Education] and M. Ed. [Master of Education] credentials to work in their home communities" (2017, p. 76). One way of doing so is by providing prospective teachers who are already employed in the community with the possibility of acquiring additional qualifications and alternative pathways for certification. Teacher aids and educational assistants could then receive certification, transition into full-time employment, and be financially compensated for the work they already do (Caruk, 2018). Ideally, such programs could be completed in the community and offered at no cost to the teacher candidate.

There are programs that successfully follow this strategy. For example, Brandon University in Manitoba offers an integrated Bachelor of Education/Bachelor of Arts program (K-4, or 5-8), entitled Program for the Education of Native Teachers (PENT). This is a blended TEP through which teacher candidates combine schooling with paraprofessional work in their community schools. Courses are offered on campus at Brandon University from April through July and the candidates utilize what they have learned with progressively greater responsibility in a paraprofessional position September through March. To be admitted, prospective teacher candidates must already have a position as a classroom paraprofessional, such as a teacher's aide. On average, the program takes six years to complete. An advisory committee oversees program delivery and consists of representatives from a wide range of communities and councils. Over 50 communities from across Manitoba participate in the program. According to Brandon University's (2016) student handbook, over 587 graduates of the program teach in schools in Manitoba and other provinces.

Alongside flexibility in certification pathways, flexibility in the admissions process is another successful strategy for increasing the number of Indigenous teachers (Auhl et al., 2018; CMEC, 2010; White et al., 2007). This could mean broadening admissions criteria, such as by crediting an applicant for relevant life and work experiences in the community, including familiarity or fluency in an Indigenous language. The opportunity to fulfill the admissions requirements over time is another option. This would mean accepting teacher candidates provisionally, requiring pre-program preparation courses, or bridging programs that allow potential teacher candidates to be credited with the qualifications required for admission upon completion.

## ***Part Two: Retention Strategies for Indigenous Teacher Candidates***

This section focuses on successful retention strategies. Five interrelated strategies were highly successful in retaining Indigenous teacher candidates for the duration of the program, positively guiding them from admission to graduation. These strategies are:

- The *creation of Indigenous cohorts*
- The implementation of *specialized support services*
- The provision of a culturally, politically, and epistemically relevant *Indigenous-centric curriculum and program design*
- The employment of corresponding *Indigenous pedagogies* for program delivery
- The *hiring of Indigenous faculty*

Each of these strategies led to positive outcomes on their own, but were most successful when combined. In their own ways, each of these strategies contributes to the fostering of an environment that seeks to prevent the drop-out, or push-out, of Indigenous teacher candidates. Such strategies are crucial in underlining the need for programs to adapt to the needs of Indigenous students, instead of expecting Indigenous students to adapt to Eurocentric and culturally oppressive programs (Kirkness, 1999).

### *Creating Indigenous Cohorts*

One strategy that positively affects student retention is the *creation of Indigenous cohorts*. This allows for the building of an Indigenous-centered learning community that places the needs of Indigenous teacher candidates at its core, fostering a sense of community and belonging among students to combat feelings of isolation and alienation, while enveloping them in a support network of Indigenous teachers, mentors, and advocates. The data of this study show that the creation of Indigenous cohorts is widely successful, having been adopted across TEPs in all four countries.

For on-campus TEPs in particular, the creation of Indigenous cohorts is an important step in the building of a sense of community. One such example is the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP) at the University of Alberta. ATEP began in 2002 as an off-campus elementary TEP involving community-based cohorts. Its stated goal is the recruiting and training of “First Nations, Métis and Inuit teachers by offering courses and in-classroom training through colleges and schools close to First Nations communities” (French, 2017, para. 6). According to Angela Wolfe, Associate Director of ATEP, the program was created “to meet the demand for teachers who are already connected to Indigenous communities” (French 2017, para. 4). ATEP offers classes across the province through partnerships with other academic institutions and communities throughout Alberta, such as Northern Lakes College, Portage College in Cold Lake, University nuhelot’ine thaiyots’i nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills, and Maskwacis Cultural College. In 2017, ATEP added a new urban cohort—a secondary education stream—for Indigenous teacher candidates exclusively. The urban cohort is part of the collaborative community-based program, yet classes are held at the University of Alberta campus in Edmonton. Since students live on or near campus to attend classes, additional resources and special support programs have been designed for this cohort, including “a lounge where they can study and work on projects, and elders and mentors to turn to for advice, academic or otherwise” (French, 2017, para. 23).

### *Providing Specialized Support Services*

The creation of Indigenous cohorts can be a starting point for a more holistic approach to Indigenous teacher education. Not only can it provide a sense of community, but such a model can also invite a more tailored curriculum design and specialized support programs. The academic literature notes widespread support for such initiatives, reporting higher student satisfaction overall and a positive correlation with student retention and graduation rates (Augustine, 2002; Freeman, 2008; Kitchen et al., 2010; Malatest & Associates, 2010; Orr et al., 2008; Pidgeon et al., 2014; Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017; Rawana et al., 2015).

The majority of TEPs included in this study provide tailored support services for Indigenous teacher candidates. In alignment with the literature, the data of this study indicate a move away from strictly academic support programs towards more holistic approaches to student well-being. Alongside academic support and tutoring services, programs increasingly offer initiatives that focus on emotional and mental well-being of Indigenous teacher candidates.

Commonly, these initiatives are designed and implemented under Indigenous leadership to ensure that they are culturally, epistemically, and politically meaningful. Examples include Indigenous-led research centers, Indigenous student support centers, community centers, Indigenous mentorship programs, peer-support programs, Elder-in-Residence programs, and community events and celebrations, such as pow-wows, smudges, ceremonies, potlucks, speaker series, and workshops in areas such as beading or drum-making. Another example is the provision of dedicated physical spaces, such as study rooms or common areas.

### *Providing Indigenous-Centric Curriculum and Program Design*

Indigenous teacher candidates are more likely to apply to and remain in programs that are culturally, politically, and epistemically relevant. Qualitative research indicates that a Eurocentric curriculum and program design are prime reasons for why Indigenous students leave a program (Kitchen et al., 2010; Pidgeon et al., 2014). Thus, a core strategy for increasing the number of Indigenous teacher candidates is to provide a relevant *Indigenous-centric curriculum*, grounding course content in Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being (Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004; Villegas et al., 2008; Whitinui et al., 2018).

Indigenous leadership and community partnerships are essential for this strategy. As Champagne (2003) puts it, “Education for Native students needs to start in the community and must incorporate the interests, values, and cultural orientations of the community” (para. 17). This includes the creation of curricula, programs, and intellectual materials that provide Indigenous students “with the perspectives, opportunities, and understandings that assist in building and preserving their communities and nations” (Champagne, 2003, para. 17). This strategy can be implemented through a process that is broadly collaborative and led by Indigenous peoples and community leaders. It is important to ensure that Indigenous teachings are based on the direction of community members, taking their safety into consideration. Indigenous teachings and knowledges must be used cautiously, and by following the applicable protocols for knowledge sharing. For example, Vine Deloria Jr. (2001) explains that:

The boundaries of American Indian knowledge were those of respect, not orthodoxy. For instance, certain stories about the stars could not be told when the constellations in question were overhead. Some other

kinds of stories involving animals, plants, and spirits could only be told at a particular time of year or in a specific place. (p. 23)

Non-indigenous educators, in particular, must heed caution when engaging with Indigenous knowledges, for “the increased presence and engagement with Indigenous knowledges cannot result in an intellectual free-for-all” (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 224). As such, ongoing self-reflexive, open-minded, open-hearted, and respectful discussions over appropriate curriculum and program design are necessary components of this strategy (Buker, 2014).

Increasingly, TEPs facilitate the engagement with an Indigenous-centric curriculum through Indigenous languages. As stressed in the 2010 report of the Council of Ministers of Education, in Canada, “Language is the foundation of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures” (p. 10). Affirmation of Indigenous language and cultural identity is important for Indigenous student success, both in schools K-12 and in post-secondary education. As such, a range of programs exist in Canada and abroad that train teacher candidates to become Indigenous language teachers or practitioners.

The structure through which Indigenous languages are incorporated into TEPs varies. Some TEPs teach Indigenous languages as part of their program. For example, teacher candidates or graduates of the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan can learn Indigenous languages (and pursue a part-time, two-year certificate in Indigenous Languages), while being trained to teach these in Saskatchewan. The certificate is based on ten courses, focusing on Indigenous pedagogy and culture in a variety of languages, including Cree, Michif, and Saulteaux. Grounded in Indigenous teaching methodologies, “courses [are] based on the need for total immersion, followed by a period of reflection. Most courses are taught in the summer months, however courses in the fall and winter will be necessary, as storytelling is culturally favoured during these seasons” (University of Saskatchewan, 2018b, para. 2). Other TEPs assume fluency and deliver courses in Indigenous languages.

One of the most immersive programs is the Kahuawaiola Indigenous Teacher Education Graduate Program Certificate offered through the University of Hawai’i at Hilo. This three-semester graduate certificate program is designed to prepare Maui Ola Hawai’i (Hawaiian identity nurturing) teachers “to teach in Hawaiian language medium schools, Hawaiian language and culture programs in English medium schools, and schools serving students with a strong Hawaiian cultural background” (University of Hawai’i at Hilo, 2017, para. 5). Both the coursework and practicum are “conducted through the medium of the Hawaiian language and implemented upon a foundation of traditional Hawaiian pedagogy” (Alencastre & Kawai’ae’a, 2018, p. 137).

### *Drawing From Indigenous Pedagogies*

Alongside curricula that are relevant to Indigenous peoples, an appropriate delivery of course content is similarly connected to the success of Indigenous teacher candidates. An Indigenous-centric curriculum must be aligned with and cannot be separated from *Indigenous pedagogies*.

Indigenous pedagogies extend from Indigenous ontological and epistemological positions. They may emerge from sovereign, place-specific knowledge systems (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001), exhibit different ways of learning than Western institutions are accustomed to, and be attuned to politics of self-determination, sovereignty, resurgence, and decolonization. For

example, in *Red Pedagogy*, Grande (2004) calls for “pedagogies of disruption, intervention, affirmative action, hope, and possibility”, and pedagogies that cultivate “a sense of collective agency, both to curb the excesses of dominant power and to revitalize indigenous communities” (p. 26). Red pedagogy, Grande (2004) explains, “trusts the beliefs and understandings of our ancestors as well as the power of traditional knowledge” (p. 28). Champagne (2003) puts forward a similar idea under *Education for nation-building*, describing it as “a means to help preserve Native cultures and communities as self-governing cultural and political groups with territory from time immemorial” (para. 18), an argument also put forth by others (Brayboy et al., 2014; McKinley et al., 2016). Such approaches then would be culturally relevant or, better yet as Paris (2012) puts it, “culturally sustaining” (p. 93)—engaging with cultural teachings and Indigenous knowledges in such a way as to actively nurture Indigenous ways of past, present, and future (Villegas et al., 2008; Paris, 2012).

Indigenous pedagogies certainly extend beyond books and physical classrooms (Bruce et al., 2010; Kirkness, 1999). Indeed, the data show a strong preference for *community-based* and *land-based learning opportunities*. Several TEPs include what they refer to as outdoor or immersive courses. Some programs include live-in modules or experiential learning periods, where a cohort comes together for a short period of time to live and learn on and from the land, while immersed in an Indigenous community. For example, the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Saskatchewan offers four different cohorts to complete their Master of Education, including an Indigenous Land-Based Education Cohort. This cohort will:

Learn the Indigenous ethics of relationality and accountability with Indigenous faculty by studying Indigenous approaches to the research, teaching and learning in educational institutions through 10 courses offered through 3 two-week summer land and community-based, on-site institutes, 1 study tour and 3 online courses. (University of Saskatchewan, n.d., para. 17)

During these immersive educational periods, “Students are required to live on-site for the duration of field schools (approximately 2 weeks each) so that contact hours with faculty, Indigenous communities and the land are maximized” (University of Saskatchewan, 2020, para. 2).

Our data corroborate the literature, namely that an “affirmation of Indigenous worldviews alongside the practical reclamation of Indigenous educational practices and on-the-land learning provide ways to decenter hierarchical educational structures and empower Indigenous communities to regain educational sovereignty while also working with universities” (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 223). Ultimately, land-based and community-based learning and teaching are important aspects of Indigenous resurgence and self-determination (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; McCoy et al., 2016; Wildcat et al., 2014).

### *Hiring Indigenous Educators*

Alongside considerations of what to teach and how to teach it, the question of *who teaches* is equally important. Whether in high school or TEPs, Indigenous students “cannot be what they cannot see” (Buckskin, 2016, p. 29). Attracting and retaining Indigenous teacher candidates means it is necessary to hire and seek guidance from Indigenous faculty, teachers, Elders, traditional knowledge holders, and community leaders. This is widely accepted as a truism in the academic literature (Augustine, 2002; Bruce et al., 2010; Malatest & Associates, 2004); not one TEP program was found that disputes the importance of this strategy.

For the strategy of *hiring Indigenous educators*, situations may arise in which Indigenous faculty are not immediately available for hire. The following example provides one possibility for navigating such a circumstance. Beginning in 2006, through a collaboration between the University of Prince Edward Island, the Government of Nunavut, Nunavut Arctic College, and St. Francis Xavier University, the first Master of Education program was offered in Nunavut: the Nunavut Master of Education in Leadership and Learning. The program was delivered part-time over three years, using a combination of in-person, community-based, and online courses. The guiding principles of the program were based on Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, Inuit values and knowledge. As such, it was considered important that Inuit instructors would be involved in the program delivery. However, no Inuit instructors who fit the universities' selection criteria—one of which was the possession of a master's degree or higher—were found to teach the first cohort of students. As a solution, the first cohort of students was taught through co-instruction by Inuit instructors without possession of a graduate degree and non-Inuit instructors who did possess a graduate degree. Upon completion of the Master of Education, graduates of the first cohort then met the selection criteria for the next intake, and the second cohort was partially taught by graduates from the first cohort (Wheatley et al., 2015). While the selection criteria for hire could have been altered to allow for sole Inuit instructors for the first cohort, this model provides one strategy for a self-sustaining program.

## **Conclusions**

This paper discussed a range of strategies that have successfully been utilized in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and the United States to increase the number of Indigenous peoples entering and graduating from TEPs. From the findings, the following directives emerged. First, bring the education to the students by offering courses close to home and online. Second, remove financial barriers; offer programs at no cost through scholarships, bursaries, or tuition waivers. Provide financial support if the program is delivered outside the community through allowances or stipends for housing, transportation, and childcare. Third, do it in a loving, respectful, honest, and humble way: Create Indigenous cohorts, provide holistic support for Indigenous teacher candidates, provide relevant curricula, teach in an appropriate manner, and hire Indigenous educators. Further, the authors recommend that none of these strategies be pursued by universities or TEPs on their own. Collaboration and long-term partnerships between universities, Indigenous organizations, education authorities, and community partners are essential.

## ***Theoretical Implications***

Aligning with scholarship on decolonization and self-determination in education as put forth by Cannon (2018), this paper calls for partnerships that take the shape of nation-to-nation relationships. Cannon writes that “pedagogical and reform-based programmatic initiatives” in education should further a process of “relationships rejuvenation and nation-to-nation relationships building” (2018, p. 164). Taking this call seriously means working towards relinquishing structural advantages in teacher education, dispersing the administrative and decision-making power of the university, and returning this power to Indigenous nations and communities (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Kuokkanen, 2008). Placing recruitment and retention strategies in this context underlines the need to do more than simply add Indigenous teacher candidates to existing Eurocentric TEPs. Most often, as Kuokkanen (2008) reminds us, Indigenous students are asked to “leave their ontological and epistemological assumptions and perceptions at the gates of the university, [to]

assume the trappings of a new form of reality” (p. 2). The retention strategies discussed recognize that TEPs—among other programs—must themselves change to serve the needs of Indigenous peoples (McKinley et al., 2016).

Ultimately, the paper implicates broader theories of Indigenous education that seek to adapt the education system itself to Indigenous ways of knowing and learning (Association of BC Deans of Education [ABCDE], 2018; Battiste et al., 2002; CMEC, 2010; Kinnane et al., 2014; Kirkness, 1999; Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004). Increasing the number of Indigenous teachers plays an important role, perhaps best signified by revisiting the quote, Indigenous students “cannot be what they cannot see” (Buckskin, 2016, p. 29). This goes beyond the hiring of more Indigenous faculty and staff, although it means that too. The authors are mindful that any reform-based approach be situated within a broader understanding of settler colonial governance, attuned to the fact that structures and institutions—particularly the education system—rearticulate colonial relations. Increasing the number of Indigenous teachers thus is part of a larger goal. An influx of Indigenous teachers is a vital component in the mitigation of immediate harm, and it can function as a strategic stepping stone towards settler decolonization and Indigenous resurgence, sovereignty, and self-determination. What is suggested is a transition to Indigenous teacher education programs run by and for Indigenous peoples, where decision-making power over curriculum, pedagogy, and staffing lies with Indigenous peoples and community leadership. Pragmatically, this also means that Indigenous programming generally, and Indigenous TEPs specifically, “will need more autonomy and more secure funding to operate according to their own directives and those directives coming from Indigenous community partners” (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 224).

### ***Practical Implications***

The recruitment and retention strategies described in this paper have each been successfully employed by their respective Universities, Colleges, or TEPs. Across Canada and abroad, TEPs can consider implementing some form or combination of the strategies described, with the aim of increasing Indigenous teacher candidates. An influx of Indigenous teachers has many positive implications for Indigenous students, including shared perspectives, abilities to teach Indigenous curricula, and better relatability to students’ school, home, and community experiences. These positive trends are amplified in schools that lie within Indigenous communities, and particularly pronounced with Indigenous teachers who teach within their own communities (Buckskin, 2016; Champagne, 2003; Harper, 2000; Kitchenham & Chasteauneuf, 2010). These teachers are more likely to possess and draw from shared local Indigenous knowledges, creating educational spaces in which Indigenous students’ values and experiences are respected, centered, and amplified. Teachers from the community are also more likely to remain in community schools, compared to teachers relocating from another region (Monk, 2007; Tessaro et al., 2018), leading to a more stable educational environment.

### ***Limitations and Future Research***

Through the recruitment and retention strategies described in this paper, this study aims to support communities, like Shamattawa, by offering pathways to increase the number of Indigenous teachers. However, in doing so, this study only addresses part of the solution. Limiting its scope to the aspects of recruitment and retention means a lack of insight into the realities of Indigenous teachers after graduation. Increasing the number of Indigenous teachers in schools is not only a

matter of recruitment to and retention in TEPs. It is also a matter of moving newly minted teachers into full-time teaching positions and supporting Indigenous teachers in their roles as teachers after graduation. To ensure that Indigenous teachers flourish in their new roles, future research must address job creation and job placement strategies and examine how best to support Indigenous teachers in their new profession.

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