

# Community-based access to apprenticeship: An Indigenous work-integrated learning model

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Fresh approaches to trades training are essential for decolonizing educational access and success for Indigenous people. Holistic approaches to supporting student success are needed for the unique learning needs and contexts of Indigenous learners. Community-based training presents opportunities for this type of innovation. Using a Canadian case study and an Indigenous storytelling approach of *witnessing*, this paper introduces an Indigenous work-integrated learning conceptual model to support apprentice access and success through a community-based program. This student-centered approach ensures the apprentice is grounded in culture and Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being. Key features are described in a medicine wheel, which includes community, training providers, funders, and industry, and has the apprentice at the core.

Keywords: Apprenticeship, Indigenous education, co-operative education; community-based education, access

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Fresh approaches to trades training are essential for decolonizing educational access and success for Indigenous people. Holistic approaches to supporting student success are needed for the unique learning needs and contexts of Indigenous learners. Community-based training presents opportunities for this type of innovation. In this paper, we use an Indigenous storytelling and case study as a methodology to introduce a new Indigenous WIL model used for trades training, developed and situated in an Indigenous community. We will describe both the experience and outcomes using this Indigenous WIL model, inspired by the accomplishments of the Nuxalk Nation in British Columbia, Canada, over a four-year period. The case shows how the model yields a dual impact of both educational attainment and developing critical legacy infrastructure for community in support of housing and economic development goals. It incorporates WIL in the form of apprenticeship on multi-year projects benefitting the community. The paper begins with an introduction of the broader First Nations education and apprenticeship context in Canada, followed by a description and a discussion of new Indigenous WIL model; the paper is narrated as the first author reports on this case, situated both as a witness and as a participant:

My three-year experience working with the leadership, staff, and people of the Nuxalk Nation has inspired me to share this story of how a housing strategy has led to community-based education, work-integrated learning, and economic development in a First Nation community. The implementation of the housing strategy started a chain reaction that led to education and training as well as economic development opportunities for the Nation and the people of the Nation. As a result of this experience, I have developed a conceptual model to share with other Indigenous communities. (Michael Cameron, author, storytelling)

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## FIRST NATIONS IN CANADA: RIGHTS, WORK AND TRAINING

Indigenous rights to self-governance have been successfully achieved after successive Supreme Court of Canada decisions. Communities are increasingly “exercising rights, continuing healing and reconciliation, and building the capacity to design and manage their own affairs consistent with traditional practice and the unique needs” (Lindquist, 2018, p. 473). As a result, Indigenous communities in Canada have gradually established community objectives and economic development goals, including multiple socio-economic goals (Hotte et al., 2018), often in spite of the provisions and restrictions of the *Indian Act* of 1876. This colonial legislation is still in existence today, and continues to hinder the self-determination of Indigenous communities. The National Indigenous Economic Development Board (2020) expresses the vision that:

By repatriating and rebuilding Indigenous economies, we can restore self-determination and ensure a positive legacy of healthy and prosperous communities. We can do that by supporting business leaders and business development, increasing equity ownership, strengthening financial and business management capacity, and removing barriers to employment for Indigenous youth and adults. (p. 3)

Key to Indigenous community and economic development is fostering economic self-sufficiency and socio-economic equality with other Canadians. Community planning and community development are relatively new activities introduced in First Nation communities in the 1980s. In 2016, the Federal Government in Canada provided support for First Nations in Canada to develop Comprehensive Community Plans (CCP). Indigenous Services Canada, a federal department with responsibility for policies relating to Indigenous peoples, provides funding for capacity initiatives to First Nations who have asserted Aboriginal title; this funding is available to support preparation of negotiations, consultations, management, and implementation (Indigenous Services Canada, 2018) as well as capital support for physical development planning of infrastructure, housing, and facilities. CCP are intended to be holistic and community-driven, and span all operational areas of the community. They also define a community vision and their goals for the long term. The planning process is inclusive of Indigenous culture and community. Resolving housing issues is a common priority in community plans; Indigenous people are the fastest growing population segment in Canada.

Another priority is increasing access to post-secondary education, including training in skilled trades. Indigenous peoples in Canada face systemic barriers to accessing all forms of post-secondary education. Barriers encountered by Indigenous peoples as a result of colonization have perpetuated a gap in educational participation and attainment (Frenette, 2011; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Almost half (48.4%) of Indigenous people had a postsecondary qualification in 2011, including 14.4% with a trades certificate, in comparison to almost two-thirds (64.7%) of the comparable non-Indigenous population. There is a marked difference in the relative proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people with no certificate, diploma or degree with 28.9% of Indigenous people having no post-secondary qualification at all, whereas the proportion for non-Indigenous people in the same age group was 12.1% (Ferguson & Zhao, 2013).

Indigenous educational attainment is shaped by academic, institutional, and social and cultural barriers as well as finances and problems of geographic proximity to access (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2013; Pidgeon, 2014). There has been increased attention to the importance of culturally responsive teaching practices, inclusion of Indigenous knowledges, and use of Indigenous pedagogy in addressing these barriers (see Louie et al., 2017; Pirbhai-Illich et al., 2017; Pidgeon, 2014,

2016; Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017; Vizina, 2018; Williams, 2008; Wilson & Nelson-Moody, 2019), including land-based or community-based education (see Oskineegish, 2014; Pearson & Daff, 2011; Simon et al., 2014). Access to trades training and apprenticeship presents a unique set of challenges. Community-based training models reduce barriers and meet needs of Indigenous learners, providing education access to rural and remote areas, and allowing individuals to learn in their community with important support and resources for success (Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association et al., 2011). Quality community-based training emerges through intentional community engagement (Saltmarsh & Johnson, 2020) and the development of relationships reflecting “reciprocity, mutual respect, shared authority, and co-creation of goals and outcomes” (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2020, p. 1). With these considerations in mind, we turn to the apprenticeship context in Canada, and the conditions in which the new Indigenous WIL model was developed.

## APPRENTICESHIP IN CANADA

Attention to apprenticeship by policymakers is increasing, with specific focus on labor market demands, skills shortages in key occupations, and economic development requirements. Overall, approximately 12% of Canadians reported a trade certificate or diploma as their highest level of education, and there are approximately 300 apprentice trades in Canada, with the most being in manufacturing and construction (Frank & Jovic, 2015). Numerous studies have identified barriers for historically excluded populations, including Indigenous apprentices (Berik & Bilginsoy, 2006; Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF-FCA), 2004, 2011, 2013, 2016; Sharpe & Gibson, 2005). Indigenous apprentices constitute 6.3% of all Canadian apprentices and in the Canadian province of British Columbia, it is 7% (n = 2,753) who self-identified as Indigenous (Frank & Jovic, 2015). There is growing interest in attracting Indigenous participants into apprenticeships (Arrowsmith, 2019).

Apprenticeship completion is an area of concern for stakeholders (CAF-FCA, 2011; Coe, 2013; Laporte & Mueller, 2013). Retention in apprenticeship is complex to improve, given its unique intersection between the labor market, employer sponsorship, and technical training. The apprenticeship training system also tends to be sensitive to fluctuations in the economy (Gunderson, 2009; Skof, 2013). Building construction trades apprentices have been found to have a lower completion rate than the average (Dostie, 2010). Focusing on academic preparedness as a key factor in success, studies suggest that a significant proportion of apprentices lack important literacy, numeracy, and workplace skills, and therefore are ill-prepared for entry into employment (CAF-FCA, 2004, 2011, 2013; Gunderson, 2009; Sharpe & Gibson, 2005; Stewart, 2009). These preparedness gaps may be barriers to gaining or keeping employment as an apprentice, in addition to barriers to academic success in technical training. Barriers to apprenticeship completion affect Indigenous apprentices disproportionately; one study found that Indigenous apprentices had higher discontinuation and lower completion rates, and were more likely than non-Indigenous apprentices to report having had difficulty progressing through their apprenticeships (Frank & Jovic, 2015).

Apprentice completion is a process that is the collective responsibility of all key stakeholders within the vocational education and training system (Harris & Simons, 2005). The literature provides some insights into supportive mechanisms of retention. A work environment in which employees feel they are learning and growing is a key component of employee retention (Smith et al., 2008). Specific mentorship and role modeling has been reported necessary (Fuller & Unwin, 2003; Ryan, 1998, 2001), as is workplace culture (CAF-FCA, 2004, 2013). Employers and training providers that consider the psychological variables in the employer-apprentice relationship and provide both ‘pastoral’ (meaning guidance, social, and counseling support) and academic support have been found to be more likely to

achieve higher completion rates (Hogarth et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2011). Situating vocational learning as a social and cognitive process, and using ethnographic methods, Filliettaz (2010) emphasizes the importance of knowledge transmission and transformation, and notions of transition and identity construction of apprentices. Others draw upon Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation from cognitive anthropology, which situates learning as a type of social practice, where meaning is created through co-participation between master and apprentice (Fuller & Unwin, 2003; Sligo et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2002). Other researchers deploy Billett (2009), suggesting that situated learning in the workplace is a function of participation in tasks with support and guidance from more skilled workers, and proposing that retention of apprentices is dependent on both apprentice and mentor engaging in a discourse of mutual understanding and co-participatory work practices.

The Nuxalk case study responds to challenges in the labor market and within apprenticeship completion. Policy experimentation in apprenticeship has occurred in most Canadian provinces, with adaptations of the apprenticeship management system, format of technical training, regulation of trades occupations, new occupations, and introduction of youth apprenticeship initiatives, and programming to encourage historically excluded participants, including Indigenous people (Coe, 2013). At the time and location of this case, the policy environment was unique in Canada, with a voluntary rather than a compulsory apprenticeship registration system. The low regulatory environment from 2018 to 2020 created a window of opportunity for First Nation communities and other Indigenous organizations in British Columbia to sponsor Indigenous individuals in place of a traditional indentureship. By June of 2021, the Industry Training Authority (ITA), the quasi-governmental body governing the trades training system, had sponsor agreements with 17 First Nation communities and other Indigenous organizations. The Nuxalk Nation agreement is the focus of this study.

#### CASE SETTING: NUXALK NATION

The Nuxalk Nation is the community government of the Nuxalk people of Bella Coola, British Columbia, and is a member of the Oweekeno-Kitasoo-Nuxalk Tribal Council. This Indigenous and sovereign community is located on British Columbia's western central coast and is approximately a six-hour drive to the nearest major center, Williams Lake. The Nuxalk Nation is strongly independent with a clear view of self-sufficiency for its citizens future for their citizens, a future that decolonizes dependency on outsiders and on the *Indian Act*. Both elected officials and a hereditary chief system govern the Nuxalk. The *Indian Act* outlines the protocols and procedures for the elected officials of the First Nation government, the hereditary system guides the sovereignty and traditional government of the people (Kennedy & Bouchard, 2021).

At the heart of Nuxalk economic development is the desire to provide proper housing for all its citizens. A housing strategy is defined as five key goals, with the first to utilize the assets already available (Nuxalk Nation, 2018). At the time of the study, the Nuxalk Nation had a number of immediate local assets, including a gravel pit, heavy equipment, and lumber from its Forest Products Division. Future assets planned include a college trade school, a concrete plant, a door building plant, and a cabinet manufacturing business. The second goal was building capacity within the community; the leadership of the Nuxalk Nation identified the need for more carpenters, plumbers and, more trades people in general. Instead of sending people out of the community, the leadership intended to bring the skills training into community with the notion to introduce trade skills into the local school system. Third, the Nuxalk Nation aimed to build for economic, social, and cultural needs, to maximize use of funds

for housing and to build buildings promoting community and family gatherings through using historical designs, and to build structures to withstand the climate. This leads to the fourth goal, of having climate conscious construction. This resulted in the provincial building codes being enhanced with local Nuxalk codes to promote building longevity and cultural relevance, and to “redefine homebuilding” in the territory (Camosun College, 2020, p. 1). The fifth and final goal was to educate and empower workers and homeowners through providing training to community members in trades and to build community capacity and enable sustainable economic development.

## APPROACH

Similar in spirit to community-based participatory research (Coughlin et al., 2017), the conceptual framework for this study reflects the goal of socio-economic change, use of culturally relevant theories, and community-based identification of problems and solutions (Freire, 2018). The case study approach was adopted for two reasons. First, this approach allows for an in-depth examination and description of a unique occurrence, and second, it supports an Indigenous-centered approach of storytelling and Indigenous sensemaking of key variables and associations within the case (Denzin et al., 2008). The lessons to be drawn from the case are primarily derived from meaning expressed by Indigenous voices. Indigenous story-work or storytelling as a methodology has been established and applied in different contexts (Datta, 2018; Smith, 2019). Indigenous storytelling is “crucial to the cultural and political resurgence of Indigenous nations” (Corntassel et al., 2009, p. 137). Storytelling is at the center of Indigenous oral history and how Indigenous worldviews and ways of being, doing, and knowing are shared by the Elders, knowledge keepers, and leaders. The case is motivated by Marshall’s *two-eyed seeing* framework, to reconcile Western methodology with Indigenous knowledges; two-eyed seeing (Etuaptmumk in Mi’kmaw), embraces “learning to see from one eye with the *strengths* of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the *strengths* of mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing, and to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all” (Bartlett, et al., 2012, p. 335; see also Reid, et al., 2021).

The first author uses storytelling from the position of *witness*, having been a participant and an observer within much of the time period of these events. As a representative of the apprenticeship system, the author had participated in community meetings, sharing, exchanging stories, and written notes. The first author resided and worked as a guest on unceded and traditional Coast Salish territories, including those of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əy’əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), səlilw’ətaʔ (Tsilil-Waututh), and scəwaθən məsteyəx<sup>w</sup> (Tsawwassen) Nations. Witnessing or bearing witness is a Coast Salish concept in which individuals are trusted to carefully observe, remember, or recount critical events or information (Carlson, 1996; Suttles, 1987). Witnessing is a key Salish methodology, as it is with the reputable acts of witnessing that the stories of community are accurately captured and transmitted. Other individual Indigenous voices in this text are quoted from archival documents, primarily a video produced by the community, and are cited. As participant and witness, following protocol and through the avenue of storytelling, the first author introduces himself here:

Let me introduce myself. My name is Michael Cameron and I am a Métis person originating from the Red River Valley in Manitoba, Canada, and the home of the Métis. I have been working in post-secondary education for over 20 years and it has been over 30 years that I have been providing work-integrated learning for First Nation and Indigenous people across Canada. I am a former First Nation Band Administrator for a remote community in Northwestern Ontario. I have had the extreme privilege to visit over 300 of Canada’s 632 First Nation communities. For over thirty years, I have been involved in working with First Nation communities and

Indigenous organizations across Canada. I have listened and learned from many Elders and Knowledge Keepers who share stories of their people and culture so I can understand them better and their different ways of doing things from the colonial ways many people were taught. The Elders in particular speak about the importance of transformational learning, and how learning does not always occur when it is being taught. Often, we have “Ah-ha” moments when we suddenly understand something shared with us earlier. I have had many moments like this. One in particular occurred in 2018 after visiting over fifty of the 203 First Nations in British Columbia. As the Director Indigenous Initiatives for the Industry Training Authority, the governing body for all trades training in British Columbia, and being new to British Columbia, I ventured out on a nine-month tour to listen and learn about Indigenous cultures in the province and to understand the barriers Indigenous people are facing in pursuit of completing a trade. I spoke to different partners, apprentices, tradespeople, employers, Elders, and Indigenous leaders. I met with anyone who was willing to share their personal experiences with the trades training system in the province. What I learned was similar to my experiences with three other provinces in Canada, including Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. I learned the importance of bringing the education to the people so they can learn in their own communities, in their own ways, with their own supports. (Michael Cameron)

Information gathered for this case emerges primarily based on first author’s participant observation through witnessing from 2018 to 2020. Additional archival information was subsequently gathered from the Nuxalk Nation, the apprenticeship system, and from review of media, college, and government documents, to help shape reporting.

#### INDIGENOUS WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING MODEL

Based on these learnings and inspired by the work of the Nuxalk Nation, the first author developed the model choosing a medicine wheel to depict the dimensions and relationships. The medicine wheel has been used by contemporary educators to develop culturally relevant educational processes, spaces, and supports that are inclusive of Indigenous knowledge (Bell, 2014; LaFever, 2016; Pewewardy, 1999; Verwoord, et al., 2011). While there is a variety and diversity of medicine wheel teachings and representations, the common metaphors emphasize the importance of interconnectedness and interrelatedness of all things (Bell, 2014). The medicine wheel is deployed here as a result of the first author’s interpretation and sense making of the components of success in this case:

As a Metis person, and through the Anishinaabe teachings I have received from my Elders, the medicine wheel makes sense to me, and a good way to reflect and understand this education model. I used the medicine wheel because among other things, the medicine wheel represents the circle of life and the circle of knowledge. In the circle of life, everything flows in a circle and it brings out awareness that leads to the formation of a having balance. Ensuring there is balance, we are ensuring the four quadrants are present and working together. The circle of knowledge applies as a tool or system for sharing knowledge. Everything is interconnected, therefore important the four quadrants are again, working together for the students or apprentices. (Michael Cameron, author, storytelling)

Figure 1 shows the model is defined within the four sections or quadrants of the Medicine Wheel. At the center of the Medicine Wheel is the student as an apprentice. The four quadrants indicate how the apprentice is supported. The Medicine Wheel with the students as the focal point is unique because it merges the Western and Indigenous ways of being and doing (Indigenous Works, 2020).

FIGURE 1: Indigenous work-integrated learning model.

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**Industry** – The most often left out ingredient is industry. This goes beyond work-integrated learning and job experience. When industry is at the table, we are training toward actual jobs and developing careers. Industry helps define what the jobs are and where the work is.

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**Funders** – All those providing the funds for training, e.g. Federal funding from various departments; Provincial bodies responsible for funding the trades and apprenticeship training in each province are funders of Trades Training Seats. This could be a contribution from industry as well as other stakeholders.

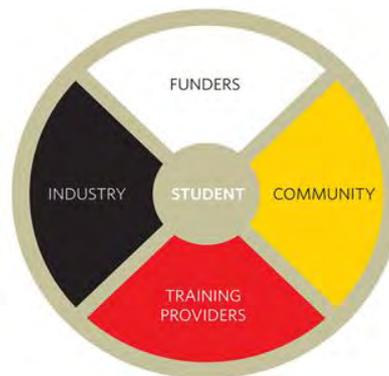
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**Community** – First Nations lead the decision-making processing and define scope of project in the best interest of community and their people

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**Training Providers** – Those providing training that make up your overall program that ensures student success. Training includes the technical training, essential skills, life skills, academic readiness and work readiness training.

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## NUXALK CASE

I first met the Nation and learned of their plans when I visited in the summer of 2018. I met with community leaders as well as key administrative leaders from the community. I was extremely inspired of the story they shared regarding the journey the community was on, toward building a healthy, well-educated community using their own resources, including their community members. The planning that had taken place to support their vision of a prosperous community made me want to help and support them in any way that I knew I could. In my case, that was to

provide funding so the training could take place in the community and to ensure the community could sponsor the apprentices. (Michael Cameron, author, storytelling)

In 2017, along with the Nation's designated training provider, Camosun College, the Nation started a pre-apprenticeship carpentry program, a trade which requires four levels of training. As the apprenticeship contact for the Nation, the first author became involved:

Our relationship began the summer of 2018. After spending two days in the community, I left with a commitment to provide multi-year funding for the trades training. I also promised to return in the fall to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between the Nuxalk Nation and the Industry Training Authority, formalizing a partnership to provide culturally appropriate apprenticeship pathways. I was taught the importance of culture to their learning and how individual self-esteem and self-determination increases when individuals learn in their own environment and contribute to the economic development in a positive way, by constructing the buildings and infrastructure. To take into consideration the needs of the community; to ensure there is a trusted training provider the community chooses to work with; to commit funding for all multiple years providing multiple levels of trades training; to ensure industry is there to provide the jobs, are four key ingredients to success. I was able to conclude how important bringing multiple years of trades training to the communities was going to be, and to align the training with their community plans. (Michael Cameron, author, storytelling)

When entering these initial discussions in 2018, Nuxalk Nation administrative staff and leadership were clear on what they expected as outcomes working with the Industry Training Authority. These included formalizing the relationship, Nuxalk Nation authority to sponsor apprentices, and that technical training was scheduled for delivery in the community at an appropriate time through the completion of all levels of apprenticeship. Nuxalk Nation leadership wanted to ensure that supports for the apprentices were provided in a culturally appropriate way by ensuring access to Elders, Knowledge Keepers and the Camosun College Indigenous Advisors during both technical training and their WIL experiences. Finally, the goal was to ensure all apprentices obtain their level four carpentry, with many of them obtaining the Red Seal Endorsement, which in Canada represents national certification in a trade.

With the new agreement signed in 2018, the Industry Training Authority committed to ensuring funding for all levels of technical training in the community, empowering the newly confirmed sponsor, the Nuxalk Nation, to facilitate access to apprenticeships, and to track their hours for each level of their apprenticeship in accordance with the provincial apprenticeship system (Nuxalk Acwsalcmalslayc Academy of Learning Society & Industry Training Authority, 2018). This new sponsorship empowered the Nation to be able to increase Nuxalk participation in apprenticeship, and to work toward the Nation's goal to establish a trades training school in the community. As the required technical training was to be offered right in the community, there was an improved ability to support recruitment of Indigenous people into the trades as well as support apprenticeship retention. Also, importantly, the Memorandum of Understanding committed the Industry Training Authority to "understanding and respect for Nuxalk culture" and to work towards strengthening the relationship "where it is mutually beneficial and relevant to trades training, certification and Indigenous culture" (Nuxalk Acwsalcmalslayc Academy of Learning Society & Industry Training Authority, 2018, p. 1), in addition to increasing Nuxalk participation in trades and apprenticeship training.

The program operated from 2017 to 2020, with 12 students initially registered as apprentices with the Nuxalk Nation, employed to build homes and other buildings under the Comprehensive Community Plan. Over the four-year apprenticeship, the apprentices were able to cover the full scope of the carpentry trade and achieve the required hours of work. Enhanced funding for all levels of technical training was provided by the Industry Training Authority to Camosun College, a public community college selected by the Nuxalk Nation, to deliver training in the community. Training occurred in the winter months when construction was more difficult due to the climate in Bella Coola. Qualified instructional staff were recruited by Camosun College, who then lived in the community while they were teaching the technical courses. In December of 2019, Camosun graduated 11 students from level four of their carpentry apprenticeship (Camosun College, 2020). Five of those students went on to obtain their Red Seal National Endorsement, and one left the program to become an electrician. This completion rate is encouraging, especially compared to the national average completion rate of about 50% (Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship, 2014).

In reflecting on this initiative, the Nuxalk Nation, the Industry Training Authority, the college, and the provincial government reported favorable reviews. Indigenous voices describe the impact on individuals, the community, and socio-economic development efforts of the Nation. Wally Webber, hereditary chief and elected chief councilor of the Nuxalk Nation described the approach:

...through ingenuity and multi-sector collaboration, we have found ways to bring meaningful work to our community, and as a result, are now making significant progress in both the housing and economic development sectors....Sending community members away for skills training was not only expensive but also meant they had to spend time away from their families. For a fraction of the cost, we brought instructors to our band school instead. Building a successful skills training program took years of patient work and collaboration with outside organizations. Our skills training program and the work it has created in Bella Coola have increased our sense of pride, self-worth, and self-competence. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to community-based training programs, business, industry leaders and Indigenous communities can find innovative ways to collaborate on mutually beneficial opportunities to build and maintain the communities in which we thrive. If [government] will support trades training programs for Indigenous Peoples, we can create employment for people who cannot afford to go to school outside their community. We can build our own future. (Webber, 2018, para. 1,4,5,9-11)

Stakeholders in the partnership reported that the program had a positive impact on the participants. The Indigenous WIL model provided a path for individuals, without having to leave their community and the support systems, and fostered self-efficacy and motivation. Camosun College's Indigenous Peoples Trades Training Coordinators reported that "The impact has been amazing...to see so much growth and success in each learner. This program has not only benefitted Community, it has positively impacted each students' health, their way of life and their personal pride in themselves" (Camosun College, 2020, p. 2). Gilpin's (2017) report found that participants spoke positively of the model, including Apprentice A saying, "the program provides the apprentices security, direction and purpose, all key factors to feeding confidence and pride in their families and Nation" (Gilpin, 2017, Chapter 3). Apprentice B said that:

The stronger one person gets, the stronger everyone grows. Like dominoes, the success of one is the success of all. When one person gets empowered, they empower their family, their

community and their Nation, he said. He thinks the program tunes apprentices into the bigger picture, the future of the Nation, not just the day's work. (Gilpin, 2017, Chapter 3)

Apprentice C described his pride:

pride from being a part of a team that provides hope for his community...[and that] the program has enriched the lives of all of the apprentices, some of whom had lacked confidence and made poor decisions...there's a light they carry now, instead of a darkness...feeling that they're needed is the most important thing (Gilpin, 2017, Chapter 3).

The Asset Manager and Nuxalk Nation carpenter apprentice reported that "it brought a lot of enlightenment to some of the people that I guess didn't see themselves having a chance to become carpenters" (ITA BC Trades Training, 2021, 3:03). From an apprenticeship perspective, an Apprenticeship Advisor with the Industry Training Authority observed, "They finally have a career path. They finally have something they can put their feet into and sink their life into. They wouldn't have had that had this not been brought here to the community" (ITA BC Trades Training, 2021, 4:10).

From the community perspective, the Education Director for the Nuxalk Nation reported that her previous experience showed quite low success rates, however the new Indigenous WIL approach was quite different: "the pride that you see, in not only the carpenters but in their families, and then the pride that our community has as well. It is awesome to be able to say that these buildings were built by our [community] carpenters" (ITA BC Trades Training, 2021, 3:37). She also shared the importance to the community:

to see the possibility of a carpentry program coming to the community from the beginning to the end was really exciting, not only for the students that were in the program, but the community as whole...It not only instills pride, but it builds the Nation. This is what we dream about. This is what our ancestors have dreamt about. This is what we're all about, is working together and raising the bar all together. And this is what happens when we can have our programs here within community. When we do it here at home, the sky's the limit really. We've got so many incredible things happening. You can witness them. They've been built. We've got so many things that are waiting to be built, and we've got so many things that we are going to build. (ITA BC Trades Training, 0:34)

The former Asset Manager of the Nuxalk Nation and a Red Seal Carpenter stated, "When we do our part, a lot of things will change for our people, and that we do our best. I always say, we do our best. Let the creator do the rest" (ITA BC Trades Training, 2021, 6:14).

At the community level, the model supported the socio-economic development efforts of the Nuxalk Nation by providing a well-trained and skilled local work force to support their housing strategy, supporting the notion that enabling or empowering an Indigenous community to take responsibility for individual community members' apprenticeship has significant and positive outcomes. Wally Webber Chief Councilor (2018) wrote:

To date, participants of our training program have built six energy-efficient homes, a chief's house, daycare, construction classroom and storage, four small homes and laundry electrical room for single homeless or low-income community members. We're completing a restaurant and cabins along the river for fishing tours and have also renovated at least 136 units...To

educate and empower our community members to maintain their homes, we've included courses in our band school on finance, home maintenance and repair strategies.

Another outcome of our carpentry program has been substantial cost savings. Because our homes were built by the Nuxalk people and not outside contractors, we have saved a significant amount of dollars and created 53 more jobs for the community membership. We have now set our sights on building up to 50-60 homes over the next five years, along with a Big House and a cultural center and museum. Our long-term goal is to become a Central Coast Trades Centre and for current apprentices to become instructors. The Nuxalk Nation also plans to build housing for other communities. (para. 5-9)

## DISCUSSION

In this model, the traditional apprenticeship curriculum was enhanced in several ways: academic development support, job readiness, and mentoring. Camosun College provided cultural support for the apprentices for the entire duration of the carpentry program, from pre-apprenticeship to the conclusion of level four. A key to the success of the program were the two Indigenous Student Advisors that visited the community regularly to ensure the academic, cultural and WIL milestones were being achieved. They provided or assisted community Elders and Knowledge Keepers and the instructor in providing cultural support to the student/apprentices, while also providing advice and strategies that would help individuals toward academic and workplace success, including fundamentals of navigating job demands and expectations. Through a shared mentoring program, instructors, student advisors, community leaders, and Red Seal Carpenters provided culturally sensitive mentorship.

### *Privileging Indigenous Knowledges and Apprenticeship Success*

The inclusion of culture and Indigenous knowledge in all aspects of the program was fundamental in the program success. This inclusion of relevant perspectives and community capacity is a "purposeful and political act of empowerment by Indigenous peoples. The task for Indigenous scholars and educators has been to affirm and activate holistic paradigms of Indigenous knowledge to reveal the wealth and richness of Indigenous languages, worldviews, teachings, and experiences (Battiste & Henderson, 2009, p. 5). Camosun College's Indigenous Student Advisors provided cultural supports throughout the technical training and their apprenticeship. Elders from the community visited the class and were available to share cultural support throughout. Culture was also at the core of curriculum. Within the carpentry program, apprentices were able to learn about the history of their people and their own Indigenous building techniques, which were then applied in the construction projects in the community with buildings "suitable for our wet climate but also aligned with the cultural needs of the Nuxalk Nation" (Webber, 2018, para. 7).

Culture-based learning is reflective of Indigenous priorities, values, worldview and ways of being, doing and knowing:

learning from place is how Indigenous peoples mark their knowing, and learning through visiting, remembering stories that entertain and teach, recalling events as markers of history, and providing continuity in learning and identity...Elders, knowledge-keepers, and cultural workers are indispensable to the process (Battiste & Henderson, 2009, p. 15).

Indigenous identity development, community involvement, use of culturally relevant practices, and integration of Elders and Knowledge Keepers are important features of culture-based learning (Ramji

et al, 2016). Land-based learning places these cultural learnings in context, for the overall development of the community. Applying tribal knowledge is key to the success the Nuxalk Nation's overall economic development. In order to apply tribal knowledge, one needs to first listen and learn from the community, their leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers before acting:

Storytelling is integral to Indigenous culture and is the methodology of sharing oral history and in educating individuals. Listening to Elders and Knowledge Keepers share stories is incredibly interactive based on the words they choose to use and the different actions that help to expose the different elements or concepts of a story. When we listen, we learn!

I have been listening intently and actively to many stories from Elders and Knowledge keepers over the years and I must say, all of them have sparked my imagination leading me to think how we can be doing things differently in education today. The Elders have shared with me, their stories that are often concepts being shared and today, we need to find ways to take these concepts and relate them in stories as means of learning. Applying storytelling to education and training is the association between story and concept. In this model, this is a direct means of sharing and transferring skills and knowledge. In apprenticeship, adding storytelling to the learning process while on the job, enhances the apprentices learning. (Michael Cameron, author, storytelling)

#### *Beyond Placement: Educational Sovereignty in Action*

Commenting on the Nuxalk success, British Columbia's Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training Melanie Mark, herself an Indigenous person, remarked that "strong partnerships that provide access to education closer to home are true examples of reconciliation in action" (BC Colleges, 2020, p. 3). From an Indigenous perspective, community-based access to critical skills for economic development is an expression of sovereignty, and from a provincial government perspective, an expression of reconciliation. Canada has a long colonial history of Indigenous dislocation and isolation, and has committed to transformational change (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). This case highlights the importance of proximity to systems of personal, familial, and cultural support, which is an important change from the historical disruption of generations of Indigenous families (Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association et al., 2011).

#### CONCLUSION

A number of important lessons can be drawn from the Nuxalk Nation case. As a teaching tool, the medicine wheel can be used by educators more broadly to guide program design to support student success. The new Indigenous WIL model can be applied in new program areas, and different international contexts, to improve Indigenous education outcomes. Fresh approaches to apprenticeship training are needed to increase the success of other equity-seeking groups, and this new model may have helpful applications in other settings and with other target groups. The model's deployment in supporting high-quality partnership engagement is a promising practice for those looking to build stronger community-based education. Finally, the use of Indigenous-centered approaches, including the use of Indigenous story-work or storytelling as a methodology, broadens existing scholarly approaches described in the WIL literature, and poses opportunities for future use in broader educational and workplace research.

## STATEMENT OF PLACE

*Michael Cameron*

A Métis from Manitoba with a Masters Arts Integrated Studies from Athabasca University, I have over 20 years of experience in post-secondary education spanning four provinces in Canada including Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. I have been providing work-integrated learning to First Nations for over 30 years.

*Deanna Rexe (Shilliltanaht)*

A non-Indigenous white educator from Peterborough, Ontario, I married into the St'at'imc Nation of British Columbia, and currently live in Treaty 2 territory, serving as Vice President, Academic at Assiniboine Community College. The college's campuses are located in the traditional territories of Treaty No. 1 and Treaty No. 2, and the shared traditional lands of Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, Dene and Anishinabek/Ojibwe peoples, and the homeland of the Métis nation. I received my traditional name in the longhouse on x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam) territory in 2002.

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