Gathering community knowledge, practices, traditions, and values for future generations

Supporting Indigenous education authorities to conduct research for Indigenous curriculum design

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Executive Summary

This position paper makes a case that if the Canadian government intends to support the development of nation-specific Indigenous curriculum as called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, then research funding agencies need to extend research funds to local, Indigenous education authorities (IEAs) responsible for schooling in Indigenous jurisdictions. We support our case with a select literature review followed by a report of the lessons learned over the course of a two-day Curriculum Design Symposium held in Kahnawà:ke on January 31st and February 1st, 2019. Convened by McGill University's Office of First Nations and Inuit Education and Department of Integrated Studies in Education, as well as the following four IEAs, the Ahkwesáhsne Mohawk Board of Education, the Kahnawà:ke Education Centre, Kativik Ilisarniliriniq, and the Listuguj Education, Training and Employment Centre, the Symposium brought together Indigenous curriculum developers from each IEA with two university experts in Indigenous education as well as an expert curriculum developer from Nunavut. The purposes of the Symposium were twofold: 1) bring curriculum designers together to share their experiences and exchange knowledge and best practices for developing Indigenous curriculum in their communities, and 2) identify areas that require support from the SSHRC and other governmental research funding agencies. This report addresses objective two.

The academic literature on Indigenous curriculum development highlights the following themes as core research practices: gathering and validating Indigenous knowledges; building Indigenous knowledge-holders capacity to participate in education development; understanding the unique learning strengths and needs of Indigenous students; analysis of policy documents affecting Indigenous curriculum; and documenting the impact of research-action projects designed to encourage transformative learning experiences. Research is actively underway in each area and demonstrates the scope of knowledge needed to undertake curriculum reform. The literature demonstrates the methodological complexity of gathering Indigenous knowledges and of including Indigenous knowledge holders in curriculum development and educational reform. Partners identified a lack of resources and time to be able to undertake this essential work.

The Symposium component included presentations, plenaries, and small-group discussions. The curriculum experts from each partner organizations shared their experiences developing curriculum, their current projects, the challenges and knowledge-needs they face, and the work they do to overcome challenges and meet their knowledge needs. The knowledge exchange between curriculum designers was fruitful and illuminating, echoing some of major findings of the literature review. The exchange was enriched and deepened through talks and workshops given by guest Indigenous scholars and experts in Indigenous curriculum design. Drawing on their experiences, the speakers, Nunia Qanatsiaq Anoee, Rebecca Sockbeson, and Nick Claxton shared important insights into preparing Indigenous curriculum, including developing Indigenous learning materials, decolonizing educational thinking, and implementing truly Indigenous pedagogy and curriculum (rather than "Indigenized" or Western Education). The conversations identified six main areas of research that IEAs actively pursue: epistemic, linguistic, curricular, content, assessment, and building community confidence. This list is non-exhaustive, but rather indicative of the breadth of research work IEAs undertake.

Consensus was built around the need to ensure that pedagogy and learning outcomes were project/practice oriented and grounded in each community's way of life. To do this requires significant time to engage in Indigenous research methods on the part of the curriculum design team. Some key ideas were, for example, to create an Indigenous Project Based Learning framework and insure that Indigenous teachers, researchers, and curriculum designers were

overseeing its design and implementation. These ideas are expanded upon in the body of the position paper. Through Symposium dialogue the following recommendations were identified:

- Directly fund IEA's research for all aspects of curriculum development—from the development of curriculum frameworks and curricular outcomes, to the development of lesson activities and resources, to the design of assessment plans and generating data for reporting to community stakeholders.
- Recognize the full scope of Indigenous methodologies including pilot and project-based methodologies that generate knowledge directing Indigenous curriculum development and implementation.
- Recognize Indigenous teachers and curriculum designers as researchers.
- Coordinate with Indigenous Service Canada as well as other curriculum development funding sources to provide more stable funding to IEAs over more reasonable timelines.
- Support IEAs to engage university researchers as needed in research activities.

This project addressed components of all four SSHRC-identified strategic themes:

Support Indigenous Talent and Research Careers: The symposium supported the professional development of eleven First Nations and Inuit educators and policy-makers in the areas of action-orientated research and community engagement methodologies for curriculum development. Both areas underpin Indigenous curriculum development as well as educational policy-making in general.

Engaging Indigenous Knowledge: The Symposium brought together First Nations and Inuit curriculum developers and experts with knowledge of and experience from across Canada in Indigenous education. The Symposium drew on participants' existing expertise and experience in curriculum development as the basis for building broader research capacity in action-orientated research methodologies, which are critical to the development of culturally-grounded curriculum. Invited university-based experts in Indigenous curriculum design further supported participants' preparation of research action-plans for future curriculum development projects.

Mobilize Knowledge and Partnerships for Reconciliation: Local research practices undertaken by Indigenous school boards are often overlooked as rigorous research activities. Universities and research-funding bodies can recognize and support local research-to-practice initiatives. Yet these bodies will require direction for how to best partner with Indigenous education authorities undertaking this work. This policy paper recommends that research funds be allocated directly to IEAs. This would allow IEAs to identify and enter into mutually beneficial, reciprocal relationships between the university sector and Indigenous educational institutions. Direct funding would permit IEAs to control the funds and engage specific researchers with expertise related to their questions. A direct funding arrangement would support the ability of Indigenous communities and Indigenous education bodies to lead and retain full ownership of research endeavours and to discuss curriculum and research knowledge with university-based academics on equal footing.

Foster Mutually Respectful Relationships: Indigenous educational leaders have substantial knowledge to share with one another and the broader Canadian education community. This Symposium proved to be a productive space to share and develop best practices for creating culturally-grounded curriculum between IEAs who, typically, do not have opportunities to partner or collaborate. By facilitating knowledge exchange between partners on community-engaged research, the Symposium supported ongoing, mutually respectful relationship building and self-determination in the field of education.

Introduction: An urgent need to support research and collaboration for Indigenous Education Authorities to undertake Indigenous curriculum development

The repatriation of Indigenous education to Indigenous education authorities (IEAs) is actively underway in Indigenous jurisdictions across Canada. Since the National Indian Brotherhood's (1972) watershed publication, *Indian Control of Indian Education*, the justification for returning Indigenous education to Indigenous governing institutions has been reaffirmed repeatedly by scholars and Indigenous organizations (Assembly of First Nations [AFN], 1988, 2010; AFN & INAC, 2016; Jones Brayboy, Faircloth, Lee, Maaka, & Richardson, 2015; Chiefs of Ontario, 2012; First Nations Education Council [FNEC], 2002, 2009; Mendelson, 2008; Restoule, 2009; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996; United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007).

Fundamental to the repatriation process is Indigenous control over the goals of education and the curricula and pedagogies necessary to achieve those goals (Archibald, 1995; Battiste & Hendersen, 2018; Burns, 2000; Callilou, 1999; Grande, 2004; McCarty & Lee, 2014). IEAs across Canada are replacing Western educational models with culturally-sustaining curricula (see Kahnawà:ke Education Centre's *Tsi Niionkwarihò:ten Program,* the Government of Nunavut's *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*; British Columbia's First Nations Steering Committee's *Learning First Peoples Classroom Resources*; Saskatchewan's *Inspiring Success: First Nations and Métis Pre K-12 Education Policy Framework*). Decolonized, culturally-grounded and sustaining curriculum builds on students' cultural assets and takes students' cultural backgrounds as a core facet of educational practice (Battiste, 1998; Paris & Alim, 2014). Non-Indigenous educational objectives, standardization, and stereotypes of Indigenous communities found in Western pedagogical resources marginalize and "other" Indigenous children (Castagno & Jones Brayboy, 2008; Levitan, 2018; TRC, 2015). Alienation in and through educational objectives leads Indigenous students in Canada to have higher attrition rates than their non-Indigenous peers (Statistics Canada, 2016; UNESCO, 2012). There is a clear consensus that Indigenous developed, culturally-grounded curriculum improves retention and better prepares youth for achieving educational goals (Battiste, 1998, 2002, 2013; Castagno & Jones Brayboy, 2008; Harper & Thompson, 2017; Johnson & Levitan, in press; Kanu, 2007; Levitan & Johnson, forthcoming; St. Denis, 2011; TRC, 2015). As the Assembly of First Nations (2010) argued, it is only by "implement[ing] comprehensive First Nations learning environments envisioned by First Nations" that we will see "an overall improvement in learning outcomes" (p. 3).

Despite the pervasiveness of Indigenous education reform movements, Indigenous education authorities often undertake research and develop curriculum in isolation from parallel initiatives of other Indigenous jurisdictions and with little effective support from Canadian research bodies. Residential schools and Western educational systems have systematically excluded Indigenous knowledges from the historical record and the education system. The development of Indigenous curriculum necessarily entails community-engaged, actionable research strategies to identify educational objectives and culturally-appropriate pedagogical practices (see FNEC, 2009; RCAP, 1996). The need to research, create, implement, and sustain locally developed curriculum requires that Indigenous school boards mobilize extra resources and develop extra expertise not required of non-Indigenous boards (see AFN, 2010; National Panel on First Nation Elementary and Secondary Education for Students on Reserve, 2011). Developing culturally-grounded Indigenous curriculum is an intellectually demanding and research-intensive task requiring support across institutions and appropriate funding mechanisms

(Anuik, 2013; Metallic & Seiler, 2009; Sarkar & Metallic, 2009; Stagg Peterson, Horton, & Restoule, 2016; Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, 2005).

On January 31st and February 1st, the Office of First Nations and Inuit Education, with a team of scholars from the Department of Integrated Studies in Education, and four IEAs—the Ahkwesáhsne Mohawk Board of Education, Kahnawà:ke Education Centre, Kativik Ilisarniliriniq, and the Listiguj Mi'gmaq Development Centre—convened a two-day Curriculum Design Symposium exploring the process and research needs of developing curriculum for Indigenous schools. The Symposium brought together curriculum developers from each of the partnering IEAs and Indigenous curriculum and community engagement specialists from the University of Alberta, the University of Victoria, and the Government of Nunavut. Guided by a strengths-based approach to Indigenous education capacity building, the Symposium was designed to support IEAs in Quebec to undertake community-engaged research for curriculum development. The Symposium was organized as a series of "lateral" knowledge-sharing dialogues and included three keynote presentations by the invited specialists.

The Symposium had two related goals. The primary goal was to convene a forum for Indigenous curriculum developers working for IEAs to share knowledge and best practices, what Rebecca Sockbeson called a "radical collaboration" quoting Dr. Manu Ali Meyer. The forum was designed to give an opportunity for curriculum developers to network, share developments within their respective boards and discuss lessons learned in community engagement and curriculum development and curriculum reforms. The secondary objective was to document the kinds of knowledge-building and research activities curriculum development entails in order to identify areas that require support from the SSHRC and other governmental funding agencies.

Indigenous curriculum development through research: A selective survey of the literature

Research clearly calls for a Symposium on the research-intensive nature of Indigenous curriculum development. Major themes include (but are not limited to): gathering and validating Indigenous knowledges; building Indigenous knowledge-holders capacity to participate in education development; understanding the unique learning strengths and needs of Indigenous students; analysis of policy documents affecting Indigenous curriculum; and documenting the impact of research-action projects designed to encourage transformative learning experiences.

Battiste's (1998) foundational scholarship on decolonizing Indigenous education is integral to establishing the scope of knowledge needed to develop Indigenous curriculum reform. All Indigenous curriculum reform initiatives involve formulating Indigenous knowledges, values, and worldviews into a curricular framework that orientates culture as foundational to education. If curriculum is to respect and sustain Indigenous knowledge and identity, Indigenous curriculum must be grounded in the Indigenous epistemologies/worldviews developed over countless generations (Battiste, Bell, Findlay, & Youngblood Henderson, 2005; Battiste and Youngblood Henderson, 2018; see also Jones Brayboy & Maughan, 2009; Fellner, 2018). For the practical work of curriculum development, consulting, collaborating, and writings with traditional knowledge holders is indispensable. Aylward (2009) identified the essential nature of full participation of Indigenous knowledge holders, from knowledge gathering, to the creation of a curricular framework, to the identification of learning outcomes, to the final writing.

Curriculum developers have also sought to gain a better understanding of the unique learning strengths and needs of Indigenous students on which to base curriculum redevelopment, drawing on a range of methods that engage both students and community members to formulate this knowledge. Kanu (2007), for example, analyzed student work and journal entries and

engaged in extensive student collaboration to document the relationship between student success and Indigenous culture and values. Showing the importance of close observation of Indigenous children's learning practices, Stagg Peterson (2017) drew on close classroom observations of children's play and talk in an Ontario First Nation's school. Findings from this participatory action research project pointed to how students' cultural awareness impacts language-use, providing teachers and language curriculum developers with diagnostic information about Indigenous children's learning processes. Rather than direct student observation, Agbo (2001) collaborated with community elders as part of the Mohawk Education Project in Ahkwesáhsne. Group workshops and consultative sessions established a baseline set of needs and built a "group ownership of information" (p. 39) that formed the basis of subsequent curriculum reform.

Research that involves the analysis of policy documents is a third significant area of work in Indigenous curriculum development. Sockbeson (2009) put this approach into practice through an analysis of school policy documents. The analysis joined autoethnographic research of herself as a Waponahki person and consulting other members of the Waponahki community. The process allowed her to define what it was that students should be learning about her people. This enabled her to "[develop] curricular resources related to the Waponahki History and Culture Law" (p.15) (see also, Petherick, 2018). It is essential that developers have opportunities to analyze these documents prior to when curriculum development occurs to best build on the current state of education and integrate Indigenous ways of being (Petherick, 2018).

Research has also shown the efficacy of action-based research methodologies that enfold curriculum development with transformative, project-based learning experiences. By involving participants through evaluations, Facebook posts by participants, and video recordings at the "Resilient Places-Resilient Peoples: Elders' Voices Summit," Williams and Claxton (2017) highlighted the necessity for "the common goal of shining a light on the successful Indigenous resurgence initiatives and the collective processes of the re-Indigenization that are critical to all living beings" (p.69). Participants noted that this experience was a kind of "medicine" and that the entire process was highly transformative (Williams & Claxton, 2017, p.73). In a separate project also employing action-based methodologies, Flicker et al. (2014) organized arts-based workshops. These workshops demonstrated the importance of involving Indigenous youth in the research process, not only to learn more about Indigenous strengths and needs for curriculum development, but also to provide a transformative and engaging learning experience for the youth throughout the research process.

The above studies demonstrate the methodological complexity of gathering Indigenous cultural knowledge and identifying student strengths and needs from which to formulate a curriculum plan. An explicit centering of Indigenous epistemologies is not only essential for developing curricular frameworks, but also in designing methodological approaches meant to gather Indigenous knowledge for curriculum design. After seven years of collaborating to develop a community-first, land-centred framework, Styres and Zinga (2013) concluded that only Indigenous research methodologies can appreciate the strengths of Indigenous communities and create the conditions for research collaborators to work from their respective areas of strength so that an equitable balance of decision-making power is fostered.

The organization of the Symposium: A collaborative information gathering and idea creation event

Because the goal was to ensure that the information presented was representative of the diverse perspectives, goals, and needs of each partner education authority, conversations about

curriculum, and Indigenous curriculum development specifically, were also opportunities to build ideas, uncover facts, and create frameworks to be shared with the SSHRC. Keynote presentations, facilitated breakout sessions, and plenary dialogues were organized to foster discussion around work currently being done in each partnering IEA as well as ongoing knowledge-needs. To simultaneously share and record information was seen as cumbersome, so participants from Office of First Nations and Inuit Education (OFNIE) and Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE) took notes, and member curriculum developers wrote key and salient ideas on poster paper, to ensure that we gathered important information for moving forward. This semi-formal information gathering and creation, which was done in small and large groups, collaboratively and with partners, is the information we collected and now present here. The schedule of activities is presented as Appendix 2.

The multifaceted and layered research needs of Indigenous curriculum development and the locally developed methodologies for taking action

Despite this diversity, all participants articulated a common aspiration to centre Indigenous knowledges and pedagogies in their curriculum and infuse Indigenous culture, values, and practices throughout schoolchildren's lives. The work of Indigenous curriculum development is emotional and intellectual work. It is also urgent; participants expressed this repeatedly over the course of the two days together.

> *"We have to share our knowledge, even when we think it is common knowledge. Who will pass on the knowledge that had been passed onto us?" – Nunia Qanatsiaq Anoee*

As Nunia Qanatsiaq Anoee suggests, curriculum reform is urgent because of its promise to pass down Indigenous knowledges generation to generation: "we have to tend to the flame of the Qulliq [traditional oil lamp], moving it along." This urgency is compounded by the fact that reform can break cycles of Indigenous intellectual and epistemic eradication that has characterized Canadian colonialism. In line with the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, many of those gathered at the Symposium shared an understanding that Indigenous students have the *right* to an Indigenous, culturally sustaining curriculum, one that would allow them to confront ongoing discrimination and reach their full potential.

To develop, implement, and gain community support for curriculum reform, however, a multitude of knowledge resources are required. IEAs represented at the Symposium go to great lengths to undertake research that can inform and validate curriculum, often without the minimum financial and human resources necessary to sustain this work. Below, we explore the knowledge needs discussed at the Symposium and identify the strategies participants shared to address those needs. Note, the curriculum developers and educational professionals who attended the Symposium come from territories and work for IEAs located on different trajectories with different needs and mechanisms for addressing those needs. The work necessary to develop a truly local, *Indigenous* educational system is ultimately built around the particular knowledges, values, and relationships essential to their communities and regions. Rather than offer generalizations, the observations below survey the diversity of knowledge needs and research activities expressed by Symposium participants, both IEA-based curriculum developers and the university-based experts. They reflect breadth and depth of the research work IEAs undertake and make a strong case for recognition and support from federal research granting agencies.

Meshing knowledge-needs, research, community engagement, and pedagogy

The discussions and presentations of the Symposium echoed some of the major themes evident in the scholarly literature concerning research for curriculum development, but also added complexity and nuance. On the morning of Day 1 of the Symposium, Nick Claxton spoke of his community-engaged work revitalizing traditional reef net technology. His experience bringing back into use reef nets was both informative and inspirational, and it lends a conceptual heuristic to make sense of the complexity of curriculum development: the set of knowledge needs inherent in developing curriculum, the research activities curriculum developers pursue to meet these needs, and the pedagogies developers design knit together as in a net. Each link is integrated with the others and essential to the functioning of the whole; pressing on one link or one strand pulls taught the others.

The knowledge production activities discussed at the Symposium fall into six categories epistemic, linguistic, curricular, content, assessment, and building community confidence which are explored in the three subsections below. Analytically, this list is useful for discussion. However (in keeping with the heuristic of the net), in practice each need braids into the next and methodologies focused in one knowledge area strengthen the others.

Starting with Indigenous epistemologies and languages in curriculum and pedagogy

> *"Curriculum should embody the stories of our history thousands of years old"*
> *– Nick Claxton*

In his presentation on community engagement and the resurgence of traditional reef net technology, Nick Claxton told the story of the original gifting of the technology to the WSÁNEĆ people; a story that his uncle, YELḴÁŦŦE (Dr. Earl Claxton Sr.), had told him. Some time ago, a visitor visited the WSÁNEĆ community ĆEŁTENEM (Pt. Roberts) and married a young WSÁNEĆ woman. Shortly after the salmon became scarce and the WSÁNEĆ suffered hardship. The visitor taught the WSÁNEĆ people how to build a reef net with natural materials, how to speak the language of the net, and how to use the net to harvest salmon. When afterwards the WSÁNEĆ became prosperous again, he set out with his new wife to return to his homeland. The two canoed out to deep water and vanished, not into the horizon, but into the sea. It is believed that the young man who gifted the WSÁNEĆ with the knowledge of the reef net was a salmon spirit in human form. By marrying the young princess, he joined the salmon and WSÁNEĆ people in kin relations that have been maintained ever since (Claxton, 2003).

Nick Claxton explained how community members who participated in his PhD research project on the resurgence of reef net fishing gained an appreciation of the fundamental paradigm shift in human-natural world relations this story tells of – a shift from natural world as commodity to natural world as relation. The story, and Nick Claxton's telling of it, speaks to the profoundly different ways of relating to the world embedded in Indigenous ways of knowing which Indigenous curriculum must strive to foster. It demonstrated the important role of storytelling as both epistemology *and* pedagogy. And, as it concerned research, it pressed on the importance of community-engaged research for curriculum design and to the manner in which pedagogy and research merge and blossom in knowledge production activities. As Nick Claxton explained, not only is research ceremony (quoting Shawn Wilson, 2008), ceremony is a necessary part of education. Ceremony is research and ceremony is education.

Rebecca Sockbeson spoke of the urgency to recentre Indigenous epistemologies as a consequence of Canada's history of "epistemicide," the extensive, purposeful subjugation of

Indigenous ways of knowing (Sockbeson, 2017). Rebecca Sockbeson discussed the need for curriculum developers to ground their knowledge-gathering activities in epistemological foundations, namely "How do we know what we know? How do we come to know what we know and how does that impact our curriculum development approaches?" Questions of this kind are fundamental to the curriculum development project. Education professionals working within IEAs are at the leading edge of answering the questions concerning how to ground K-12 curriculum in Indigenous epistemology and how to integrate Indigenous epistemology into the Indigenous school system. Symposium participants spoke with sensitivity and insight into the kinds of important epistemological questions they are actively addressing: How do we gather knowledge non-exploitively and make it fit into a school 'box'? How do we integrate this knowledge in a sacred way? How can we work with nature to develop epistemological awareness when school calendars do not align with the cycle of nature? How can we build storytelling as a fundamental aspect of Indigenous education without subverting the dynamic nature of stories, which are traditionally told orally, when written?

To answer these questions and to centre Indigenous epistemologies in educational practice, participants identified the value of linguistic research. Indigenous paradigms are expressed in language and song. Researching the origins, roots, and semantic components of lexical items can give access to ways of seeing and modes of engaging with the world encoded in the language. For some participants, this meant extensive consultation with community elders, as one participant mentioned, "I literally will go to 2 or 3 community elders." Nunavik participants identified how language-use for them is tied to engaging in traditional practices such that understanding language is co-constitutive with understanding traditional practices – if traditional practices wane, so too will Inuktitut language use. Curriculum developers are engaging community in new forms of Indigenous language research that merges cultural practice, language, and significant skill in both colonial and Indigenous languages.

Preparing curriculum frameworks, learning outcomes and teaching materials

> *"Why should we keep teaching in the colonized way when we don't have to anymore?"*
> *– Chief Darcy Gray*

The preparation of curricular frameworks built from Indigenous epistemologies, values, and knowledges, the identification of curriculum outcomes, and the development of teaching materials are of the most research-intensive aspects of Indigenous educational development. In developing culturally-grounded curricula, curriculum developers must engage community members – elders, educators, parents, students, etc. – and draw on methodologies that allow them to translate the community's values, ways of being, needs, and goals into the curriculum. While university-IEA partnerships have supported this work in targeted ways, the vast majority of this research is done by IEAs *outside* of the context of academic institutions. In this work, IEAs undertake knowledge-gathering work, knowledge-production work, as well as knowledge dissemination work. SSHRC would benefit from recognizing this intensive research and supporting it financially, and through strategic, collaborative partnerships, directed by IEAs.

Curricular frameworks refer to guiding principles and philosophies upon which learning objectives and benchmarks are based. Often implicit, these frameworks form the foundation of education. As such, they must reflect the beliefs and aspirations of the respective communities in which they are used. They must also be iteratively and continuously validated by community members. IEAs are involved in extensive cycles of community engagement and consultation in the preparation of curricular frameworks. In Nunavut, for example, the development of curricular

framework involved consulting elders on the straightforward but profound question: "what should children learn?" across three geographically vast regions.

The scrupulous and conscientious work of the Kahnawà:ke Education Centre (KEC) to develop the *Tsi Niionkwarihò:ten Program* and their *Mobilization Framework* is indicative of the complexity of community-engaged research involved in developing curriculum frameworks (see https://www.kecedu.ca/administration/education-services/curriculum-development). The website cited presents the following picture of the depth of the intellectual work IEAs undertake: "Rooted in Rotinonhsión:ni epistemology, the definition is clear that Kanien'kehá:ka curriculum is not isolated activities to Indigenize curriculum, it is education from our perspective drawing from our sources of knowledge and all that mediates our ways of being Rotinonhsión:ni people" (KEC, Curriculum Development, Paragraph 2). The *Mobilization Framework* adds further emphasis to the point. The policy, which was created to "support the development, implementation and continuous assessment of our curriculum," was developed based on principles "which emphasize the importance of our collective voice to identify our needs, our direction and our solutions for ourselves." (KEC, Curriculum Development, Paragraph 3).

The two excerpts above underscore the intensive and iterative or cyclical nature of curriculum development and implementation. Throughout the two days, in both plenary presentations and small group discussions, participants spoke of the cycles of community engagement and community feedback loops that underpin the development of curricular frameworks, learning outcomes, modules, units and lessons, and learning benchmarks. A non-exhaustive list of the knowledge gathering, knowledge production, and knowledge implementation work curriculum developers identified during the symposium is as follows:

- Engaging a representative cross-section of community so that diverse perspectives are acknowledged and reflected in schooling practices.
- Co-developing questionnaires with community and presenting questionnaires to entire community via Facebook, kitchen table meetings, etc.
- Facilitating teacher workshops to investigate "which topics should be used to teach important themes/modules?"
- Drawing on auto-biographical inquiry and family-based research.
- Creating an advisory committee comprising of elders, parents, educators (with pedagogical and/or curricular experience), and other stakeholders to approve plans.
- Gathering and categorizing community resources and preparing new documents when necessary.

An example of the last bullet comes from Nunavut. Nunia Qanatsiaq Anoee described how curriculum developers engaged elders and a media team to document the process of the traditional sewing of an eider duck skin *amauti* (traditional Inuit parka) because no archival documents or media were available. This heritage research project was taxing and resource depleting yet essential in that it added to the knowledge resources available for curriculum *and* produced teaching materials for the classroom.

To return to the conceptual heuristic of a net, and as suggested by the eider duck *amauti* project just discussed, the development of curricular frameworks, learning resources, and teaching pedagogies to transfer Indigenous knowledges lace together such that working to strengthen a section improves the whole. Conversely, the net as a whole cannot function unless all sections are complete. An example: during a culture day activity at Innalik School in Inukjuak, Nunavik, a hunter was invited to show how to butcher a seal and to explain the

traditional way it was shared amongst the Inuit. The event also provided opportunities for students to eat raw seal in the traditional Inuk way. This event not only gave students access to Inuit hunting and nutrition practices, it added to the Inuit curriculum and simultaneously functioned as an instance of research insofar as seal meat sharing was as of yet undocumented knowledge for the school.

From canoe building to Elder life story collections, examples of project-based learning activities serving at once as a teaching and learning activity, as a community-engagement and involvement activity, and as a knowledge-gathering activity were frequent throughout the course of the Symposium. The interweaving of these aspects of Indigenous educational development is both reflective of a lack of adequate funds to appropriately conduct research *ahead of* Indigenous educational development, but also demonstrates the interwoven nature of practice and knowledge production in research and research-to-practice initiatives.

Assessing student progress and building community confidence

Finally, symposium participants also identified two other areas of curriculum design in which they were actively involved in knowledge creation, research, and dissemination: designing assessment plans that match curriculum innovation and developing community confidence through progress tracking and knowledge dissemination.

Preparing learning benchmarks, assessment plans and communicating student achievement to community stakeholders are essential in rolling out new curricula but easily overlooked. Curriculum re-development implies that assessment techniques be re-developed as well. Culturally grounded learning outcomes require assessment tools that measure the learning outcomes that are sought-after, and that they do so through mechanisms that produce relationships between assessor and student that are valued – multiple choice tests, for example, fall far short in this regard. Reflecting on the misalignment between assessment practices and indigenized curricular objectives, one curriculum developer asked: "How do we eliminate inappropriate assessment?"

This same developer noted one of the challenges of curriculum redevelopment: the challenge of gaining student and community confidence in curricular reform. As she put it, "Why do students feel wrong about going outside of pen and paper learning?" Processes for cultivating community buy-in are complicated, and challenging yet they are critical for successful curriculum development and implementation.

Recommendations: Indigenous Control of Indigenous Curriculum Development

"It's our responsibility to privilege Onkwehon:we ways of education for our children, to value and assert our knowledges, so their voices can be heard"
– Kahtehrón:ni Iris Stacy

Re-centering Indigenous epistemologies in curricular frameworks, delivering culturally-grounded lessons, creating assessment plans, and tracking student learning for fostering community confidence, are all fundamental research activities that IEAs undertake, and they are drastically under-supported. Unlike other educational contexts, IEAs have to do this intensive research and knowledge identification/creation work while also fighting against colonizing norms and healing from epistemological violence perpetuated through the educational systems they are reforming. Curriculum reform for non-Indigenous school districts is a multi-year process involving large research and development teams, pilot projects, and government funding.

For Indigenous school districts, even with the importance and urgency of Indigenous education recognized in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, development budgets and timelines are drastically constrained.

Yet, despite the scale of the task, more so than either universities or provincial government departments, IEAs are unquestionably the best positioned to identify knowledge needs and to design and execute the research tasks necessary to build high-quality Indigenous curriculum. Without adequate Indigenous representation in universities, and without the recognition and valuing of Indigenous epistemologies in postsecondary education, universities are indirectly and directly marginalizing Indigenous students and communities. Because of this, we recommend that the SSHRC create a multi-year research funding structure specifically for IEAs. By recognizing and adequately supporting the community-engagement, research, and knowledge implementation work IEAs undertake, research granting agencies in Canada would respond to both the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and a cross-section of the TRCs Call to Action, namely:

10.iii : Developing culturally appropriate curricula.
10.v : Enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems.
10.vi : Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children.
14.iii : Realizing the federal government's responsibility to provide sufficient funds for Aboriginal-language revitalization and preservation.
14.iv : Recognizing that the preservation, revitalization, and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Aboriginal people and communities.
62.iii : Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.

To realize this contribution, this report makes the following six recommendations to Canadian research granting agencies. To:

1. Fund directly IEAs'research for all aspects of curriculum development from the development of Indigenous curriculum frameworks and curricular outcomes to the development of lesson activities and resources, to the design of assessment plans and generating data for reporting to community stakeholders
2. Recognize Indigenous teachers and curriculum designers as researchers.
3. Recognize the full scope of Indigenous methodologies including, story, project based, and action methodologies that generate knowledge directing Indigenous curriculum development and implementation.
4. Coordinate with other curriculum development funding sources to provide more stable, long-term funding to IEAs.
5. Support IEAs to collaborate between themselves and recognize collaborations as critical forms of research dissemination.
6. Support IEAs to engage university researchers as needed in research activities.

Supporting intra- and inter-IEA knowledge-sharing and collaboration

This project addressed components of all four SSHRC-identified strategic themes: *Supporting Indigenous Talent and Research Careers; Engaging Indigenous Knowledges; Mobilize Knowledge and Partnerships for Reconciliation; and Foster Mutually Respectful Relationships.* The first and second objectives were met by bringing together Indigenous

curriculum developers and educational researchers working within IEAs and the university system. The second and third by engaging in a new way of thinking about university and community working relationships. As knowledge-sharing (via conversation) and collaboration are cornerstones of Indigenous epistemologies, supporting IEAs to network and collaborate constitutes an important research need and research dissemination practice for developing curriculum in Indigenous contexts. At the end of the Symposium, participants shared what they were taking away from the two-day experience. This included making critical connections with curriculum developers in other communities; learning new strategies and/or approaches being used in other communities; a renewed strength of their Indigenous identity and the importance of developing culturally-grounded curriculum; new knowledge of how to develop curricular frameworks; and the desire to reconvene and to "recreate" the Symposium for other educators in their communities. Providing support for IEAs to continue exchanging knowledge and collaborating with one another (and within themselves) will empower them to continue this work.

The role of the university in Indigenous curriculum development

Universities have much to learn from the way IEAs pursue collaborative, community-engaged research. A common need expressed by the Indigenous scholars and curriculum developers centered on the academy's tendency not to value Indigenous epistemologies. Grounded in concepts such as storytelling, Indigenous ways of knowing are often marginalized in university settings, particularly in what the academy considers scholarly research. This marginalization contributes to strained relationships between Indigenous scholars and their colleagues and between IEAs and non-Indigenous university researchers. Moreover, because researchers within universities receive most of the research funding, they are both passively and actively diverting funding that could be used to support Indigenous research.

If universities are to effectively support IEA research for Indigenous curriculum development, academia must champion Indigenous epistemologies and support Indigenous scholars and practitioners working within these paradigms. University-researchers collaborating with IEAs must be supported to adopt a community-first perspective, recognizing that educational development goals supersede or even replace publishing objectives (e.g., research-granting agencies should recognize curricular documents as a form of scholarship). Funding IEAs s directly and allowing them to engage university-based researchers on their own terms and as needed is the most effective way to ensure equitable university-IEA partnerships.

Cultivating new and strengthening existing partnerships between IEAs and universities in this way can provide a promise pathway toward supporting the development and implementation of curriculum in Indigenous communities. Universities can serve as partners in curriculum development via resource sharing (e.g., materials, printing services), capacity building (e.g., teacher preparation, leadership training, symposia/workshops), and research collaborations (e.g., participatory action research projects). Research funds that directly support these critical collaborations can provide IEAs with the necessary supports to perform this work. Canadian policies to redress historical wrongdoings against First Nations and Inuit communities imply an ethical requirement to support Indigenous communities. Therefore, strengthening university-community partnerships can contribute to this effort via increased research collaborations and other linkages.

Appendix 1: Works Cited

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Appendix 2: Symposium Schedule

McGill Curriculum Design Symposium

Location: Conference Room, Host Hotel, 1860 Route 132, Kahnawà:ke, QC

Date: Thursday, January 31st and Friday, February 1st

Facilitator: Facilitated by the Office of First Nations and Inuit Education and the Department of Integrated Studies in Education, McGill University

Agenda Items

THURSDAY, JANUARY 31ST

7:45 am	Shuttle Pick-Up from Marriott Residence Inn Montreal, 2045 rue Peel
9:00 am – 9:30 am	Opening Ceremony
9:30 am – 10:15 am	Symposium Attendee Introductions: Sharing curriculum development plans and current and future projects
10:15 am – 10:45 am	Collaborative Goal Setting
10:45 am – 11:00 am	**Coffee Break** (catered by Messy Kitchen and Host Hotel)
11:00 am – 12:00 pm	Keynote Session: Nick Claxton – Community engagement
12:00 pm – 12:45 pm	Keynote Session Follow-Up: Break-out activity
12:45 pm – 1:45 pm	**Lunch** (catered by Messy Kitchen)
1:45 pm – 3:00 pm	Keynote Session: Rebecca Sockbeson – Bridging community knowledge and the school (Part 1)
3:00 pm – 3:15 pm	**Coffee Break** (catered by Messy Kitchen and Host Hotel)
3:15 pm – 4:15 pm	Keynote Session: Rebecca Sockbeson – Bridging community knowledge and the school (Part 2)
4:15 pm – 4:45 pm	Closing Activity: Reflecting on lessons learned and ideas for moving forward
5:00 pm	Shuttle Pick-Up from Host Hotel (Symposium venue) (Drop-off Mirela's Restaurant)
5:30 pm	Symposium Dinner, Mirela's Restaurant, 245 Route 132
7:30 pm	Shuttle Pick-Up from Mirela's Restaurant (Drop-off Marriott Residence Inn)

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McGill Curriculum Design Symposium

Agenda Items

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1ST

7:45 am	Shuttle Pick-Up from Marriott Residence Inn, 2045 rue Peel
9:00 am – 9:15 am	Expense Information
9:15 am – 10:00 am	Sharing Our Experiences: Successes and lessons learned
10:00 am – 11:00 am	Keynote Session: Nunia Anoee Qanatsiaq –The Nunavut experience
11:00 am – 11:15 am	**Coffee Break** (catered by Messy Kitchen and Host Hotel)
11:15 am – 12:15 pm	Keynote Session Follow-Up: Break-out activity
12:15 pm – 1:15 pm	**Lunch** (catered by Messy Kitchen)
1:15 pm – 3:15 pm	Working Session: Engaged curriculum development plans (**coffee and snacks available**. catered by Messy Kitchen and Host Hotel)
3:15 pm – 4:00 pm	Closing Activity: Sharing achievements, questions, take-aways and next steps
4:00 pm – 4:30 pm	Closing Ceremony
4:45 pm	Shuttle Pick-Up from Host Hotel (Drop off Marriot Residence Inn)

Additional Information

If you have any needs or last minute requests, please contact Stephen Peters at 514-967-6813 or Stephen.peters@mcgill.ca

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