The Social Environment and Indigenous Student Success in a Canadian Post-secondary Institution

by

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Abstract

A qualitative case study was used to explore emerging changes in social relations at a regional university in British Columbia, Canada, following implementation of a government policy on the indigenization of public institutions. My research probed intercultural social relations using a social ecological systems framework with instructors, student support staff, and administrators at the single case institution. The university allocated significant resources to indigenization efforts but little activity was directed at changing social relations. Institutional staff did not use intercultural skills to improve social relations with Indigenous students. There was little understanding at organizational levels of why reconciliation with Indigenous peoples is required. Combining a social understanding of Indigenous world view, how culture is maintained, and how cultures interact with a historical understanding of what culture is and how others have interrelated with Indigenous culture, I proposed a Social Indigenization Model for helping individuals and institutional environments move to Indigenous acceptance and validation. In this model, as social understanding increases, employees move from a position of Indigenous bias to one of Indigenous tolerance; and as historical understanding increases, employees move from a position of Indigenous isolation to one of Indigenous acceptance. Using the four activities outlined in the Social Indigenization Model, an institution could move its social environment toward greater Indigenous acceptance in line with the Indigenous acceptance framework.

Keywords: Indigenous education, settler society, organizational culture, social relations
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The rapid and stubborn rate of change in the post-secondary educational attainment of Indigenous students in Canada (Gordon & White, 2014) offers a context to analyze organizational culture change and to explore how changes in social relations can support Indigenous student success. A social ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) explores the patterns of change in intercultural social relations following a decade of exogenous attempts at “indigenizing” post-secondary institutions. This model is useful in exploring the complex social, institutional, and cultural contexts of social relations within specific environments because it systematically examines multiple levels of social interaction surrounding the student. The social ecological systems model predicts that change occurs simultaneously, if not proportionally, at the levels of microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem, and exosystem (Wicks & Warren, 2014). In the post-secondary context, microsystems (see Appendix A for definitions) directly surround students and provide the knowledge to be acquired, while the other systems have decreasing levels of direct interaction but greater levels of influence on the learning ecosystem. Using a case study approach, this dissertation examines perceptions of emerging changes in intercultural social relations among staff and students at a
Canadian public post-secondary institution in British Columbia. The goal of this research is to
determine if there are significant changes in intercultural social relations within this institution
that improve Indigenous student achievement in post-secondary studies. The key research
question is: What perceived changes to intercultural social relations are emerging within a
Canadian public post-secondary institution that is in the process of implementing the BC
government’s indigenization policy?

The Broad Context of the Research
Many indicators of social equity, including levels of income and employment, for Indigenous
peoples living in advanced industrial economies have improved in recent decades while the
education gap has generally grown wider (Mitrou et al., 2014). At a population level, a key
indicator that often reflects future social equity is educational outcomes. In Canada, for
example, the number of Indigenous graduates of colleges and universities increased steadily
over the past two decades, while the number of Indigenous graduates of trades programs
declined and the number of Indigenous adults without high school completion increased
(Gordon & White, 2014). The various approaches to designing and delivering tertiary education
programs for Indigenous peoples, largely in advanced settler societies, have focused on
providing safe cultural spaces and supports, accommodating perceived learning styles or
cognitive preferences, and imparting instructor- or learner-centred critical and decolonial
pedagogies (G. Martin, Nakata, Nakata, & Day, 2015). Currently there is no evidence-based
framework for the most effective approaches to supporting Indigenous student success.

Recent scholarship has examined a wide range of possible factors impacting Indigenous
student success. These include social factors such as modern forms of prejudice (Nesdole,
Lepnurm, Noonan, & Voigts, 2015), institutional factors like the ineffectiveness of cultural competence training (Carey, 2015), and complex psychosocial environments (Chirgwin, 2015). Indigenous student success is also affected by geographic and social isolation (Fredericks, Mann, Skinner, CroftWarcon, & McFarlane, 2015) and degree of acculturation into mainstream cultures (Ozer, 2015). Page, Radloff, and Asmar (2015), for example, found that while Indigenous university students report more positive engagement in their studies than average students, they are prepared to depart from their studies, indicating complex psychosocial burdens. It is clear from the research that academic success for Indigenous students is a complex issue that requires multifaceted, inclusive, culturally responsive, and engaging teaching and learning approaches delivered by educators and student support staff (Robertson, Holleran, & Samuels, 2015; Wikaire et al., 2015).

Improved educational outcomes for Indigenous learners are a key objective of post-secondary institutions, governments, and Indigenous communities in Canada (Colleges and Institutes Canada, 2015; Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2015; Truth and Reconciliation Commission Canada, 2015). In BC, the province with the second highest Indigenous population of all provinces and territories in Canada, the provincial government has made investments in the 25 publically owned post-secondary institutes—including one Indigenous institution. These investments include the creation of Indigenous gathering places, and the provision of specialized student services and community programming. Many of the public post-secondary institutions in BC, for example, now have a director of Indigenous education who reports to senior management, and many of these institutions also have met an objective of having Indigenous peoples in positions of leadership and governance (British
The current goal of the BC government is to increase the number of post-secondary credentials awarded to Indigenous learners by 75 percent over a ten-year period: from 2,634 awarded in 2010 to 4,609 in 2020 (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education Innovation and Technology, 2012). The Aboriginal Post-secondary Education and Training Policy Framework of British Columbia (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education Innovation and Technology, 2012) specifies four key strategies: systemic change to physical space and student housing; increased Indigenous community partnerships; reduced financial barriers to students; and an increased rate of transition to post-secondary education for Indigenous secondary school graduates.

While systemic change initiatives at these organizations have involved increasing Indigenous staffing and the participation of hundreds of Indigenous community stakeholders, the Aboriginal Post-secondary Education and Training Policy Framework does not include an action plan for changes in organizational culture or social relations. In stark contrast, diversity initiatives in the workplace are typically based on changes to intangible social relations such as attitudes, values, and behaviours (Bond & Haynes, 2014) and not on changes in material or tangible culture, such as facilities or equipment. Over the past few decades, for example, attitudes on the differences and abilities of women in paid employment have changed profoundly in Western industrialized societies, and the behaviours of men have changed to create positive cultural spaces for women in the workplace. The mainstream emphasis on social change in organizational diversity (J. M. Chen & Hamilton, 2015; Hofhuis, van der Zee, & Otten, 2015; Visser, 2015) is seemingly at odds with the main approaches to indigenization at BC institutions.
The impact of not addressing the gap in educational outcomes between Indigenous and other students includes increasing social inequity and continuing poverty for Indigenous people, leading to high costs of health care, social assistance, and other programs for government. The provincial government’s policy defines its motivation for investing in post-secondary education and training for Indigenous peoples as meeting labour market shortages, supporting economic opportunities, and strengthening communities (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education Innovation and Technology, 2012, p. 1). In general, the benefits of higher education are to individuals, their families, communities, and society. While individuals typically benefit from increased earnings, there are associated reductions in teenage pregnancy, child abuse, neglect, and criminal activity within their families. There is evidence that higher education causes better health outcomes and extended life spans. Communities benefit in terms of greater civic participation, including voting and charitable giving, reduced incarceration rates, and increased productivity (Berger, Joseph, Mott, Anne, & Parkin, 2009, p. 18).

Indigenization in a Post-secondary Institution in British Columbia

Using a social ecological systems model, this research explores how the BC government’s policy of supporting indigenization has functioned as an exosystem change to alter the social ecological systems of a target post-secondary institution. The interdependence of system components predicts that changes within the institution will impact the learning experiences of Indigenous students and bring about increased educational success. Social ecological systems models examine nested levels of analysis to determine how a policy change affects organizational culture. People within the system adapt to organizational culture change in order to facilitate desired outcomes through social relations change mechanisms. Social
ecological systems models focus on power differentials and differences in the quantity and quality of interaction in dynamic systems with responses, feedback mechanisms, and indefinite boundaries (Cilliers, 2002).

Drawing on the characteristics of a complex adaptive system, the social ecological systems model has been used to uncover patterns in the evolution of a system or variable responses to change (Cilliers, 2002). In the post-secondary context, faculty presumably has a great deal of influence on student persistence and success; and services or business units such as the library and human resources provide support to faculty and students. Administrative personnel, including senior and junior executives, may have low contact with students but help to create the organizational policies and structures that serve the ultimate goal of student success. The social relations within the microsystems surrounding students could include individual attitudes and behaviours of instructors and classmates and dynamics related to intercultural coordination. Intercultural coordination is a process of acknowledging and adapting to cultural difference among individuals who represent culturally dissimilar and politically unequal groups (Debebe, 2008).

This dissertation focuses on the intercultural social relations, and the interactions between individuals, emerging within a public post-secondary institution that is in the process of implementing the BC government’s indigenization policy. It explores qualitative evidence on institutional interventions in intercultural social relations from the perspective of the employees working to support students and influence the institutional culture. There are 25 public post-secondary institutions in BC, including eleven universities, eleven colleges, and three institutes, offering a variety of specialized certificate, diploma, and degree programs.
These institutions vary greatly in size and scope and serve communities throughout rural, urban, and remote northern locations. They include internationally recognized comprehensive research institutes as well as regional institutions with largely vocational programming. The number of seats funded by the provincial government, which is one indication of the size of each institution, ranges from 538 to 42,500, with a mean of 7,290 and a median of 5,450. These data reveal that the few large research universities are outnumbered by the small colleges and institutes.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

An advantage of this study is its focus on the social relations component of policy implementation, as it has not received significant study to date. This is in line with broad social issues related to Indigenous history and social inclusion being addressed in Canada through major federal initiatives such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Inquiry (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2016). Geography limits the credibility of the study; in the urbanized south, the number of Indigenous students is highest, but their percentage of the student population is low relative to other geographic areas. A major disadvantage of the study is that participants often had little recognized or acknowledged experience with Indigenous students.

The research was conducted at a single case institution, which does not represent the whole system but shares many of the same social influences as all other institutions. Participants volunteered to take part by responding to email invitations, which may represent a skewed sample of those employees who were more open to contributing to research or to Indigenous student success. The short term of the research period and employee availability
were limiting factors in the quantity of data collected. A social ecological framework, while useful in centering the support on Indigenous students, limits the direct comparison of responses between employee categories. Exploratory questions based on known mechanisms of social relations change may not have captured what is actually happening with intercultural social relations in the institution.

**Rationale for Change**

In addition to the human rights and decolonization issues inherent in improving the success of Indigenous learners, there are likely negative impacts of not reducing the education gap. Individuals who graduate from college or university (tertiary education) tend to benefit from better labour market prospects, reduced risk of unemployment, and higher earnings over the course of their working lives. The general public benefits from higher educational attainment through a mix of social and economic measures, including additional taxation revenues and reduced public spending on social welfare programs (Conference Board of Canada, 2016). Income inequity involves complex forces such as economic activity and family composition in addition to educational attainment (Jarrett, 2013). If changing social relations is critical to improving Indigenous educational attainment, then not changing them would continue the lower education that supports economic inequity.

**The Social Ecology of Intercultural Relations**

Indigenous students may be affected by the attitudes and behaviours directed toward them by people in the microsystems of an institution, and by different cultural expectations and ways of being that make up the organizational culture (Howitt et al., 2014). Applying a social ecological systems framework to the indigenization of post-secondary education in BC may determine if
Social Environment and Indigenous Student Success

Microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem changes emerge. For example, if change in response to the provincial Aboriginal Policy Framework (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education Innovation and Technology, 2012) is not reported by instructional and student services staff working directly with students, then there may be disruptions in the system that implements the policy throughout the organization. In addition to policies and practices that produce an organizational climate and educational experience, changes may be required in the social relations that impact Indigenous students. Any changes in intercultural social relations could follow patterns inherent in existing models for changing these relations (Crippen & Brew, 2013; Lieberman & Gamst, 2015; J. N. Martin & Nakayama, 2015). The microsystems of instruction and student support could use mechanisms of social relations change such as increasing interculturalism (Bennett, 2013) and civility to counter bias and defensiveness (Bannister & O’Sullivan, 2013; Debebe, 2008, 2010). The mesosystem that supports students at an institution could include diversity methods such as intercultural dialogue to encourage change in social relations (Alred, Byram, & Fleming, 2006; Bikmen & Sunar, 2013; Keating, 2007; Patel, Li, & Sooknanan, 2011). An institution could develop a reconciliation narrative to inform understanding of the indigenization process. This could be in the context of the provincial policy; through recognition of Indigenous rights to education (United Nations, 2007); or in helping employees understand their relationship with colonial dynamics (Freeman, 2014, p. 220). The macrosystem of the institution could create intercultural policies and an organizational climate that support changing social relations, such as affirmative action and assigned accountability, which have been effective in other diversity initiatives. Tully (1999) defines five principles of a just and practical relationship between Indigenous and non-
Indigenous Canadians: mutual recognition, intercultural dialogue, mutual respect, sharing, and mutual responsibility. These principles should be inherent in the desired cultural outcomes of a change in social relations in post-secondary institutions in BC.

**Positionality**

As a long-time instructor and administrator of a private Indigenous college in BC, I have been involved in creating and sustaining organizational culture that supports Indigenous student success through reducing the need for cultural assimilation. This has included influencing facilities, curricula, learning materials, instructors, and supports as well as interpersonal relations, protocols, ceremony, traditional knowledge, and values. It has also included working with Indigenous staff and faculty to define and promote the social relations required to increase Indigenous student success. Unlike the case institution, the institution where I work is controlled by an Indigenous Board of Directors, and approximately half its employees are Indigenous. Its mission is to provide post-secondary credentials to Indigenous students. I have also served in an advisory capacity on behalf of the Indigenous community for a public university and been involved in the issues of systemic change for Indigenous student success. Although I am of European ancestry, I have acquired knowledge of Indigenous pedagogy, culture, and peoples, as well as of decolonization. I hope this research provides value to Indigenous learners, Indigenous communities across Canada (and the world), and the Indigenous institution I work for. I have also worked at a large polytechnic institution, a semi-independent entity largely dependent on government funding and leadership.
Summary

The BC government’s policy on the indigenization of post-secondary education has not yet closed the gap in educational outcomes between Indigenous and settler communities in the province. Recent research into the factors promoting Indigenous student success at post-secondary institutions has generally focused on the material factors of the educational experience and not the social relations involved (Pio, Tipuna, Rasheed, & Parker, 2014). In this dissertation, I use a social ecological systems framework to examine social relations between Indigenous students and staff at a post-secondary education institution. The overarching goal of this research is to determine emerging patterns of perceived social change, in personal behaviours and interpersonal social relations, contributing to Indigenous student success.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review of Indigenous education, indigenization, and reconciliation. It explores recent scholarship on intercultural social relations and cultural coordination. Chapter 3 details the methodology and research design of this project. I discuss the case study methodology used and the sample selection; as well as data collection and data analysis methods and research ethics processes. In Chapter 4, I describe the case institution and provide the results of my data analysis on indigenization there. Following a social ecological systems approach, I have divided this analysis into three sub-sections: microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem. Chapter 5 draws on the data examined in Chapter 4 and links these with the broader literature and theory on the indigenization and reconciliation examined in Chapter 2. I also analyze the social ecological systems impacting Indigenous student success at the case institution. The conclusions in Chapter 6 identify gaps in knowledge and provide recommendations for further research, policy directions, and practical application of
knowledge. I also propose a model for improving the social environment experienced by Indigenous students in post-secondary institutions, and I provide a framework for indigenization developed from the key recommendations extracted from my research data.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter I explore the key concepts of Indigenous education and the indigenization of education in Canada—particularly the indigenization of post-secondary education in BC. I survey literature that highlights the importance of incorporating Indigenous worldviews in curriculum design, and the provision of higher education within the cultures of Indigenous students. I also explore recent scholarship that focuses on the role of unlearning racialized stereotypes and other mechanisms for improved intercultural social relations in higher education. Further, I highlight the role of education in supporting the process of reconciliation of Indigenous and settler societies in Canada, with specific emphasis on the importance of interventions in organizational diversity at post-secondary institutions. Various models and mechanisms for intercultural social relations change are explored for their relevance and applicability to research on organizational diversity and indigenization. There is significant overlap in indigenization efforts at the primary and secondary educational levels, but the social relations contexts are quite different, as adults are considered to have much greater agency. There are also complex differences in power differentials between students and educational employees at different levels.

**Indigenous and Settler Reconciliation through Education**

There is a well-defined social divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, evident in empirical measures of income, health, education, employment, and justice. For example, the percentage-point gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons
holding a bachelor’s degree or higher was 10.9 percent in 1981; it grew to 17.6 percent in 2006 and decreased slightly to 16.7 percent in 2011 (Mitrou et al., 2014; Statistics Canada, 2011). The unemployment rate gap was 5.4 percent in 1981 and increased to 6.6 percent in 2006. At the same time, there has been slow improvement in many measures of success for Indigenous peoples. Median Indigenous income as a proportion of non-Indigenous median income (where parity would be 100 percent) increased from 60.3 percent in 1981 to 76.1 percent in 2006 (Mitrou et al., 2014). Within Canadian society many organizations are working to address these disparities through specialized services and expanding cultural awareness. Regarding the educational success of Indigenous Canadians, Gerber (2014) notes, “One might be surprised and inclined to celebrate the achievements of those with advanced education—but a population 25 times larger is without high school certification and has little hope of escaping poverty” (p. 141). A disparity in educational outcomes between indigenous and other Canadians is a legacy of colonization by settler society. The colonization process included violent conflict, pandemics, displacement, and institutionalization in Indian Residential Schools.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada was established in 2009 to revitalize the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canadian society, with a particular focus on identifying the social impacts of Indian Residential Schools (IRS). More specifically, the goals of the Commission included “Produce ... a report including recommendations to the Government of Canada concerning the IRS system and experience including: the history, purpose, operation and supervision of the IRS system, the effect and consequences of IRS (including systemic harms, intergenerational consequences and the impact on human dignity) and the ongoing legacy of the residential schools” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission
Canada, n.d., Our Mandate, Terms of Reference section). A policy of forced institutionalization produced profound loss and grief in Indigenous families. The children who suffered the removal from family often had reduced knowledge of cultural norms and practices, including parenting skills (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2011). Research suggests that adults with at least one parent who attended an IRS have an increased experience of depressive symptoms and are more likely to experience stress throughout their lives (Bombay et al., 2011). And mental health symptoms in the children of residential school survivors indicate the intergenerational transmission of the effects of residential schools. This transmission links to a lack of traditional parenting skills by children raised in institutions (Bombay et al., 2011) and the effects of unaddressed trauma from the experiences of residential schools (Neeganagwedgin, 2014).

In Canada, support for an Indigenous cultural value system within education has its roots in the National Indian Brotherhood’s (NIB) 1972 publication *Indian Control of Indian Education*. In its policy paper the NIB (1972) took a stand against cultural assimilation by emphasizing the importance of Indigenous students receiving an education compatible with and supportive of their culture. By 1979, an Indigenous-controlled institute was operating in Vancouver (Haig-Brown, 1995). While the special legal status of the Indigenous peoples of Canada was recognized and affirmed in Canada’s *Constitution Act* in 1982, there have not been any initiatives to clarify Indigenous rights to education within Indigenous cultural contexts outside of specific treaty rights that impact education (Carr-Stewart, 2011). In 1985 five Indigenous-controlled institutions in BC formed an association to promote Indigenous education. By 1995, the BC government had produced its first policy framework on Indigenous post-secondary education, designated an Indigenous-controlled public institute, and began
funding all public post-secondary institutions to hire Indigenous student support staff (Billy-Minnabarriet, 2012). By 2012, the BC government had developed policy in collaboration with Indigenous leadership organizations (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education Innovation and Technology, 2012). As a result of ongoing efforts, the demographic recovery and decolonization of Indigenous peoples continues, and future political, economic, and cultural relations between settler and Indigenous cultures continue to evolve as the population, skills, and culture of Indigenous communities recover and increase. An understanding of this history of societal collapse and cultural destruction during the colonization process is essential to all people in recognizing the future validity and viability of traditional cultures and peoples.

Education therefore plays a critical role in cultural recovery and can be highly contested or political. Education either supports cultural survival through awareness of the history of cultural destruction during colonization, or supports assimilation by preparing students for employment that requires contact with, if not placement within, dominant culture (Haig-Brown, 1995). Where education incorporates Indigenous cultural ways of relating, it will not result in assimilation even if it includes knowledge and concepts required for contemporary economies and workplaces.

The indigenization of mainstream education is the process of integrating the philosophy and worldviews of Indigenous peoples into educational institutions. As a result, Indigenous students would see themselves and their realities reflected in curricula and services, and all students would graduate with skills and knowledge that enable them live alongside their neighbours knowledgeably and respectfully, understanding the racialized history of colonization, recognizing the traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples, and respecting
Indigenous values such as collectivity and social and gender equality (Zamluk, 2006). As an example, the Government of Northwest Territories has adopted a primary education curriculum framework for some of its nine Indigenous languages, which includes learning outcomes of respecting spiritual forces, understanding the land, extending generosity to others, and maintaining humility (Government of Northwest Territories, n.d.). The indigenization process in an educational setting has typically focused on providing safe cultural spaces and supports, accommodating culturally different learning styles, and creating instructor- or learner-centred critical and decolonial pedagogies (Nakata, Nakata, Keech, & Bolt, 2012). The methods and appropriateness of indigenization in educational institutions, while supported in policy in, for example, BC (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education Innovation and Technology, 2012), impact political beliefs and contested objectives (Hill, 2012). Indigenous communities can be skeptical of the real intentions of governments; whether indigenization seeks to rejuvenate endangered cultures and protect invaluable cultural legacies, or assimilate Indigenous peoples into mainstream economies. To be successful, indigenization of education may closely parallel the revitalization of Indigenous languages through language immersion education; it is cultural immersion education (De Korne, 2010; Hermes, Bang, & Marin, 2012).

**Social Ecological Systems and Indigenization**

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) social ecological systems approach provides a framework for exploring the complex issues of changing social relations at the microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem, and exosystem levels. In a social ecological systems framework, change at any one level creates reverberations at the other levels. In this context, the change in provincial policy for Indigenous student success, an exosystem change, will produce change at the microsystem and
mesosystem levels. Microsystem social relations directly impact individuals. For post-secondary students this includes professors, instructors, and support staff with whom a student has regular direct interaction and who facilitates the learning experience. A multiyear examination of student achievement data at one institution, for example, found that performance of underrepresented minority students is significantly higher when taught by an underrepresented minority instructor (Fairlie, Hoffmann, & Oreopoulos, 2011). Other researchers have found that teachers are important in creating a culture of reconciliation by fostering attitudes of acceptance of the “other” in conflict situations (Lazar, Braun-Lewensohn, & Litvak Hirsch, 2015.). The mesosystem involves the social networks that surround, support, and connect microsystems in a social ecological systems framework. In a post-secondary environment this would include the student services that help students with their studies or support their basic needs. It would also include the institutional support networks for instructors who would not normally have direct interaction with students. These support networks include managers, systems for instructional development and curriculum development, library services, and human resources support on diversity issues. The macrosystem surrounding students includes the institutional departments that have little direct impact on students but greater power in establishing organizational climates and culture, which in educational institutions impact students’ education experience through, for example, human resource management, infrastructure, and industry relations.

**Microsystem: Social Relations in the Classroom**

One of the ways that culture appears in the classroom is through social relations. Some concepts of social relations are well known in the classroom setting, and others may be
obscured by being culturally specific expectations for how people behave and relate to each other. Several key concepts in social relations are applicable to the multicultural classroom.

**Interculturalism.** The persistence of an Indigenous education gap may be evidence of intransigence of individuals, institutions, and dominant society to the personal social behaviour change that could help to include Indigenous peoples in routine social relations in a way that is not assimilationist. Language teachers often train in the personal social behaviours that are compatible with the culture in which they work. These teachers may still experience culture shock upon entering a culture with different body language, interpersonal distance norms, emotionality, masculinity, or time orientation (Hofstede, 2001). Factors that have been found to support Indigenous student persistence in higher education include stronger traditional cultural identity in students, culturally specific student support systems, and the resilience engendered by students undertaking cultural practices (Chen, 2012).

Cultural segregation is also present between Indigenous students and many of their instructors in Canada. Higgins, Madden, and Korteweg (2013), for example, found that a majority of schoolteachers in Saskatchewan who identified as being of European ancestry maintained a position of the “perfect stranger,” in which they did not feel knowledgeable enough about Indigenous culture or issues to teach them to their Indigenous students. According to Dion (2007) the “perfect stranger” is a position that non-Indigenous peoples may take before they begin to understand their own relationship with the dominant discourses on Indigenous peoples. The phenomenon of the perfect stranger also relates to issues of Eurocentrism, psychic distancing, historical amnesia, white privilege, and collective trauma (Ahluwalia, 2012; Jackson, 2011).
In today’s culturally diverse colleges and universities in Canada, it is highly problematic to have instructors and student support staff operate under the condition of the perfect stranger. In the perfect stranger position, an instructor feels unable to teach Indigenous reality despite how much knowledge they may have. Just as an instructor need not be Roman to teach Roman history, an instructor need not be Indigenous to teach Indigenous topics. The belief that a person of European or Asian ancestry cannot teach Indigenous content relies on a modern-versus-traditional or us-versus-them dichotomy created by the schemas of a racialized society. This is where a settler Canadian who has not yet questioned the settler trope of the racialized other can only teach from a position lacking in understanding of historical intercultural relations. For Indigenous students this cultural blindness may act as a barrier to success because it requires them to acculturate into a dominant schema that sees them as a primitive “other.” In contrast to the perfect stranger, language teachers moving to a foreign country are typically offered a cultural orientation that allows them to operate in the foreign cultural context. An orientation to Indigenous culture in post-secondary institutions serving Indigenous students may be helpful, but the perfect stranger position predicts that Canadians of European ancestry may see no need to adapt, placing the onus on Indigenous students to acculturate or assimilate (Higgins et al., 2013). This is analogous to individual men not changing their sexist attitude and behaviour until a wider social change is evident, and vice versa.

Often working in the context of training language teachers for a foreign assignment, Bennett (2013) suggests that people can develop intercultural communication skills and an increasingly complex worldviews along a continuum from a state of denial of cultural differences to a state of integration. People raised within a specific cultural context may not
have experienced intercultural difference and could expect others to operate with the same attitudes, behaviours, and values. At the other end of the continuum, he describes integration as the ability of highly intercultural individuals to shift to a cultural framework appropriate to a specific cultural context. This involves affective, cognitive, and behavioural changes (Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004). Stages in the development of intercultural complexity include defensiveness, minimization, acceptance, and adaptation (Table 1). A person becoming more aware of other cultures would learn how people from other cultures operate from different worldviews and, by developing skillful use of this knowledge, can operate more easily in other cultures.

Table 1

*Stages of Intercultural Experience (Bennett, 2013)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant Experience of Cultural Difference</th>
<th>Organizational Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aggregate of Individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Systemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>Unaware of own culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lumps cultures into categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not interested in culture concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ignorant of cultural issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited valuation of diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>Polarizes discussions of difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low expectations of culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overconfident and arrogant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoids cultural difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimization</td>
<td>Sees equal opportunity and rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belief in melting pot into equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pressure for conformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colour-blind and tolerant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Curious about cultural differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contrasts with own culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Often overly tolerant attitudes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adaptation</th>
<th>Sees cultural perspectives</th>
<th>Respect for diversity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeks out different cultures</td>
<td>Training for intercultural skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behaves within cultural contexts</td>
<td>Cultural difference used as resource</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integration</th>
<th>Positive to intercultural activities</th>
<th>Sees cultural context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intercultural ethics and mediation</td>
<td>Little emphasis on ethnic identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sees complexity of cultures</td>
<td>Virtual third cultures created</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Creating new intercultural skills in the context of contentious social, political, and economic issues can demand significant personal change. Ron and Maoz (2013) interviewed Jewish facilitators of Jewish-Palestinian dialogue groups. Their research discovered themes of conflicted identity and alienation from former beliefs, but also a new sense of moral involvement. Jewish facilitators faced changes to their identity, beliefs, and morals through the intercultural exchange. In another example, a study of intergroup contact and attitudes in South Africa (Durrheim & Dixon, 2010) found that post-apartheid blacks were still socially isolated and people of European ancestry largely supported racial integration in principle but were opposed to it personally. Rosenthal and Levy (2010) found that multiculturalism promoted respect for diversity, but not willingness to have personal contact, among students of different races. Crippen and Brew (2013) found that intercultural parents negotiate cultural
difference in unique ways. Possible strategies to bridge communication between two people from different cultures can include each bending a little, one experimenting with the other’s cultural norms, creating a cultural amalgamation, or both parties becoming bicultural.

**Cultural coordination.** A model of the acculturation that takes place when two cultures meet (Figure 1) proposes that individuals undergo behavioural shifts and acculturative stress as a step toward psychological and sociocultural adaptation (Sam & Berry, 2010). Organizations experiencing cultural change could acknowledge the experience of behavioural shifts or acculturative stress either at the individual or group level. When Indigenous students enter a post-secondary institution, both they and the individuals in the institution could undergo acculturative stress and behavioural shifts requiring psychological and sociocultural adaptation.

![Figure 1. From "Acculturation: When Individuals and Groups of Different Cultural Backgrounds Meet," by D. L. Sam and J. W. Berry, 2010, Perspectives on Psychological Science, Volume 5, p. 474. Copyright 2010 by the Association for Psychological Science. Reprinted with permission.](image)
Intercultural communication is difficult because cultural knowledge is often unconscious and taken for granted, and when people from two cultures interact they can experience violations of a culture-based rule (Debebe, 2008). To cultivate positive working relationships, members of different cultural groups require modification of communicative behaviour. When a member of a politically stronger group violates a power-based rule, a member of a politically weaker group could perceive a negative judgement. A study of intercultural communication between Indigenous and non-Indigenous business teams (Debebe, 2008) found culture-based rules were connected to selecting neutral topics and not criticizing. Power-based rules related to assumptions, prior knowledge, granting airtime, confirming agreement, and showing initiative. Power-based rules involve the non-imposition of outside knowledge and power. Cross-cultural coordination results from the joint learning produced by the interaction of members of these cultural groups (Figure 2).

Building an organizational culture that supports openness and monitors and addresses errors can reduce defensive routines in intercultural communication (Debebe, 2010). At the individual level defensive routines can include actions such as ascribing negative motives to an “other,” asserting control through expertise, or resignation in the face of challenge. Defensiveness at an interpersonal level may include denial of information, avoidance, or superficiality. Organizations undertake a defensive position if they fail to take corrective action regarding intercultural difference. Behaviours for countering defensive reasoning can be developed at individual, interpersonal, organizational, and inter-organizational levels (Figure 3). Practices that foster civic virtue reverse defensive dynamics, leading to resolution of issues at each level. Habits and attitudes that promote positive social outcomes, such as resolving issues, verbal support, recognizing contributions, and restating rationale for collaboration, foster civic virtue (Debebe, 2010).

**Mesosystem: Social Relations in Student Services**

In colleges and universities students interact with support staff, albeit generally to a lesser intensity than they work with instructors. Various other staff provide support and service to instructors and can influence organizational culture. Some concepts of social relations in these settings that may influence student success are general knowledge of cultures and knowledge of historical patterns of cultural interaction.
Indigenous worldviews. The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (2009) states that education that does not recognize Indigenous worldviews limits Indigenous peoples participation in the dominant national society and can lead to loss of identity and connection to community for Indigenous peoples. The UN working paper on Indigenous education further notes that “Indigenous students frequently find that the education they are offered by the state promotes individualism and a competitive atmosphere, rather than communal ways of life and cooperation” (Champagne, 2009, p. 143). Mafela (2014) recommends that Indigenous education be restructured to privilege Indigenous traditions and
cultural ways of knowing so Indigenous people retain control over their own lives, resources, and destinies.

Indigenous students may have poorer educational success through their experiences of cultural difference in the educational setting, the added stress of acculturation to a new culture, the disempowerment of assimilating into a hegemonic cultural institution, and emotional incompatibility with classmates and instructors (Champagne, 2009). Grugel (2012), for example, describes Pueblo values in the American Southwest as very collectivist, requiring individuals to conform behaviourally and to subordinate interests to the group. This includes limits to personal ambition and individual opinion, and an emphasis on being self-effacing and humble to avoid conflict. Pueblo culture reinforces sharing and considers copious personal possessions as suspect. Not adhering to behavioural standards produces social censure. This is an example where Indigenous values can have enormous impact on post-secondary success.

Like other philosophies, Indigenous cosmologies include distinct epistemologies, aesthetics, ethics, logic, and metaphysics. Use of the academic term *episteme* has been suggested, as it is broad enough to include Indigenous worldviews (Kuokkanen, 2007). Henderson (in Battiste, 2000, p.252) describes an Indigenous worldviews as based on ecology, using human kinship as an analogy of natural relationships and demanding personal choice and integrity. Indigenous thought reveres and reaffirms life through prayer, dance, ceremony, and ritual, respecting intuitive and transcendental experiences that impact daily life. In higher education, educational philosophy and pedagogy are particularly important in the transmission of knowledge, and epistemology is critical to the discovery of new knowledge. Educators are now integrating Indigenous cultural worldviews into coherent theoretical and practical
frameworks for education. These frameworks are moving away from mainstream Western education philosophies and relying specifically on Indigenous metaphors of human development and learning as their foundations (MacFarlane, Glynn, Grace, Penetito, & Bateman, 2008).

In a study of social relations at a New Zealand university from the perspective of Indigenous employees, Pio, Tipuna, Rasheed, and Parker (2014) determined that these employees struggled to operate as professionals within their own cultural worldviews when surrounded by others who saw their own worldviews as normal and correct, rather than as one of several. All the Indigenous respondents in the New Zealand study reported a need for post-secondary institutions to move more rapidly to create a practice of centring Indigenous worldviews. They suggested that dialogue with and education of settler professionals can accomplish this. They recommended training on concepts such as the Treaty of Waitangi, a founding document of the nation. Pio et al. (2014) propose that, despite positive university structures and practices, the institutional culture will remain complacent unless Indigenous worldviews become part of the culture of the organization. Despite the current indigenization efforts in BC, under this schema (Figure 4) the provincial institutions of higher learning will remain complacent rather than transformational unless Indigenous worldviews become a normal part of social relations. This viewpoint predicts that Indigenous students will have greater success if professors and student services staff see Indigenous worldviews as normal and one of several cultural worldviews.
Supporting this framework is the work of Denis (2015), who found that group prejudice is partly due to social avoidance of discussing political issues. A political avoidance norm ensured that, despite contact between Indigenous and settler residents in a Canadian town, social group members rarely discussed the issues impacting their social relations. Indigenous and settler residents of this town held significantly different viewpoints on such issues as the causes of the Indigenous–settler income gap, producing what Denis termed *laissez-faire racism*. The residents of the town also maintained group prejudice through processes labeled *subtyping* and *homophily*. Subtyping is a logical fallacy in which townsfolk judge individuals who violate common stereotypes as exceptions that prove the rule, rather than proving the stereotype is
incorrect. Ideology-based homophily is a process in which people tend to befriend others with similar racial ideologies despite their own racial identity.

Reconciliation narrative. Paradies, Franklin, and Kowal (2013) propose educating white professionals who are preparing to work in Indigenous communities on the concepts of social construction, racialization, and identity formation as a way of preventing unconscious racism. They believe that superficial methods of understanding create essentialism, where some people may come to believe that all members of a marginalized cultural group are good while all members of a dominant group are bad. The subtler concept of racialization examines the social construction of social systems in which people divide into races with unequal power distribution. This concept puts personal actions in a context of broad social patterns of power and privilege. Paradies and Cunningham (2008) discuss the contexts for race consciousness and ethnoracial identity. Paradies, Franklin, and Kowal (2013) propose methods to overcome racism in intercultural social relations. They suggest that members of the dominant race in settler societies learn to manage their own racialized thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. White racial attitudes often require white people to accept their own racialized identity to overcome racism. Individuals living within both Indigenous cultures and dominant cultures must engage with change to construct new systems of equity and equality within organizations.

McLean (2013) records that without a power-informed analysis of social relations, secondary students describe Canada as a post-racial society made up of caring, tolerant people with a global reputation for peacekeeping. This characterization of Canada dismisses the continuing racialized nature of legislation such as the Indian Act of 1876, which is quite the opposite of a post-racial reality. Analysis of the inclusion of Indigenous people in academia (de
Leeuw, Greenwood, & Lindsay, 2013) hypothesizes that decolonized social relations, and therefore most likely Indigenous student success, requires that employees from a settler background become more aware of their identity as settlers. A settler identity contrasts with a generic national identity, which lacks power-informed analysis of colonization. Settler identity also clearly contrasts with its binary opposite—Indigenous identity. Working with 70 Indigenous and settler educators and activists, Stirling (2015) identified four areas of settler decolonization: Indigenous perspectives on settler participation in decolonization; Indigenous concerns about settler participation in decolonization; forms of settler engagement in decolonization; and the issues settlers experience as they engage in decolonization. Indigenous participants wanted settlers to support the decolonization activities of Indigenous peoples, take responsibility for colonial systems, address the legacy of colonialism, and learn about Indigenous cultures and languages. In this research, Indigenous peoples were concerned about settler participation in decolonization if they appropriated or distorted Indigenous cultures and languages as they worked to change colonial systems. Forms of settler engagement with decolonization included learning Indigenous languages and cultures. The issues experienced by settlers when engaged in decolonization were in defining settler identities as alternatives to those they had grown up with, such as the caring, tolerant, peaceful Canadian described by McLean's (2013) respondents.

The concept of reconciliation is also a contested issue in the decolonization process (Freeman, 2014). Although the TRC focused specifically on the issue of IRS, it provided a starting point for describing the work required to achieve a change in social relations implied by the concept of reconciliation. The commission said:
Reconciliation must support Aboriginal peoples as they heal from the destructive legacies of colonization that have wreaked such havoc in their lives. But it must do even more. Reconciliation must inspire Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to transform Canadian society so that our children and grandchildren can live together in dignity, peace, and prosperity on these lands we now share. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Canada, 2015, p. 114)

Regarding social relations between Indigenous and other Canadians, the TRC recommended that settlers learn about Indigenous culture and the history of treaties and Indigenous rights. The TRC noted:

All Canadians, as treaty peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships. Supporting Aboriginal peoples’ cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the reconciliation process are essential. Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, treaties, and Aboriginal rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian society. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Canada, 2015, p.125)

A fundamental aspect of Indigenous identity and history is the related concept of Indigenous sovereignty, the belief of a people in their nation and its right to govern and maintain territorial integrity. A recent study found that most white Australian students do not have the ability to describe their relationship to Indigenous sovereignty, leading to negative attitudes toward Indigenous people (Koerner, 2015). There has been a great deal of psychology
scholarship on various approaches to changing intergroup attitudes. Vorauer and Sasaki (2014), for example, found that in intergroup interaction, students do not develop positive outgroup attitudes by imagining themselves in the place of the other group, but by imagining the other in their place. A member of a social group may change their attitude with feelings of benevolence toward members of another group rather than by feelings of empathy. Hammack and Pilecki (2015) conducted dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian youth. They found that impetus for change did not develop when the youth focused on their commonalities but only when they focused on dominance and confrontation. This again may point to psychological mechanisms underlying social relations between groups. In another example, more than 1,400 students participated in 26 dialogue courses on race and gender in U.S. universities with diverse student populations (Gurin, Zuñiga, Nagda, & Muse, 2013). On average they developed insight on worldviews, structural inequalities, intergroup empathy, and collaborative action. Interestingly, there was an initial increase in negative emotion, which was no longer present a year after the course. The emotional actors in intergroup social relations are an emerging area of study that may eventually be included in a cohesive understanding of changing social relations.

Researchers have empirically measured the cultural isolation between Indigenous and other students in Canada. A study of the racial attitudes of Canadian Indigenous students and college students of European ancestry (Corenblum & Stephan, 2001) found that students with European ancestry reported less status difference between the two groups than did the Indigenous students. They also held more positive attitudes toward Indigenous people than Indigenous students did toward them. According to the study, however, many students of European ancestry did not understand Indigenous political actions or demands, believed that
too much money was being spent on meeting the educational needs of Indigenous students, felt that Indigenous rights should not be put ahead of those of European descendants, and believed that Indigenous people should not impose their beliefs on people of European ancestry. This is consistent with a settler schema that does not understand or acknowledge historical and systemic inequities as part of intercultural social relations. From the dominant cultural perspective, Indigenous peoples are equal and good but misguided. From a marginalized Indigenous cultural perspective, settlers are more powerful, negative, and ignorant. Settler and Indigenous peoples act out these positions set up in cultural isolation in complex social and organizational dynamics.

**Macrosystem: Social Relations in Administration**

Most administrative staff have limited direct interaction with students, but they can set a general tone for interpersonal social relations. This can be through organizational culture and policy direction.

**Indigenization policies.** FitzMaurice (2011) points out that academic institutions have been a colonizing as well as a decolonizing force with respect to Indigenous peoples. He states that post-secondary indigenization that is not led by cultural communities requires processes for accountability to external communities of knowledge while sharing knowledge with other disciplines in the academy. Similarly, Pérez-Aguilera and Figueroa-Helland (2011) argue against “bland multiculturalisms” (p. 269) in the Mexican Indigenous post-secondary system. They believe the Indigenous universities “don’t sufficiently challenge age-old racial, educational, and epistemic hierarchies” and argue for the need to further examine power relations. Hill (2012) points out that the process of indigenization of the academy may deflect from the goal of
decolonization. The process of decolonization may be distinct from, and prerequisite to, a process of indigenization. An analogy in feminist thought is a need to shed patriarchal thinking in order to build truly equitable ways of being. Many Indigenous scholars see indigenization primarily as achievable through language and culture revitalization (Murray Orr, Munroe, Toney, Borden, & Meader, 2013) rather than through the indigenization of fundamentally Eurocentric institutions. This could include a rethinking of the European institutions of education and an envisioning of institutions based on Indigenous cultures.

Berman and Paradies (2010) contend that multiculturalism alone is not effective without explicitly anti-racist practices. Systemic change for equitable social, political, and economic participation requires policies and practices that specifically address the racism of the dominant race. Kowal (2008) hypothesizes an inevitable conflict between the remedialism and orientalism of postcolonial logic. Remedialism is the belief that increased intervention can close the gap between Indigenous and average Australian social development indicators. Orientalism is the defining of a group as “other” that changes the original concept of “oneness.” Kowal says the gap will not close with the interventions of white professionals, as they will not eliminate the otherness that they see as a positive cultural attribute.

Organizational climate. Persistent lower participation rates of Indigenous learners in education have been attributed to incompatibility at an organizational culture level (Burbank, 2006; Godlewska, Moore, & Bednasek, 2010; Tonkinson & Tonkinson, 2010) or incompatible epistemology (Battiste & Henderson, 2009; Sefa Dei, 2011). Burbank (2005) describes a demotivating cognitive–cultural dissonance that arises for Indigenous people when engaging with Western institutions. She questions the extent to which Western institutions are bad not
only for Indigenous peoples but for settlers as well. Where there is an emotional incompatibility between the Indigenous cultural self and a Western structuring of social relations, Indigenous people may not see the point of being within such alienating environments (Tonkinson & Tonkinson, 2010). Similarly, Battiste and Henderson (2009, p. 6) describe Indigenous post-secondary students as experiencing “condescending Eurocentric educational systems.”

Another area of study in intergroup social relations is in organizational dynamics. A meta-analysis of Indigenous health interventions (Clifford, McCalman, Bainbridge, & Tsey, 2015) concluded that the education of professionals does not change their behaviour; to change patient health outcomes requires structural organizational changes. These include cultural competency policies, protocols, and related key performance indicators. Truong, Paradies, and Priest's (2014) meta-analysis revealed similar findings not specific to Indigenous cultural competence. They suggested that effective behavioural change must go beyond cultural competency to discuss political issues and include reflexivity. Hurtado, Alvarado, and Guillermo-Wann (2015) found that the racial salience among students in diverse college environments impacts campus climate. They found that college employees' awareness of racial and ethnic identity issues is required to understand their role in improving campus climate and creating inclusive learning environments. Racial salience is a measure of identity that asks how often a person thinks about their ethnicity. Indigenous, Arab, Asian, black, and Latina/o students all thought of their ethnic identity more than twice as often as students of European heritage, and more than students of mixed ethnicity. Less than 20 percent of students of European heritage think about their ethnicity often, even though they are usually an ethnic minority on campus. These studies show that awareness of racial and ethnic identity may be
required to build students’ skills and knowledge for a diverse workplace and society. This social psychology evidence appears to indicate that human nature mediated by emotional reactions plays a large role in intergroup dynamics in contemporary society.

Bond and Haynes (2014) reviewed evaluative and social bias in the workplace as well as organizational values and practices that support diversity. They reported on four common practices in support of organizational diversity: 1) training programs; 2) discrimination policies; 3) hiring and promotion procedures; and 4) compliance strategies. They recommended that current policy practices around sexual harassment be used to develop new polices to help monitor organizational climates that are experienced as hostile by members of diverse cultural groups. Indigenous post-secondary students who move to cities from rural tribal communities report similar hostility (Flynn, Olson, & Yellig, 2014). Where hostile organizational climates are experienced, only systemic patterns of unequal treatment or inappropriate attitudes can reasonably be addressed, not every occasional incident (Bond & Haynes, 2014). This change approach to social relations aligns with the systemic approach desired by the Ministry of Advanced Education but stands in contrast to actual changes in cultural artifacts such as physical space, services, and programs (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education Innovation and Technology, 2012).

A number of suggestions for improving intercultural social relations between Indigenous and settler peoples in the institutions of advanced settler societies have been proposed based on specific contexts (Table 2). Cultural diversity in the workplace can be measured (Hofhuis et al., 2015), but a general celebration of diversity is less effective than more focused outreach to and welcoming of underrepresented minorities (Ho & Unzueta, 2015). An organization can
prevent the political avoidance shown by Denis (2015) to maintain intergroup bias by welcoming less powerful groups and thus directly addressing the power imbalance. Chen and Hamilton (2015) have shown that white respondents perceive diversity primarily in terms of numeric representation and secondarily in terms of social acceptance, whereas racial minority perceivers define diversity primarily in terms of social acceptance and secondarily in terms of representation. Since humans have a keen awareness of social acceptance and in-group and out-group belonging, it may be critical to changing social relations for members of settler groups to become more visible and to be open to new ways of relating to the Indigenous other (de Leeuw et al., 2013). Racial diversity in post-secondary institutions has been described as requiring organizational practices and policies that endorse homogenous social realities, such as rational, objective, linear thinking that emphasizes cognitive processes over affective processes as a systemic hostility created by hegemonic cultural groups (Gusa, 2010). White blindness describes policies and practices in which minority races are noticed but white racial behaviour is not considered or questioned (Gusa, 2010). White, black, and Indigenous are politically and socially constructed categories, and failure by settlers of European heritage to acknowledge whiteness helps to perpetuate unconscious systemic hostility. White identity and race relations courses would encourage white employees to examine and develop their own settler identities, recognize the socially constructed schema of white privilege, and understand whiteness in relations to African, Asian, Pacific island, and Indigenous American cultures (Gusa, 2010).
Table 2

*Suggested Actions for Changing Indigenous–Settler Social Relations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand and counteract the political avoidance norm.</td>
<td>Denis, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normalize Indigenous worldviews.</td>
<td>Pio et al., 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support decolonization activities by Indigenous peoples.</td>
<td>Stirling, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take responsibility for colonial systems, structures, and privileges.</td>
<td>Stirling, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address the legacy of colonialism and colonial injustice.</td>
<td>Stirling, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn about Indigenous cultures and languages.</td>
<td>Stirling, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a reconciliation narrative beyond multiculturalism.</td>
<td>Larkin, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make settler identity more visible.</td>
<td>de Leeuw, Greenwood, &amp; Lindsay, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagine Indigenous peoples in your place.</td>
<td>Vorauer &amp; Sasaki, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise awareness of the systemic, psychological, and sociological aspects of racial identity.</td>
<td>Hurtado, Alvarado, &amp; Guillermo-Wann, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend a dialogue course on worldviews, structural inequalities, intergroup empathy, and collaborative action.</td>
<td>Gurin, Zupñiga, Nagda, &amp; Muse, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a cultural competency policy, protocols, and key performance indicators.</td>
<td>Clifford, McCalman, Bainbridge, &amp; Tsey, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome underrepresented minorities.</td>
<td>Ho &amp; Unzueta, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize the social acceptance of minorities over mere attendance.</td>
<td>Chen &amp; Hamilton, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define what it means to be a settler, and describe positive settler identities.</td>
<td>de Leeuw et al., 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice reflexivity on Indigenous relations.</td>
<td>Truong, Paradies, &amp; Priest, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host dialogue on dominance and confrontation.</td>
<td>Hammack &amp; Pilecki, 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

In this chapter I explored published models of social relations and cultural change that are relevant to the educational gap between Indigenous and other Canadians. A rich description of the divide in worldviews between Indigenous and other Canadians is interrelated with a marked power imbalance. Social actors at many levels of society are addressing racialized historical relations and continuing marginalization of Indigenous peoples. People with intercultural skills recognize and adapt to multicultural social environments, and intercultural communication is a large area for organizational interventions in an increasingly complex world. A wide range of educational theories and practices for Indigenous education increasingly recognize the need to integrate multiple worldviews, including Indigenous worldviews. Social psychology approaches inform these areas of investigation, especially through understanding the emotional underpinnings of what can often appear as irrational or power-based social behaviour. The reconciliation area of scholarship draws on all of these themes and attempts to understand global social changes at the levels of individuals, small groups, and entire nations.
A social ecological systems framework will discern patterns within the complex interacting forces involved in the indigenization of post-secondary education. The process of reconciliation between Indigenous and hegemonic populations increasingly leads post-colonial global discourse. Intercultural relations in organizations like institutions of higher education must change, in the same way that gender relations have dramatically changed in advanced industrialized societies, in response to external policies of indigenization but also to a social desire for equity and as a resolution to colonial legacies. Processes leading to changing social relations in institutions of higher learning, including racism and sexism, are extremely topical and stubbornly persistent.

In the following chapters, I explore employee perceptions of changes emerging within the post-secondary Indigenous education policy context of BC. My research examines how intercultural communication could develop within a complex multicultural context that includes Indigenous worldviews in post-secondary institutions. I also examine whether discussions on reconciliation are part of efforts to indigenize post-secondary education. Given the amount of government funds dedicated to Indigenous education, organizational responses to the racialized history of Canada could reasonably be expected to develop within the context of improving the academic success of Indigenous students. In addition to one-off and tentative indigenization activities, systemic approaches such as organizational policies, the measurement of indigenization, and changing intercultural social relations could also develop as systemic responses that support the academic success of Indigenous students within the provincial government’s stated timeline.
Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter I detail the methodology and research design of this project. I discuss the case study methodology used and the sample selection, as well as data collection, data analysis methods, and research ethics processes. Studies in social relations include quantitative approaches such as global values surveys (Bangwayo-Skeete & Rahim, 2011; Boer & Fischer, 2013; Fischer, 2009; Hofstede, 2001) and cultural or social psychology approaches (Courtois et al., 2014; Muthukrishna & Schaller, n.d.). Data in intercultural relations have typically been quantitative, using various measures and scales such as intercultural sensitivity (Buchtel, 2014; Jain, 2013). Large samples of undergraduate students or mass samples by telephone of adults are often used (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010). A qualitative case study approach, however, can provide an understanding of the perceptions of intercultural issues and change in higher education (Thomas & Sanderson, 2013; Jiang & Carpenter, 2014).

I used the social ecological systems framework as a theoretical approach to support the case study methodology and answer the research question: What perceived changes to intercultural social relations are emerging within a Canadian public post-secondary institution that is in the process of implementing the BC government’s indigenization policy? The case study provided practical insights into the perceived changes to social relations in one post-secondary institute in BC with a specific focus on mechanisms of change in a multidimensional social context. Collecting a thick description of social relations at one institution offered an opportunity to probe the perceived changes in social relations. It illuminated a social experience of education as offered to Indigenous students in alignment with the provincial policy on systemic indigenization of higher education to improve Indigenous student success.
Case Study Methodology

A case study is highly suitable to this area of investigation because the aim is to examine real-life phenomena within a specific context and with multiple variables. Case study accomplishes this through a focus on rich description, good access to personal meaning, and access to the effects of individual power differentials (Platt, 2007). Case study has also been valuable for applied and transdisciplinary studies, as in the case of experimental treatments and pilot studies (Brown, Harris, & Russell, 2010). It is also well suited to the practical evaluation of public policy and other forms of practitioner research (Haire-Joshu & McBride, 2013). Although case study tends to be more exploratory or descriptive than explanatory, it is a suitable qualitative method to determine causes and test theories. Strongly documented patterns of effects allow for a logical determination of cause in the particular case studied, as well as the postulation of cause to a wider context. In case study, the multiple variables impacting a phenomenon compare with theoretical frameworks through triangulation. The intention is to determine if the case is a manifestation of a generalized theory through logical relationships. Case selection plays a central role in producing insight, such as through typical or atypical cases that confirm a generalized pattern (Platt, 2007).

I examined the institutional interventions in intercultural social relations that may impact Indigenous student success in higher education. I focused on the microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem levels in relationship to Indigenous students. Evidence of perceived change in the social relations in a post-secondary institute would provide support for the current public policy on systemic change for Indigenous student success. A lack of evidence
for changing social relations may provide support for adjustments in the policy and its implementation.

**Sample Selection**

I selected the case institution after comparing the number of core funded seats at each of the eleven institutions (six universities, three colleges, and two institutes) in the southwestern BC mainland. I chose the public institution with the number of government funded seats closest to the mean number of seats in all programs, as determined from the institutional funding letters posted to the BC Ministry of Advanced Education website (http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/budget/welcome.htm). The institution provided a letter granting my request for research access to the university community. The Office of the President sent an email to all employees informing them of the purpose of the research and provided a letter for me to use to inform employees of my authorization. In addition, I sent emails to staff from most departments inviting them to participate in the research. I directed somewhat greater effort to contacting employees in departments in which Indigenous students have had statistically higher program enrollment rates. These subject areas included developmental education, health, trades, and departments with established community engagement with Indigenous communities, including Aboriginal Services and a research institute on sustainable agriculture. From June to September 2015 I conducted interviews with eight instructors, seven support staff, and six administrators.

Interviews took place at all four campuses of the university (Surrey Campus, 13; Langley, 4; and 1 each in Richmond and Cloverdale). One interview took place off campus, and one interview was by telephone. The respondents’ experience of working with Indigenous students
varied widely from none to extensive contact. Some informants had connections to Indigenous communities through family or personal experience; one respondent was an Indigenous person, and two others identified as having some Indigenous heritage. I interviewed respondents with cultural origins from Asia, Europe, and Oceania. A few respondents were not born in Canada. Overall, 67 percent of respondents were female, with nearly equal samples of male and female employees in the instruction and administration groups, and 87 percent female respondents in the support services category. In terms of perceived ethnicity and gender, the respondents offered a reasonably representative sample. A potential and important sampling bias could be expected if respondents were more likely to respond to a research participation invitation if their attitude toward or connection with Indigenous people was stronger or more positive. Some respondents had these connections; others participated due to unrelated factors such as an affinity with the researcher’s university or an interest in a position vacancy in Indigenous education. Two respondents were referred through a supervisor, and one volunteered during a departmental meeting I attended to outline the research topic.

Data Collection Methods

I conducted interviews in three categories of the social ecological systems framework to help determine possible social change mechanisms at each level of the case study institution. I hypothesized that the social relations between instructors and Indigenous students may follow patterns reported for the coordination of intercultural communication. I also hypothesized that the social relations of both students and instructors with the staff of institutional support departments may follow patterns described by scholarship in organizational diversity and
organizational narrative. The organizational administrators, who formed the macrosystem, may have established a framework for organizational social relations through priorities, policies, and procedures affecting workplace climate. These proposed mechanisms for organizational social relations (Table 3) formed the bases my interview questions.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Ecological System</th>
<th>Microsystem</th>
<th>Mesosystem</th>
<th>Macrosystem</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural Social Relations Mechanisms</td>
<td>Interculturalism</td>
<td>Indigenous Worldviews</td>
<td>Indigenization Policies</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Cultural Coordination</td>
<td>Reconciliation Narrative</td>
<td>Organizational Climate</td>
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I broke down the research topic, on perceived changes to intercultural social relations emerging within a Canadian public post-secondary institution, into questions related to the projected mechanisms of change. In my interviews with instructors and professors, I explored questions stemming from theories of interculturalism, cultural coordination, and civility. Support staff answered questions about Indigenous education rights, accommodations for students from different cultural backgrounds, intercultural skills, and organizational narratives
related to reconciliation. I asked university administrators questions specific to accountabilities, policies, and workplace culture.

Respondents received an interview guide and an information sheet on the ethics procedures outlining the limits and conditions on their participation. I conducted semi-structured interviews in person with all respondents who could make themselves available. The respondents had the opportunity to place themselves in one of three employee groups based on their relationship to students: (1) roles with close or repeated social relations with students (microsystem); (2) roles with indirect or occasional social relations with students (mesosystem); and (3) roles with little direct student contact but influencing the organizational culture and educational experience of students (macrosystem). In total, I conducted interviews with nine employees with close social relations with students (all instructors), seven employees with indirect social relations with students, and five employees with little student contact. These represented the institution’s microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem, respectively.

Instructors, representing the microsystem, answered 23 questions directed at discovering evidence of emerging social relations related to cross-cultural coordination and the development of civility or intercultural skills (Appendix B). Respondents in the mesosystem category, which included various support staff, answered eleven questions on Indigenous education rights and ways that the institution provides education in relation to cultural difference. The macrosystem respondents were deans, department heads, and associate vice-presidents, and they answered a twelve questions about the institutional approach to indigenization and the organizational culture.

Data Analysis Methods
I recorded all interviews and had them transcribed verbatim. Content analysis consisted of consolidation, summarization, and generalization of responses to discern patterns and themes that would provide inductive evidence of the intercultural social relations change mechanisms being explored (Table 3). The quality of each transcription was verified by comparison to written notes collected at the time of each interview. I used the four principles of the social ecological systems framework (Bond & Haynes, 2014) for further determination of themes: (1) principle of multiple nested levels of context; (2) principle of interdependence of system components; (3) principle of phenomenology-based impact; and (4) principle of person-environment adaptation. Data analysis included coding and thematic characterization using induction and abduction (Meyer & Ward, 2014). I conducted content analyses of interview and focus group transcripts with a focus on subjective views of social relations changes, categorization of meaning into patterns, and coding to identify issues, themes, and patterns from the notes (Jiang & Carpenter, 2014).

I was able to draw themes largely by summarizing the responses from all participants for each question asked. For example, when six administrators were asked what had changed at the institution as a result of indigenization efforts, nine unique factors were listed (internal awareness, Aboriginal Gathering Place, Elder in Residence, Indigenous Studies minor degree proposal, outreach to school district, Indigenous admission category, stronger community relations, Aboriginal Advisory Committee, and event listings). I then summarized these responses as, “Administrators believe that changes as a result of indigenization efforts include community engagement and specific initiatives in Indigenous programs and services.” I then examined my summaries of data content from each question for developing themes that
matched the data within each social ecological level. For example, upon examination of the summaries of the six questions asked of the macrosystem participants in relation to institutional policies and organizational climate, themes emerged as aligning or contrasting with the social change mechanisms under exploration.

**Ethical Considerations**

My university approved the use of human research subjects through the ethical review process. The case institution granted me research access to employees through discussion with the Office of the President, Provost, and Office of Research and Scholarship. I sent each participant the Participant Consent Information, along with the interview guide, approximately a week prior to the interview. No issues of ethical consideration arose from participants of the institution during or after data collection. Informants spoke forthrightly, as determined by the occasional admission of small personal transgressions during theoretical probing on a question relating to instructors violating institutional rules for behaviour.

**Efficacy of the Research Methods**

The research proceeded as planned with few exceptions. I did not anticipate difficulty in getting employees to participate, although I learned that it is generally difficult for outsiders to access organizational staff except through targeted email. Some participants did not understand issues such as worldviews, civility, and social relations, and I occasionally further explained these during the interview process. In general, the exploration of known mechanisms of social relations change was not very productive in determining what was taking place in social relations. This exploration did provide a context for interviews in which information on the broader state of intercultural social relations could be determined. I considered the option of
obtaining information from more perspectives using a survey instrument, but this would likely have not provided more insight to social relations. It is quite likely that the employees provided a good range of the actual intercultural social relations at the institution. As the mechanism of social relations change tested by the interview questions may not reflect the actual process of social change, the predictive use of the results may be limited.

**Perceived Limitations**

A limitation in the research is the low population of Indigenous students at the sample institution—below 2 percent of the student population in the academic year ending in spring 2014 (D. Hull, personal communication, November 20, 2015). In that year there were 4000 Indigenous post-secondary students who self-identified as Indigenous in southeastern BC, of which about 300 attended the case institution. Other similar post-secondary institutions in the region reported up to 3 percent Indigenous students, while provincial institutions and research universities had up to 5 percent of their student population made up of Indigenous students. The lack of experience with Indigenous students raised by many instructors and other staff is likely due to the low proportion of students, representing student registrations equivalent to 318 full-time students in a standard academic year. While some participants had personal connections with, experience with, and openness toward Indigenous peoples or communities, many other participants reported little experience with Indigenous people and therefore may not have recognized or related with Indigenous students. The percentage of Indigenous peoples in the municipalities served by the institution is slightly higher than the student population at 2.5 percent (Statistics Canada, 2011). Although the research was sponsored by the institution, the informant sampling by request for voluntary participation could have introduced significant
sampling bias toward people with sympathetic attitudes toward Indigenous peoples, or a
greater understanding of diversity issues, and away from people with antipathy to Indigenous peoples or issues.

Summary

In a case study of a medium-size post-secondary educational institution in the urban centre of southwestern BC, interviews probed theoretical approaches to social change that would signal the significant increases in Indigenous student success required for improved social equity. The interview guides (Appendix B) for each level of the organizational ecosystem included questions targeted at the first research area, on mechanisms of change in social relations, and the second research area, on interventions that facilitate success for Indigenous students. Limitations in the research design data collection and analysis included a low Indigenous student population and possible sampling bias toward institutional employees with links to Indigenous communities.

In the next three chapters, I examine and analyze my research data in detail. In Chapter 4, I describe the case institution and provide the results of my data analysis on indigenization there. I used a social ecological systems approach divided into three sub-sections: the microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem. Chapter 5 draws on the data examined in Chapter 4 and links these with the broader literature and theory on indigenization (Chapter 2) to analyze the social ecological system that impacts Indigenous student success at the case institution. The conclusions in Chapter 6 identify gaps in knowledge and provide recommendations for further research, policy directions, and practical applications of knowledge.
Chapter 4: Research Data

In this chapter I describe the case institution and provide the results of my data analysis on indigenization in the case institution. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) social ecological systems approach provides a framework for exploring the complex issues of changing social relations at microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem, and exosystem levels. In this framework, change at any one level creates reverberations at the other levels. The change in provincial policy for Indigenous student success, an exosystem change, will produce changes at the microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem levels. Microsystems are social relations that directly impact individuals, in this case the instructors who impact students. The mesosystem involves the social relations that impact the microsystems, in this case support staff who impact both students and instructors. The macrosystem involves the social relations that impact the organization through policy and climate, represented in this study by the administrators of the institution.

Indigenization is most often seen as a change in physical culture rather than in the subtler aspects of social relations. Employees at a university that is undertaking a conscious process of indigenization revealed very little awareness of the intangible aspects of Indigenous cultures and little awareness of a need for personal and organizational culture change. The research question of interest here is the emerging change in social relations as a result of indigenization and how any perceived changes may impact the success of Indigenous students. Change in social relations within organizations is much easier to determine in hindsight. A good
example is the significant change in gender relations within workplaces in advanced industrial societies. An interesting area of discovery is how complex historical societal patterns, such as relations between Canadian settlers and Indigenous peoples, are acted out in a single organization. The social ecological system that surrounds Indigenous students provides a specific framework for reporting the interview data. Below I present evidence from my interviews in the three categories of ecological system that surround Indigenous students at the institution.

Four specific themes emerged from my analysis of the interview data:

1. Underdeveloped interculturalism
2. Undeveloped narratives on reconciliation
3. Lack of indigenization measures
4. An indigenization policy vacuum

Following a description of the case institution, a sample of responses on each of these four themes is presented.

**The Case Institution**

The case university is a medium-size institution established by the BC government in 1981 as a community college. In 1995 it became a degree-granting institution, and in 2008 it became a publicly designated teaching university. Faculty was therefore required to have a minimum of a master’s degree until recently, when a doctorate degree became a minimum for new hires in academic program streams. The institution continues to have programming in vocational and trades areas, and pure research is not a requirement of faculty. The population of Indigenous students was 1.8 percent of the student population in the academic year ending in spring 2014.
(D. Hull, personal communication, November 20, 2015). This is equivalent to 318 full-time students enrolled in a standard academic year. The actual headcount of Indigenous students, including part-time students and those in various vocational streams that vary from a standard academic year, was likely over 400 in spring 2014.

The university serves the five municipalities that form the southern and southeastern suburbs of Metro Vancouver: Richmond, Delta, Surrey, Langley City, and Langley District, with a population of over 880,000 (Statistics Canada, 2011). Richmond is the most diverse, with over 50 percent of households not speaking English at home and a third of households speaking a Chinese language. In Surrey, 62 percent of households speak English, and 16 percent speak Punjabi. In Delta 80 percent of households speak English, and in the Langley districts 85 percent are English-speaking households. The population of Indigenous peoples in this region is about 21,000 or about 2.5 percent of the population. Diversity of cultures is therefore an issue at the university beyond the question of service to Indigenous community members.

More than 40 percent of respondents specifically referred to the university’s special relationship with the Kwantlen First Nation due to the name of the institution. This includes having an Elder in Residence from the nation, having the nation represented at events, and the inclusion of traditional cultural elements, such as prayers, songs, and works of art, in formal ceremonies. The Kwantlen First Nation is a community centred on a village site within the Township of Langley, 55 kilometres east of Vancouver, very near to historic Fort Langley, a trading fort of the Hudson’s Bay Company from 1827 to 1886. The nation consists of over 200 individuals with more than half living outside the village (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2015). The community is part of the historic Halkomelem language group, members of
which live along the lower Fraser River and form part of the Salishan-speaking community that
surrounds the Salish Sea of BC and Washington state. The region served by the university
includes other related First Nations communities, but it was the Kwantlen people who gifted
the name to the institution when it split from Douglas College in 1981. The name is in line with
the use of other Indigenous names for community colleges, including Camosun College in
Victoria and Capilano College in North Vancouver.

Theme 1: Underdeveloped Interculturalism

The theme of low intercultural skill development arose from respondents at all levels of the
social ecological systems framework at the case institution. Lack of training and low
intercultural skill development was found to lead to unhelpful attitudes in some support staff. I
asked respondents who worked as part of the microsystem of the learning ecosystem a series
of questions on their use of cultural references with students from different cultures (see Table
3). These included questions such as: “How do you recognize the cultural references of people
with different cultures?” In response, instructors noted the high diversity of cultures
represented throughout the college. For example, one instructor said, “I try to ensure that I am
as respectful to all cultures as I can be; which is ever increasingly challenging if you’re not
familiar with cultures.”

An emergent element of this theme was that instructors did not feel they have
consistent tools to deal with cultural difference. Many instructors believe it is important to
recognize and accommodate cultural difference. Some said it is important to recognize
Eurocentric values and that some students are in a process of acculturation. In some fields, such
as liberal arts and health, respondents noted that it is important or required to teach cultural
difference. However, one instructor stated that cultural difference is not a priority for students. He shared: “Identifying which culture each person is from, is... I don't want to guess, I can't tell. And, most times that's not important to them. At least, it's not important to them to tell me! So yes, I'll recognize people are from different cultures but what cultures, I don't know.” The data indicate, however, that issues of cultural difference do arise in the classroom. One respondent shared the challenges of intercultural difference when students relate to an instructor. The instructor noted, “Sometimes [the students] don’t understand the dynamics of the classroom. In Richmond they pretend that they understand by nodding but they don’t. When I say does anyone need to ask any questions there’s silence. Do you understand? Everyone nods their head but on the exam it’s another story.”

Some programs at the case institution facilitate cross-cultural dialogue and address issues of cultural domination. And some instructors shared that they practice sensitivity, mindfulness, or respect, and that they are aware of learning preferences, barriers to participation, and a history of segregation. One respondent stated, “I just really try to be mindful and respectful of what I feel their needs are going to be.” Instructors adapt cultural references by being culturally inclusive, culturally aware, professional, and supportive. Some instructors seek out information that is relevant to Indigenous students. The data also suggest that some instructors take a multicultural or colour-blind perspective. For example, one instructor stated, “They’re Canadian; they’ve been brought up here. They have different views and different customs and different traditions but I don’t differentiate. I like to consider the classroom colour-blind in my class.” Other instructors specifically seek to provide a safe
environment for Indigenous students. However, most instructors reported that it is difficult to recognize some Indigenous students if they do not self-identify.

Using Bennett's scale of interculturalism, I mapped instructor responses in order to estimate the level of interculturality at the case institution (Table 1). These results suggest that instructors could be developing intercultural skills in response to indigenization or to better relate to international students, recent immigrants, or the children of immigrants. Two respondents, in fact, stated that they expect students to acculturate to the workplace cultures of North America. Only one respondent required students to develop general intercultural skills, and the same instructor also required students to develop specific skills for working with Indigenous clients. This instructor worked in a program that prepares students to work with Indigenous people.

Instructors were next asked about cultural rules by which Indigenous students may be operating. Instructors said Indigenous students operate with cultural rules of respect, high levels of family and community responsibility, and high respect for instructors. One respondent noted that “seemingly they're a bit more aware of the social dynamics of respect and rites of passage.” Three instructors spoke about the institutional policy of zero tolerance for disturbing the learning of others, including student use of discriminatory speech, as a way of creating classroom safety. Three instructors stated and four implied that they were not aware of Indigenous cultural rules; one was mindful of cultural difference and two regularly told students they were open to discussing any feelings of discomfort. A few instructors said Indigenous students sometimes do not mix well socially with others and tend not to keep instructor appointments or meet assignment deadlines. One instructor had given Indigenous students a
favourable judgment in the absence of full evidence (“the benefit of the doubt”). Another instructor created additional safety and security with Indigenous students. One instructor, however, was against “special” treatment for any cultural group: “We have so many cultures in the classroom. It’s become a globalized environment. The cultures have to adapt to the business environment. It’s this North American adaptation.” One instructor was aware of stereotyping Indigenous students: “Where we want maybe to pigeonhole them as very primitive and they don’t necessarily want to be.”

The instructors discussed cultural difference and cultural worldviews in the learning experiences they provide to students. Some programs teach cultural competence, cultural difference, or intercultural issues. For example, one respondent said, “It happens by facilitating the class to just talk about their own background because the information is theirs, their own unique experiences.” Some programs prepare students for vocations working with different cultural groups, including Indigenous peoples. Some instructors use activities that stress different learning preferences to support cultural and personal differences. One instructor mentioned using culturally heterogeneous small groups to increase student exposure to personal and cultural difference. Those instructors who were not currently using cross-cultural activities had little knowledge of the techniques or rationale for intercultural or cross-cultural instruction.

Many instructors felt there is not enough institutional support for teaching and learning (such as workshops on intercultural andragogy) and curriculum development (including overcoming Eurocentric bias). Two instructors mentioned activities such as visiting scholars and the use of films and literature as methods to increase cross-cultural awareness. Some
instructors prepare students for specific work cultures that require interculturalism, and others prepare students for acculturation into mainstream multiculturalism or cosmopolitanism. Learning strategies for Indigenous students include curriculum activities from Indigenous culture, changing institutional culture, and Indigenous community engagement and delivery. Barriers include limited knowledge, limited formal opportunity to acquire knowledge of Indigenous worldviews, inadequate funding, and inflexibility in curriculum, teaching, and other processes. Fear of stereotyping and reaching out to the Indigenous community was also present in responses. One respondent mentioned institutional or collegial pressures to conform: “We have to rationalize the “why”—so is it beneficial to the entire student group? Or is it because I'm catering to one student? Or it could be a perception of that? I think ultimately its fear. They’re not sure how that is managed—ugh, it’s out of the box, what do we do with that?”

According to the interview data, some instructors became defensive when students were not engaged or lacked respect, while others were defensive when Indigenous students used unhealthy behaviours or lacked a positive self-concept. One respondent expressed defensiveness on behalf of Indigenous students:

Really there's nothing that's the big elephant in the room that I can think of “oh every time I have an aboriginal student, that's what happens”—certainly not. If anything, the only big difference that I see is the fact that maybe they don't have their support funding on time, and that can make me frustrated, but not with the students. That makes me frustrated with the system in general.”

One instructor, for example, was somewhat defensive during the interview about the concept of Indigenous identity: “I know they participate in everyday life activities on the
campus and all that and as I’ve told you I have the feeling that they’ve become part of the mainstream society.” Some Indigenous students foster civility by being trusting, compassionate, honourable, helpful, and respectful. One respondent noted, “They look to people in a [professional] position with respect because they respect life experience [and this is important] when you’re developing therapeutic relationships with people. So they definitely bring that awareness.”

I asked employees working within student support services—the mesosystem of the learning environment—questions on Indigenous education rights as outlined in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous peoples. A majority of institutional support staff believed that Indigenous peoples have a right to education that respects their culture. For example, one respondent stated, “I believe they do have the right to receive the education that honours their culture and incorporates the learning—so yes, they have a right to that.” A majority of institutional support staff believed that Indigenous students at the institution currently have access, when possible, to education in their own culture. A sample comment is, “Diversity is not grasped like a kind of strength about working together, although it kind of is in a lot of cases.” Some respondents questioned the concept of providing education within a cultural context: “How would you pick which language, which culture? ... To be able to provide quality, I just don’t know that it would work. I don’t think it’s being done at [this institution]—I think it would be a goal, and I think that some of the other provinces have achieved success.”

Support staff respondents stated that the institution encourages Indigenous students through the engagement of the Indigenous community, supports for Indigenous students, and Indigenous curriculum content. For example, “We’ve just recently got the Elder in Residence in
place. That doesn’t happen without senior administration serious support. Those kinds of things don’t appear out of the air. So that tells you the support is there at all levels.” Some support staff believed the institution is hostile to Indigenous students through insufficient funding for other supports and not enough cultural awareness training. One respondent highlighted an example of a possible institutional barrier: “I think not having an understanding of the issues and how important Aboriginal culture is to everyone. When I think that we expect students all to behave in a certain manner and I think we need to be looking perhaps at different methods for the demonstration of knowledge.” There was also some hesitancy to recognize difference, as it could lead to separation: “They’ll be ghettoized, or different people will be ghettoized. Do you want that? I don’t know that I want ghettoization of any kind of people.”

Some support staff, however, believed the institution accommodates students from different cultures through cultural events, providing service in different languages, international student programs, and diversity initiatives. One respondent stated, “[The university] has a variety of celebration events that enhance the multicultural ethnicity that is existent in each of the campuses, and they offer accommodation to individuals who have religious requirements such as prayer during an exam, or wearing religious garb.” And some support staff also believed the institution accommodates Indigenous students through cultural events, community engagement, and Indigenous initiatives. One respondent noted:

It’s the Gathering Place; it’s the availability of an Aboriginal counsellor. Being able to meet with an individual of the same heritage is helpful if there’s counselling issues, and just assistance with admissions, and obtaining recommendations or anything else.
There's nothing better than having someone of your own ethnicity to assist you. So I think the institution is offering quite a good service.

An example of an opposing view to this accommodation was noted by another respondent: “I don't think we do it very well. I think there would be more celebration and more family-centred learning. I think we're so concerned with privacy and confidentiality we lose the essence in many cultures, not just Indigenous.” In one comment on the importance of support of Indigenous educational content, the respondent noted,

I think there's a shift because it's not just for Aboriginal students, but for everybody to learn and making it mainstream. I think it's an important part of our history; who we are and how we got to be what we are today. I think there are a lot of issues in the history that we need to really look at and make people aware.

Some support staff did not recognize any institutional barriers to Indigenous student success. One respondent, for example, shared, “I have worked here a long time and I've never heard of that, any whisper of it.” This statement, and others like this one, support a finding that there is little overt racism relating to Indigenous peoples at the case institution. These examples do reveal some understanding by mesosystem staff members of the need to improve the success of Indigenous students through organizational change. Some mesosystem respondents felt that a great deal is already being done, and they indicated support for a status quo position.

In my questions for mesosystem staff, I also explored ideas for learning environments that accommodate cultural worldviews. The data indicate that some members of mesosystem staff believe that they may occasionally violate institutional rules with unhelpful attitudes and lack of training. Most mesosystem respondents believed that Indigenous students do not
generally violate any social rules for behaviour. And some of these respondents believed that
cultural difference is acknowledged in the learning experience provided to students through
international initiatives, events, curriculum activities, alternate ways of demonstrating
knowledge, and diversity programs. Some mesosystem respondents believed that support staff
could better provide indigenized learning experiences to Indigenous students through more
staff cultural awareness training and more focus on connecting students to available supports.

Some mesosystem employees believed that there are tangible institutional barriers to
providing a learning experience within an Indigenous cultural worldviews. These barriers
include the low knowledge of Indigenous languages among institutional staff, no intercultural
training for staff, and limited cross-disciplinary Indigenous course content. Respondents also
made suggestions to correct the limited Indigenous representation in the physical appearance
of the campuses, limited community engagement, low political will, and an onus on
multiculturalism. One respondent, for example, stated,

I think that to create a welcoming environment [we could] invite people to have
conversations within their cultural worldviews. If I'm not feeling safe, I don't want to
share with you. It sounds really easy, but I think it takes dedication. You can't ask
questions and then not listen to the answer. If you ask a question you may not get an
answer that you like, then what do you do with it? I think for front line staff it's the time
 crunch. If they spend too long with somebody they're not efficient. Time pressure is one
aspect and then what you do for someone [and] not [the] other... We provide the bare
minimum across the board.
Another respondent noted, “If an Indigenous student wants an entire learning experience to be within their own cultural framework, [this institution] is not the place for them because it’s multicultural.” An example of the effect of this cultural difference was shared by another respondent:

Bringing young adults into the educational milieu can be very intimidating. There’s a lot of socialization... I think sometimes an appreciation of social—you know, ways of being—we’re looking for the kid who answers first, we’re looking for the kid who makes eye contact, because we think that if we have eye contact the student is learning, and that’s not accurate in my mind.

In general the comments portray an environment with much good will but not a great deal of leadership to support an understanding of Indigenous worldviews through interculturalism.

**Theme 2: Undeveloped Narratives on Reconciliation**

I explored perceptions of emerging changes to institutional social relations at the case institution with questions to all levels of the social ecological system on the use of an Indigenous worldviews and reconciliation narratives to improve the academic success of Indigenous students. A reconciliation narrative is a rationale on why reconciliation is important (Blix, 2015; Lazar, Braun-Lewensohn, & Litvak Hirsch, 2015; Srour, Sagy, Mana, & Mjally-Knani, 2013). Respondents provided strong evidence that a reconciliation narrative is not well developed. One of the few respondents who addressed this issue within a broader context said, “I’ve heard through the news and ... some policies that are being discussed that definitely we're trying to offer services to First Nations people as much as possible certainly to make up for past
treatments and situations that we regret.” Many of the responses on this issue lumped Indigenous peoples within the multicultural fabric of the institution. For example, one respondent noted,

I guess it is not different from people coming from other cultures who come here. I think everyone who passes the entrance tests should be able to be educated here. I think that they should equally be welcomed and there should be recognition because they’re Aboriginal Canadian that they are part of our culture collectively and it should be recognized that they were here first.”

The data also indicate that the organization is increasingly recognizing the traditional territory of the Kwantlen First Nation and supporting community engagement, but there continues to be little awareness at the institution of systemic issues such as underrepresentation of Indigenous students. One respondent said,

A past president had a strong sense of Kwantlen history, Kwantlen’s name, and any event that was held always started with the Katzie First Nations Elders. They started a procession, and they spoke to us about in their culture what was happening and how learning was transmitted and why a person was wearing the blanket and what it all meant and why there was the smoke and we learned. We no longer have that. We do see the Katzie Elder coming in for one or two things, not as much. We do have an Elder in Residence so that is something in a good direction but we should reach higher especially because of our name. This is what the past president was very aware of, that we owed them our name when we split from Douglas College. We had this kind of umbilical relationship and now we don’t.
A majority of administrators interviewed believed that the institution has not developed a reconciliation narrative. However, some administrators reported that the institution has addressed a reconciliation narrative through professional development sessions. These mixed feelings are illustrated in the following examples. One respondent replied, “We had the day on campus last fall along with some other universities in the province where we held our own sessions around Truth and Reconciliation, held primarily in our Aboriginal gathering space.” Another respondent stated, “I haven’t been part of any real conversation about reconciliation.” Administrators shared with me that the barriers to indigenization of the organizational culture are a lack of expertise, the distance between campuses, change fatigue, and lack of awareness. One respondent said, “We’re engaged in so many other projects! ... I think one of the ongoing barriers is that Aboriginal students aren’t always visible so it's not always a top of mind issue. I'd also probably say, I think for better or for worse, I think international students are more ‘top of mind.’”

**Theme 3: Lack of Indigenization Measurement**

The college administration respondents described the implementation and progress of indigenization and changes to organizational culture in the institution. Administrators saw changes in organizational culture through Indigenous awareness, visibility, community engagement, and diversity in learning and worldviews. One administrator put it this way: “There seems to be a genuine engagement [with] the importance of doing that and increased understanding around concepts like multiple ways of knowing and the flexibility that should come with that.” Many administrators believed that the institution’s approach to the policy of indigenization is an encouraging strategic response on several levels. They indicated to me that
changes as a result of indigenization efforts include increased community engagement and specific initiatives in Indigenous programs and services at the institution. One respondent said, “Increasing exposure with the Aboriginal community, encouraging more participation of students with our programming, and developing new programs that will instill an understanding of Indigenous cultural history and world view ... [is] a focal point of what we call student success and well-being at the institution.” Some administrators stated that resource allocation, Indigenous student enrollment, and retention levels can be used to indigenization. Most of the administrators I interviewed, however, were not aware of any efforts by the organization to measure its indigenization efforts.

**Theme 4: An Indigenization Policy Vacuum**

A majority of the administrators I interviewed reported that there are no clear or specific institutional policies that support indigenization at the organization. Administrators all reported, for example, that the institution has not applied affirmative action for hiring Indigenous staff. One respondent mentioned a change toward external hiring over the years: “With that change in leadership...came a bigger focus on the diversity of the community we’re embedded [in] and I think that made a profound impact on our relationship with our external Aboriginal partners.” Most administrators reported that the Provost has accountability for indigenization in the organization. Some administrators suggested that the organization’s academic plan and its diversity council could be considered as institutional polices that support indigenization.

Most administrators I interviewed believed the institution supports intercultural dialogue through its international programs, diversity initiatives, and Indigenous support
services. An example of an opinion contrary to intercultural support is: “We certainly have everything you can imagine as far as diverse cultures; people come from war-torn countries, with you know, these horrendous histories from overseas, and then there are Indigenous populations ... I think it's just organically that we kind of stick to business.” This opinion implies that cultural diversity needs are unmet due to the difficulty in addressing them. Administrators reported that there were two effective interventions at the organization in support of emerging changes to institutional social relations: the organization’s celebration of its special relationship to the Kwantlen First Nation and the President’s Diversity and Equity Committee. The celebration of the special relationship to the Kwantlen First Nation may have some symbolic or indirect impact on interpersonal social relations within the institution but would not likely have a noticeable impact on interpersonal social relations. The President’s Diversity and Equity Committee was perceived by some respondents to be setting a positive example and addressing specific challenges in interpersonal social relations.

Administrators also reported that student awareness of the traditional Indigenous territory in which the institution operates supports emerging changes to social relations at the organization. Increased Indigenous student achievement and community engagement with the organization were also highlighted by respondents as evidence for emerging changes to social relations within the institution. Overall, however, there was guarded optimism about these emerging changes. One respondent shared, “I would say as an institution we’re still finding our way [on Indigenous student success],” Another respondent expressed that the institution was not at all successful in its indigenization efforts. This respondent told me: “No, I can't say directly. I feel that more could be done.” Yet another respondent indicated that a more
systemic approach to indigenization is required: “I don’t see it as a system—like it's not coming from the top down, it's coming from the bottom up.” Respondents suggested several future directions for indigenization efforts at the organization. These include an Indigenous graduation ceremony, support for active Indigenous student groups, an increased cross-disciplinary Indigenous curriculum, increased social engagement of students, increased Indigenous student housing options, and a coordinating body for indigenization initiatives.

Summary
My research explored the possibility of changing social relations in response to a provincial policy supporting Indigenous student success using case study at a medium-size educational institution in BC. I examined these data within a social ecological systems framework that focused on Indigenous students and the social relations of the organizational microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem. The data provided little evidence that changes to intercultural social relations are perceived to be emerging at this institution, which is in the process of implementing the BC government’s indigenization policy. For example, institutional staff are not using intercultural skills to improve their social relations with Indigenous students. There is strong evidence for low organizational understanding of why reconciliation with Indigenous peoples is required. There is also strong evidence from these data that the approaches to indigenization within the case institution are not sufficient to increase the success of Indigenous learners. My analysis of the data suggests no evidence of increasing achievement of Indigenous students or of changing social relations as a result of the organization’s efforts at indigenization. While the institution sponsored a great deal of activity on indigenization, it did not set changing social relations as an objective of these activities.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Analysis

This chapter draws on the data examined in Chapter 4 and links these with the broader literature and theory on indigenization examined in Chapter 2 to analyze the social ecological system impacting Indigenous student success at the case institution. This case study analysis of one post-secondary institution provides evidence that significant changes to intercultural social relations are not perceived as emerging as part of these indigenization efforts despite significant endeavors across the system. I examined these efforts by asking employees what change was occurring and what evidence of change was measured. My data indicated that there is no change in social relations and there is no perceived need for change in social relations as a part of the organization’s approach to Indigenization.

Given the supportive policy context for indigenization, it is curious why these institutional interventions are not having a significant impact on social relations to increase Indigenous student success in the university. My case data suggest a variety of issues contributing to this: the lack of intercultural skills among instructors and student support staff; the lack of the consistent application of an organizational reconciliation narrative; failure to measure and report on indigenization within the institution; and the lack of adequate intercultural policies to promote the success of Indigenous students. I believe that these data may offer educators and policy makers a better understanding of more effective strategies for increasing the post-secondary success of Indigenous students and meaningful reconciliation at local, provincial, and national levels in Canada.
It is important to note that the case institution has allocated significant resources to material supports for Indigenous students, such as safe cultural spaces and some effort toward accommodating learning preferences and decolonial pedagogy (Day, Nakata, Nakata, & Martin, 2015). The majority of effort has been in the allocation of an Indigenous support unit that includes a physical space, staffing of the space, and hosting many cultural and supportive events and activities. The recent designation of an Elder in Residence position one day per week was another well-received cultural support. Many of these supports may have some indirect impact on intercultural social relations within the institution. Recent scholarship, however, has determined that the transformation of tertiary educational institutions for Indigenous student success requires more than efforts at greater contact and understanding between Indigenous peoples and others (Day et al., 2015; Pio et al., 2014). It requires engagement with complex global political realities, worldviews, legacies, and identities (Koerner, 2015). My research found evidence that building organizational capacity to support intercultural skills and cultural coordination are significant requirements to increase the success of Indigenous students. The institution examined in this research, however, is not actively spreading the intercultural climate of the Indigenous student support unit throughout its campuses and departments. A supportive intercultural climate does not appear to be spreading throughout the institution using current indigenization methods.

My research tested for direct evidence of changing social relations with known mechanisms, and explored other indications of changing social relations. I found no significant perception of changes in staff attitudes or behaviours, and student change was not reported by the respondents. Indirect evidence of changing social relations would include themes such as
good relations, more recognition of systemic patterns of bias and inequality, and indications of recent actions or ideas for changing social relations, such as those collated in Table 4. Instead, the research data indicated no observed recognition of whiteness or settler status at the institution. There was also no discussion of indigeneity at the institutional level, and no increase in the self-identification of Indigenous students; even Indigenous staff members were found to not always disclose their identity to other staff. In general there was little intercultural dialogue or awareness of intercultural skills at the institution despite a very multicultural client population.

The support staff I interviewed said in most cases that the institution provides Indigenous students with an education that respects their culture and is delivered within their own cultural worldviews. This viewpoint, however, does not agree with the current literature on Indigenous education. For example, no respondents described their relationship to Indigenous sovereignty or a process for transferring knowledge of Indigenous rights to students (Koerner, 2015). Respondents did not acknowledge settler society’s responsibility for colonial systems, nor did they indicate they were actively learning about Indigenous cultures and languages (Sterling, 2015). In the 50,000-word data set on indigenization I collected, there was no mention of the concept of whiteness or settler identity (de Leeuw, Greenwood, & Lindsay, 2013) and only one mention of Eurocentrism. There was also no discussion of systemic racism (Hurtado, Alvarado, & Guillermo-Wann, 2015) or structural inequalities (Gurin et. al., 2013). The data contained very little description of the concept of social acceptance or welcoming of Indigenous learners (Ho & Unzueta, 2015; Chen & Hamilton, 2015); nor did they indicate a practice of settler reflexivity on Indigenous relations (Truong, Paradies, & Priest, 2014).
The lack of a conception of, plan for, measurement of, or expectation of any change in organizational social relations creates a situation very similar to decades-old criticisms of Indigenous education as being about “fluff and feathers” (Pewewardy, 1998) and “papier mache totem poles” (Iseke, 2009). In other words, Indigenous culture in general and Indigenous education in particular have often been incorrectly characterized, or caricatured, by a few aspects of material culture while ignoring the vast details associated with an entire culture and way of life. This lack of social relations change as a key component to an indigenization program at the case institution is consistent with the current literature on Indigenous higher education (Mayhew, Bowman, & Rockenbach, 2014; Nesdole et al., 2015; Pio et al., 2014). The lack of emerging social relations highlights the foresight of Canadian Indigenous leaders who have sought the right to education within their own cultural worldviews since at least 1972. These leaders have stated that education outside their cultural values was assimilative as well as ineffective (Booth & Skelton, 2011; Haig-Brown, 1995; National Indian Brotherhood, 1972). Analysis of social relations at the case institution is also consistent with Denis’s (2015) proposal that intergroup bias is maintained by a political avoidance norm and subtle practices of subtyping and homophily. That is, when people associate with intercultural others who are ideologically similar to themselves, or when they consciously avoid discussion of current affairs and political issues in these situations, racialized bias can easily persist.

**Social Ecological System Framework**

Using a social ecological system framework to analyse my research data made it clear to me that social relations surrounding Indigenous students at the case institution are not changing significantly despite a provincial policy to increase Indigenous student success. The social
ecological systems surrounding Indigenous students are the classroom environment and direct interactions with instructors. There is less direct interaction with student support staff and indirect influence from administrators. These layers correspond to the microsystem (instructors), mesosystem (student and instructor support staff), and macrosystem (administrators) embedded within the ecological system framework. This tool provided a systemic approach to determining if social relations at the organizational level are in fact changing in relation a specific exosystem—the provincial policy of indigenization developed and implemented by the Government of British Columbia. The social ecological systems framework predicts that change in the exosystem (the provincial policy) will result in people at all levels of an ecosystem being impacted and adapting to the change. Based on my careful analysis of these research data, however, change at the exosystem level did not necessarily translate into a perception of change in the microsystem surrounding Indigenous students.

It is clear from these data, however, that instructors in the microsystem working closely with students can greatly impact Indigenous student success. Adaptation to exosystem change can also be achieved by developing and strengthening intercultural communication skills, cultural coordination, and establishing civility throughout the ecosystem. I anticipated that exploring these mechanisms would provide evidence of adaptations to exosystem change or reveal emerging patterns of change not previously recorded in the literature.

**Intercultural skills.** The data show strong evidence that instructors’ intercultural skills are not well developed. There is also some evidence in the data that instructors’ low intercultural skills limit the success of Indigenous students. Intercultural skills are one mechanism of social relations change that could be emerging in this context, but there was no
evidence of a broad awareness of intercultural skills among instructors. Instructors saw their role as acculturating students to North American workplace cultures or North American culture in general. There is strong evidence that Instructors at the case institution often do not recognize or acknowledge Indigenous students, or they act from a colour-blind or “culture-blind” position. That is, they may feel it is inappropriate in their professional role with Indigenous students to identity the students as Indigenous. This goes well beyond the “perfect stranger” position (Higgins et al., 2013), which is thinking oneself incapable of teaching Indigenous academic topics or culture; it is more akin to a colour-blind position (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010), which is thinking it inappropriate or insignificant to identity a person by a racialized category. An analogous concept of “culture-blind” is a belief that it is inappropriate or to identify a person by a cultural category. Culture blindness also demonstrates a very low level of interculturalism (Bennett, 2013), in which a person is generally unaware of their own culture, places other cultures into broad categories, and is not interested in the concept of culture. Interestingly, one instructor found that having low intercultural skills is a frustrating part of teaching in a multicultural setting where students are stubbornly culture-blind.

At least one respondent relayed a perception that reacting to different cultures is discouraged by the institution and that instructors were fearful to do so. Responses that indicated some instructors require students to acculturate to North American workplace culture, and the lack of awareness of Indigenous or other cultural worldviews, may indicate an organizational or societal ambiguity on the issues of multiculturalism and the constitutional status of Indigenous cultures. There is evidence that civility was upheld in the learning
environment. Most instructors use the policies and processes in place to protect student human rights, particularly around threats of violence and discriminatory speech.

The data do not provide evidence that student support staff use intercultural skills to improve the academic success of Indigenous students. Rather, I found strong evidence that mesosystem employees have not developed the intercultural skills to improve these students’ academic success. The finding that a majority of institutional support staff who participated in this study believed that Indigenous students at the institution currently have access, when possible, to education in their own culture is inconsistent with the evidence. I am unable to determine from the data if this cultural education is actually provided, or if respondents believed the option to take some courses in First Nations Studies satisfied this need. The most likely explanation is that the respondents’ low intercultural skills influenced their belief that education within Indigenous cultural norms and values was already provided, although there is no evidence that it is. Overall, the evidence of social relations collected at the organization support the premise that these are not sufficiently intercultural to increase the success of Indigenous learners.

Reconciliation narrative. There is strong evidence for low employee understanding of why reconciliation with Indigenous peoples is necessary or desirable. There is only a limited awareness of systemic issues on the causes of an Indigenous education gap. There was no evidence of the use of a reconciliation narrative to improve Indigenous student success at the institution. At the mesosystem level, suggestions for indigenization include training on Indigenous educational methods, supporting dialogue on Indigenous issues, and training on intercultural communication and Indigenous cultural teachings. Support staff and systems could
provide more intercultural activities for students, along with opportunities for emotional check-ins. Support staff who provide curriculum and professional development for instructors could provide support for the indigenization of curriculum, alternate ways of demonstrating knowledge, the use of multiple ways of knowing, and social intelligence. Admissions staff could support Indigenous students to self-identify, implement an Indigenous admissions policy, provide student information in plain language, engage with families, and support Indigenous students to understand their potential. Student support staff could provide support for Indigenous spiritual practices and additional safety supports for Indigenous women, who face a greater risk of violence in Canadian society (Brennan, 2011).

The administrators of the university must ensure communication on indigenization reaches all campuses, and provide a strategic response to indigenization. Facilities managers can increase Indigenous visual presence on all campuses. Administration could build upon the President’s Committee on Equality and Diversity and the Director of Diversity and Inclusion position with a Director of Indigenous Services position for the longitudinal tracking of Indigenous student success, creating an institutional environment of reconciliation and supporting Indigenous research and the delivery of programming in the community.

**Indigenization policies.** Macrosystem staff coordinate internal activities, develop strategies, communicate with exosystems, and create an overall environment for learning. This is not an exhaustive list of either responsibilities at each level or of all issues that arose in interviews. Each system must work with the others, and administrators must provide the leadership to synchronize efforts at all social ecological levels within the system to change social relations. Affirmative action is not used as a strategy for indigenization at the case
institution. Accountability for indigenization is assigned but not adequately measured at this institution. In general, administrators recognized efforts for indigenization such as increased community engagement and specific initiatives in Indigenous programs and services rather than an implementation of policy. The data show that the institution does not have intercultural policies adequate to promote Indigenous student success. The observed pattern of low intercultural skills leading to low awareness of different worldviews also informs the minimal change to organizational policies and climate around Indigenous student success.

Indigenization measurement. Participants at the case institution did not provide evidence of interventions focused specifically on intercultural social relations that impact Indigenous student success in higher education. Failure to promote intercultural social relations most likely has negative outcomes for Indigenous student success. None of the six administrators interviewed could provide significant evidence of an increasing achievement of Indigenous students. None had evidence of changing social relations in general or changing social relations as a result of indigenization specifically. One respondent related an anecdote of an Indigenous graduate who had established a successful career. Administrators generally referred to potential outcomes of indigenization efforts that may provide indirect evidence of social relations, such as student awareness of unceded territory, increased engagement with Indigenous communities, increased student association engagement with Indigenous issues, increased Aboriginal student enrollment, inclusion of local First Nations in ceremonies, and increased visibility of Indigenous activities on campus. Analysis of other social movements that have resulted in significant changes to educational or workplace outcomes of marginalized groups indicate that directly addressing social bias is key to affecting change (Bond & Haynes, 2014). Interviews at all levels of the
institution produced little evidence of measures to address social bias except perhaps through responses to issues arising in the President’s Committee on Equality and Diversity.

**Intervention Concepts**

The participants’ suggestions for future innovation provide a vision of the effort that is required for the entire system to work with synergy. Instructors stated that social relations could be improved for Indigenous students and staff by sharing information on social bias, methods for creating classroom safety, security and respect, and flexible and alternate ways of demonstrating mastery of learning. The instructors described interventions not directly impacting social relations, such as developing content and offering courses on Indigenous culture, history, technology, and worldviews as well as adding cross-disciplinary Indigenous content in existing courses. Although offering courses on Indigenous culture and history, or even making these mandatory for all students, is currently an intervention garnering media coverage in Canada (Sherlock, 2016), it is not an explicitly social relations approach.

Support service employees of the institution had suggestions for indigenization through intercultural social relations including hosting a dialogue on Indigenous issues, intercultural activities for students, and providing students with opportunities for emotional check-ins. Participants found that admissions staff could engage more with Indigenous families and support Indigenous students to understand their potential. Interventions not focused on social relations include training on Indigenous educational methods, intercultural communication, and Indigenous cultural teachings. Curriculum and professional development for instructors could provide support for the indigenization of curriculum, alternate ways of demonstrating knowledge, and the use of multiple ways of knowing and social intelligence. Admissions staff
could support Indigenous students to self-identify, implement an Indigenous admissions policy, and provide student information in plain language. Student support staff could encourage Indigenous spiritual practices and provide additional safety for Indigenous women, who are at greater risk of violence.

University administrators stated that they could increase intercultural social relations by creating an institutional environment of reconciliation and creating an overall environment for learning. The interventions not focused on social relations include ensuring communication on indigenization reaches all campuses, and providing a strategic response to indigenization. Facilities managers can increase Indigenous visual presence on all campuses. Administration could build upon the President’s Committee on Equality and Diversity and the Director of Diversity and Inclusion position with a Director of Indigenous Services position for the longitudinal tracking of Indigenous student success, indigenization research, and the delivery of programming in community. Macrosystem employees coordinate activities, strategies, and communication with exosystems, and create an overall safe environment for learning.

The interventions suggested by respondents at each social ecological level indicate that intercultural social relations—actually learning to work with and trust culturally different others—is seen as less important than more impersonal and distant approaches. Each level of the social ecological system must work with the others, and administrators must provide the leadership to synchronize the efforts at all social ecological levels to affect change to intercultural social relations. In addition, the suggested interventions provide recommendations for creating social relations that may improve the educational outcomes of Indigenous students. I reformulated issues raised by respondents and their ideas on Indigenous student
success into potential interventions. These themes became recommendations for those involved in the work.

Administrators I interviewed generally referred to the potential outcomes of indigenization efforts instead of actual outcomes. These included the potential impact of such things as student awareness of unceded Indigenous territory, increased organizational engagement with Indigenous communities, increased student engagement with Indigenous issues through the student association, increased Indigenous student enrollment, the inclusion of the Kwantlen First Nation in organizational events and ceremonies, and increased visibility of Indigenous activities on campus. One respondent shared, “I think just the acknowledgement to ourselves and to the Kwantlen First Nation that we have a really deep relationship with them—this has been very helpful.” This statement provides no evidence of changes in interpersonal social relations or of an increase in Indigenous student success. It could indicate that the term social relations was interpreted by respondents as a phenomenon operating at the group level and not at an individual level. No respondents clearly interpreted social relations to mean their own individual relations or individual employee relations with people from different cultural groups, and instead spoke about the organization’s relationship to individuals or groups. Similarly, no respondents from the administrators group clearly demonstrated an understanding that students from different cultures may operate from different cultural worldviews. This indicates a generally assimilative approach to interpersonal relations within the institution.

Summary
The data provided little evidence that perceived changes to intercultural social relations have emerged at the case study institution. This study provides evidence that, in the case institution, post-secondary employees may not have the intercultural skills to improve intercultural social relations. There is also strong evidence of a low level of organizational understanding of why reconciliation with Indigenous peoples is required. My research ultimately suggests that the current approach to supporting and growing intercultural social relations at the case institution may be a barrier to increasing Indigenous learner success. There is a lack of useable organizational data to actually measure if and how indigenization efforts are impacting Indigenous student success. Even though the institution has a great deal of focus on indigenization, few of the activities are directed specifically at changing intercultural social relations within the organization. My conclusion from these data is that the organization’s current response to the provincial policy to improve Indigenous student success does not address a change in social relations within the post-secondary institutional setting. Although a causal relationship of improved intercultural social relations to Indigenous student success has not been adequately demonstrated in research, there are clear indications that it would be prudent to consider this approach to organizational change. The proposed changes to social relations may be required to produce the desired increase in Indigenous student success in the same way that changed attitudes and behaviours have supported changes to women’s integration into the workplace (Bond & Haynes, 2014). In the following chapter, I identify gaps in knowledge based on my research, provide recommendations for further research and policy directions, and provide some practical applications of the knowledge generated through my
research. This includes providing an emerging framework model for social indigenization developed from the key recommendations of my research data.
Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

In this chapter I further synthesize the results of my research to examine the main conclusions and gaps in research. In addition, I provide recommendations based on the major themes explored in the previous chapters. My research indicates that changes to intercultural social relations may not have been a large or conscious part of indigenization or diversity inclusion processes at the case study institution. It is clear from my data that focusing consciously on the impact of intercultural social relations may have a greater impact on Indigenous student success than changes to material aspects of education alone. This research suggests that if changes to social relations do not take place, the richness of Indigenous worldviews may continue to be excluded from education, and European hegemony will continue to be propagated by post-secondary institutions. The concept of indigeneity is critical to reforming contemporary notions such as progress, development and justice, and the neo-liberal ideal of education supporting economic advancement through employment and consumption (Habibis, Taylor, Walter, & Elder, 2016). Much broader than just a social equality issue, the inclusion of Indigenous worldviews in organizational social relations, such as at post-secondary institutions, has the potential to build better communities at the local, national, and international levels. The Indigenous concepts of connection to place, interconnectedness, and respect for others are powerful ways to build strong communities. The broader adoption of Indigenous worldviews would likely impact provincial social services costs and labour availability, as intended in the
provincial policy of indigenization. Globally, Indigenous peoples are a majority of human
cultural diversity and offer alternatives to materialistic worldviews.

There is no commonly accepted evidence-based practice on how people from different
cultural groups can work together effectively in multicultural organizations or in social
institutions within diverse societies. Intercultural social relations take place every day, yet the
basic sociological and psychological mechanisms are not well understood. Following a period of
using quantitative approaches, such as global values research, to this cultural phenomenon
(Bachika & Shulz, 2011; Hofstede, 2001), some believed a turn to qualitative research might
provide an explanatory framework (Tsirigianni & Gaskell, 2011). The concept of polyculturalism
is a promising paradigm to replace multiculturalism (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010), but it is yet to be
tested at the organizational level. As cultural diversity and sophistication are explored in more
depth, increased understanding of human behavioural universals may provide rich ground for
the discovery of social relations mechanisms (Chiu, Gelfand, Yamagishi, Shteynberg, & Wan,

My data indicate that intercultural social relations at a Canadian public post-secondary
institute involved in the BC government’s indigenization policy have not significantly
improved. The institution offers significant interventions in material culture designed to impact
Indigenous student success in higher education. These include a gathering space, an Indigenous
student support position, an Elder in Residence position, some Indigenous events, and
programs and community connections. However, my research suggests that the focus on
indigenization needs to shift away from impersonal or mechanistic changes to material culture
and curriculum change to focus on the design and support of interventions that impact intercultural social relations.

Cultural sensitivity or interculturalism is widely acknowledged as a key to success in foreign teaching and working assignments (Bennett, 2009), but it is almost completely absent in the instruction of Indigenous students. I recorded practices at the case institution of how to respond to students from different cultures; some instructors practiced acculturation to workplace culture, and others recognized multiculturalism with no acknowledgement of the unique constitutional status of Indigenous cultures. Most instructors at the case institution practiced a colour-blind and culture-blind approach to difference, often out of concern for equality. With a few exceptions based on occupational requirements, few instructors attempted to address cultural difference. When they did, it may have been to assist international students and new immigrants to acclimate to Canadian culture. There was no specific recognition of intercultural skills and no concept of a reconciliation narrative. Despite some organizational responses to the provincial policy on indigenization, social relations were not acknowledged, and the organizational climate was not sufficiently intercultural to increase Indigenous learner success. University administrators must provide the leadership to synchronize the social ecological systems to affect change in organizational social relations. This could be done by ensuring employee groups at all levels of the social ecological system are implementing change in social relations that impact Indigenous student success.

**Recommendations**

In order to increase Indigenous student success, a tertiary institution could plan for and implement changes to social relations and practices to measure these changes and their
outcomes. An indigenization approach based on current research would focus on creating institution-wide cultural support for Indigenous students by developing a social relations environment that recognizes cultural differences. The objectives of the approach would be to increase employees’ knowledge of Indigenous worldviews, increase settler employees’ ancestral identity, provide a strong institutional reconciliation narrative, and increase the intercultural skills of employees who work directly with Indigenous students. These four areas of focus—Indigenous worldviews, ancestral identity, Indigenous reconciliation, and interculturalism—are mechanisms that could support changes to intercultural social relations. However, interventions must produce improved intercultural social relations or increased contact and understanding between Indigenous and other constituents.

**Indigenous worldviews.** A recent framework (see Figure 2) proposes that positive action by a university toward indigenization but low employee knowledge of Indigenous worldviews produces a state of complacency rather than transformation (Pio et al., 2014). My analysis of data from the case institution is consistent with this observation. Increasing employee knowledge of Indigenous worldviews will be transformational. Methods could include courses, learning objects, ceremonies, and many other types of knowledge dissemination. An Indigenous episteme (Kuokkanen, 2007), or knowledge system, is ultimately reflected in the land; all the resources humans derive from the land and the belief that the land needs to be honoured help maintain balance. Indigenous peoples build worldviews from the ultimate gift of life embodied in the land, the water, the air, and the energy of the sun that drives this ecological system. By contrast, the Western civilization worldviews are based on controlling nature to provide wealth (Brody, 2000). Kuokkanen (2007) believes failure to recognize Indigenous episteme is an
intellectual discrimination that ultimately undermines a university’s purpose in creating and disseminating knowledge. Based on the information collected at the case institution, all tertiary educational institutions would benefit from a system to increase knowledge of Indigenous worldviews among all stakeholders.

**Ancestral identity.** Another substantial barrier to increased understanding of Indigenous worldviews within an organization may be a lack of acknowledgement and celebration of ancestral identity among settlers. McLean (2013) records that without a power-informed analysis of social relations, secondary students describe Canada as a post-racial society made up of caring, tolerant people with a global reputation for peacekeeping. As a nation with an existing Indian Act in federal legislation, there is strong evidence that Canada is not a post-racial society. A post-racial narrative of Canada may be analogous to the intergroup bias of the political avoidance norm (Denis, 2015) in which it is seen as socially awkward to discuss political diversity. An analysis of the superficial inclusion of Indigenous peoples in academia (de Leeuw, Greenwood, & Lindsay, 2013) hypothesizes that decolonized social relations requires that the settlers’ ancestral identity become more visible to them. As opposed to Indigenous respondents, other university employees at the case institution did not self-identify by race, ethnicity, or citizenship, except in two cases when asked. This may be evidence of a post-racial narrative that contributes to a lack of critical and power analysis and political avoidance of ethnicity and identity.

By assuming a depoliticized Canadian identity, settlers lose their place-based identity but also gain all of the advantages of the racialized system that built an economy on the land and resources of displaced Indigenous peoples. Without ancestral identity, settlers may also
lose connection with the history of humanity and the richness of their ancestors’ history—ancestors who participated in the settlement of a new continent and the building of a nation that included Indigenous participation. The depoliticized Canadian identity also erases Indigenous peoples and culture, and prevents reconciliation. This is because a superordinate group identity, in this case Canadian, typically aligns with the norms and values of the majority group—European settlers. The advantages enjoyed by the majority group relative to other subgroups, including African slaves, African and Asian settlers, and Indigenous peoples, are therefore obscured (Dovidio, Gaertner, Ufkes, Saguy, & Pearson, 2016). An organization can support people in the development of a dual identity as Canadian and of another ancestry, either Indigenous or from another continent, by providing an opportunity to recognize and celebrate cultural difference and preserve Indigenous culture. It may be possible to introduce the concept of polycultural identity, where all cultures are blended through borrowing, as an alternative to culture blindness and multiculturalism (Rosenthal & Levy, 2013).

**Collective reconciliation narratives.** Reconciliation in Canada and other advanced settler societies requires that the majority population transform itself for decolonization to succeed (Freeman, 2014). This may require a cohesive reconciliation narrative to overcome some of the barriers to acceptance of marginalized groups. The presence of a clearly-articulated mission that frames diversity as an institutional narrative fosters institutional capacity for diversity (Visser, 2015). Most white Australian students, for example, do not have the ability to describe their relationship to Indigenous land rights (Koerner, 2015). Positioning key narratives and providing more information may counteract this lack of understanding. The creation of a narrative around collective worldviews provides an interpretive framework through which
people interact with the world (Rinker, 2013). In the case institution studied, there was little understanding of why reconciliation with Indigenous peoples is necessary or desirable. This seems inconsistent the university’s stated mission of “critical understanding, and social and ethical awareness necessary for good citizenship and rewarding careers” (Kwantlen Polytechnic University, n.d.).

In the current rich cultural diversity produced by the 1 percent annual immigration rate, advanced settler societies quickly lose the primacy of their relationship to Indigenous peoples as just another aspect of diversity management (Larkin, 2013). Without a strong rationale, some Canadians could easily see Indigenous education initiatives as a resented requirement of the constitutional status of another founding nation. A re-narration of a collective identity may be the most important component of the reconciliation process (Rinker, 2013). Reconciliation narratives, such as contradictory accounts of the same event by members of two groups, have been used to measure the anger, empathy, and legitimacy of in-group and out-group members (Srour et al., 2013). For instance, in a small Ontario town, despite widespread social mixing, Indigenous and white Canadians largely supported different narratives of the Indigenous–white income gap (Denis, 2015). Indigenous peoples largely believed the income gap is due to historical or structural factors, while white Canadians largely believed it is due to Indigenous cultural inferiority (Denis, 2015). Indigenous respondents had the same mostly positive feeling about themselves, about Canadians and Métis people, about people with tax exemptions because of their Indigenous status, and about Indigenous protesters. Canadians, on the other hand, felt strongly positive about themselves, mostly positive about Indigenous peoples, neutral about those with tax exemptions, and mostly negative about Indigenous protesters.
Different attitudes toward these narratives point to a need for information that changes these unconscious or irrational beliefs. The subtle prejudice expressed through reconciliation narratives, such as “Aboriginal people should simply get over past generations’ experiences at residential schools,” is significantly correlated to “old-fashioned” prejudice narratives, such as “Aboriginal people have way too many children” (Nesdole et al., 2015). Given the persistence of negative narratives of Indigenous peoples, I recommend the use of collective reconciliation narratives to create more positive organizational climates.

**Interculturalism.** There are several substantial barriers to increasing employee knowledge of Indigenous worldviews within an institution. One barrier is the intercultural skill level of employees. At the case institution there was no practice of increasing the level of intercultural skills described by the participants. Levels of these skills could be somewhat higher at a large research university with professors recruited globally. It would be prudent for any institution to measure the intercultural skills of employees, as increasing these skills would likely have multiple strategic benefits.

Interculturalism is the ability to use knowledge of the diversity of human cultures and worldviews to inform more effective communication with people who are culturally different. Bennett (2013) suggests that intercultural communication skills range along a continuum from a state of denial of cultural differences to one of integration. People raised within a specific cultural context often expect others to operate with their own attitudes, behaviours, and values (Bennett, 2013). Integration is the ability of highly intercultural individuals to shift to a cultural framework appropriate to a specific cultural context, involving affective, cognitive, and behavioural changes (Bennett, 2013).
For an institution to succeed in closing the performance gap between Indigenous and other students, Indigenous students must be integrated into multicultural classrooms by faculty with high intercultural skills. While the Indigenous students themselves may have low intercultural skills, the instructors could facilitate their success using their own high intercultural skills. Indigenous students will develop greater intercultural skills, and the institutional staff can offer the intercultural experience to the benefit of all students.

**Social Indigenization Model**

Based on the recommendations of learning Indigenous worldviews, validating ancestral identity, increasing intercultural skills, and developing a collective narrative of reconciliation, I propose a model for improving the social environment experienced by Indigenous students in post-secondary institutions (Figure 5). The Indigenous Acceptance Framework (Figure 6) combines a social understanding of Indigenous worldviews, how culture is maintained, and how cultures interact with a historical understanding of what culture is and how others have interrelated with Indigenous culture. The framework is especially relevant in helping individuals and institutional environments move toward Indigenous acceptance and validation.

I propose that learning Indigenous worldviews and increasing intercultural skills are important factors on a scale of social understanding. As social understanding increases from low to high, employees would move from a position of Indigenous bias to one of Indigenous tolerance. I also propose that validating ancestral identity and developing a collective reconciliation narrative are important factors on a scale of historical understanding. As historical understanding increases from low to high, employees would move from a position of Indigenous isolation to one of Indigenous acceptance. Without social knowledge, an
organization could move from a position of bias to one of isolation but never attain acceptance. Individuals within the academy would presumably be at different stages, from social bias toward Indigenous peoples and cultures to acceptance of Indigenous peoples and cultures. By using the four activities outlined in the Social Indigenization Model, an institution could increase social and historical understanding of individuals and move the social environment of the institution toward greater Indigenous acceptance, as outlined in the Indigenous Acceptance Framework.

Hill (2012) believes that the process of decolonization may be a prerequisite to indigenization. The Social Indigenization Model may contribute to decolonization by raising individuals’ historical understanding of their own identity and by defining a reconciliation narrative on how cultures have interacted. The Social Indigenization Model attempts to modify the emotional incompatibility between the Indigenous cultural self and a Western structuring of social relations in educational institutions (Tonkinson & Tonkinson, 2010). While it is a tall order to change the Western structuring of social relations in institutions to include Indigenous models, these could be built from acknowledgement of settler ancestral identity and Indigenous worldviews. Participant suggestions along these lines at the case institution included flexible and alternate ways of demonstrating mastery of learning, providing students with opportunities for emotional check-ins, engaging more with Indigenous families, and supporting Indigenous students to understand their potential. The Social Indigenization Model could address what Battiste and Henderson (2009, p. 6) describe as Indigenous post-secondary students experiencing “condescending Eurocentric educational systems.”
Figure 5. Social Indigenization Model. Increasing social and historical understanding leads to a social environment that encourages Indigenous student success.

Figure 6. Indigenous Acceptance Framework. High social understanding combined with high historical understanding may provide greater acceptance of Indigenous peoples.
Truong, Paradies, and Priest (2014) suggest that effective behavioural change must go beyond cultural competency to address power-based issues and include reflexivity. The Social Indigenization Model would address the power imbalance between the original European colonizers and Indigenous nations with its historical approach to ancestral identities and reconciliation, and it would likely increase understanding of conflicting technologies and worldviews. Reflexivity is certainly addressed in the model in a specific way through ancestral identity. Paradies, Franklin, and Kowal (2013) note a problem of working with settlers is they can increase their racist feelings or withdraw upon exposure to issues of settler–Indigenous relations because of the tension between white privilege and anti-racism. They suggest a deconstruction of racialized identities and theracialization of people and their histories. They propose this will move people from a position of “dysconscious racism” to one of reflexive anti-racism. Kowal (2015) notes the existence of a position among anti-racists that Indigenous disadvantage stems from colonization and trauma but maintains that primitive culture holds no future. The Social Indigenization Model and the Indigenous Acceptance Framework do not hinge on a narrative of race but on one of culture—of both settler and Indigenous peoples. The focus is on intercultural skills and historical understanding, both personal and societal, as the tools to understand Indigenous worldviews as different and valid. It could move people from separating the person and the assumed primitive culture and unlikcultural difference from personal or assumed cultural dysfunction. Hurtado, Alvarado, and Guillermo-Wann (2015) found that college employees’ awareness of racial and ethnic identity issues is required to understand their role in improving campus climate and creating inclusive learning
environments. The Social Indigenization Model could increase their measure of racial salience, or how often a person thinks about their ethnicity.

The Social Indigenization Model is not a dialogue, because this work can be done by employees of an institution without Indigenous peoples having to listen to the potential bias, tolerance, or isolation of others, such as the belief that Indigenous culture is primitive or dysfunctional. Richards (2011) recommends avoiding “humanization by entanglement,” and Moore (2014) states that majority group members need to develop agency on providing solutions and changing themselves. Certainly Indigenous peoples could be involved in defining how their worldviews are presented. A wise practice is to seek out community-recognized knowledge keepers in the traditional territory in which an institution operates to ensure that the understanding of worldviews is place-based and not appropriated for use without permissions or financial compensation. Any financial compensation would likely take the form of payment for collecting and organizing cultural knowledge, but it could also include payment for use of copyrighted or traditional forms of permission agreements, including ceremony. In large urban centres, Indigenous peoples from diverse cultures could be consulted through urban Indigenous community organizations such as the developing model of executive councils that represents communities through non-profit organizational structures. Indigenous peoples who choose to participate in the activities of the Social Indigenization Model would likely also benefit by increasing their social and historical understanding.

Bond and Haynes (2014) point out that where hostile organizational climates are experienced, only systemic patterns of unequal treatment or inappropriate attitudes can reasonably be addressed, not every occasional incident. This highlights the difference between
the approach of the Social Indigenization Model and current initiatives on diversity and equity. The Social Indigenization Model addresses many specific suggestions for improving intercultural social relations between Indigenous and settler peoples in institutions (see Table 2), such as describing a personal relationship to Indigenous sovereignty (Koerner, 2015), normalizing Indigenous worldviews (Pio et al., 2014), learning about Indigenous cultures and languages (Stirling, 2015), developing a reconciliation narrative beyond multiculturalism (Larkin, 2013), making settler identity more visible (de Leeuw, Greenwood, & Lindsay, 2013), emphasizing the social acceptance of minorities (Chen & Hamilton, 2015), defining what it means to be a settler, and positive settler identities (de Leeuw et al., 2013).

**Implementation of the Social Indigenization Model**

The Social Indigenization Model would be best implemented at all social ecological levels of an institution. The project would therefore likely require coordination through the office of the president or human resources rather than through any division responsible for Indigenous education or service to Indigenous students. The project would require increasing skills and knowledge through multiple delivery methods on Indigenous worldviews, intercultural skills, ancestral identity, and reconciliation narratives. In addition to common organizational change delivery methods such as workshops, readings, and digital learning objects, there is opportunity to engage more staff with Elders, art, food, ceremonies, community engagement, and narratives. The focus of change would be on skills and behaviours that increase social and historical understanding and lead to increased Indigenous acceptance. As with other forms of
skill-building, following the provision of information there would need to be encouragement of application and practice as well as reflexivity to deepen the impact.

The purpose of indigenization efforts to change the social environment of an organization is to provide a more supportive or more familiar social environments for Indigenous students. The primary implementation through employee skill development presents a danger that the ultimate goal of student success will be misplaced. A social ecological systems framework could be used as part of the implementation to help all stakeholder groups maintain focus on the social relations surrounding Indigenous students.

**Personal Reflections**

My data collection and analysis highlighted the social relations challenges of marginalized groups. While it is possible for majority group members to empathize with the difficult position of marginalized group members, it appears to be very difficult to change behaviours and attitudes. For many years Indigenous leaders have worked with the BC provincial government to make policy changes to improve Indigenous student outcomes (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education Innovation and Technology, 2012). The fact that these policy changes have apparently little impact on effectively changing organizational cultures is interesting. It raises a question as to how key cultural institutions, such as post-secondary institutions, can be effective tools for changing views held strongly in society in general. The source of this phenomenon is likely in unconscious and irrational processes that served a purpose in intergroup dynamics during the evolution of humans as cultural animals. Advanced settler societies appear to reinforce the psychological and sociological processes that tolerate historic inequities such as European colonization and globalization.
Although moving in a positive direction, human social relations have perhaps never adapted fast enough to human technological innovations to prevent costly damage to individuals and social groups. My belief system is similar to the philosophical stance of emotional amoral egoism (Al-Rodhan, 2011), in which humans are inherently neither moral nor immoral, and are highly influenced by psychological systems that unconsciously promote self-interest. This approach leads to a belief in rational confidence-building measures to bridge the divide between groups with opposing interests. This highly intellectual concept requires much more understanding of emotional and visceral methods to be effective. I hope that my recommendations on interculturalism, worldviews, identity, and narrative are effective methods in this challenging context of changing human behaviour.

Working in the field of Indigenous education, I anticipated encountering more emerging responses to the policy of indigenization at a public university. I certainly would have liked to see a more generous application of innovation in reconciliation and understanding of Indigenous worldviews. In the Indigenous college where I work, I have observed great respect and support for students, allowing each individual student to explore his or her own ways of being. In that context, skill-building for family and community roles is often seen as equally important to skill-building for career roles, which is similar to the goals of a liberal arts education rather than vocational training. This again reflects a values difference between Indigenous students and the institution of post-secondary education from a neoliberal viewpoint. While some respondents in my case study did seek to provide students with education for family and community roles, most were focused on much narrower objectives related to employment.
As a settler working in an Indigenous institution, I experience many of the conflicts that can arise in personal intercultural interactions. My values are often more individualistic than those of my Indigenous colleagues, who have strong ties to their community of origin. That community includes not only large extended families but also cultural traditions, lands, and language that comprise a heritage they can pass on to their children if they choose to embrace it. In addition to the heritage contained in any language and culture, global Indigenous cultures have a particular strength, as they are embedded in a specific ecosystem. This historical knowledge of human ecosystems will be invaluable to future generations in the sustainable use of resources. As humans we already have the technology to destroy the world, and the understanding to avoid catastrophic overuse is developing much more slowly. Understanding Indigenous worldviews may be invaluable.

**Areas for Future Research**

The mechanisms that underlie organizational social relations are an area open to discovery. It would be interesting to determine the effects of improved intercultural skills in people who provide services to students. It would also be interesting to probe further into the reasons why institutional staff members are very resistant to change. There is an opportunity to define and measure the effects of organizational climate on Indigenous students. Several social science approaches could assist in understanding the methods and forms of social relations between groups in organizations. Cultural psychology approaches can determine how humans from different groups interact and the barriers to interaction based on human psychology. Social psychology approaches can determine the underlying human behaviour mechanism that may impact changing social environments within organizations.
There is a large challenge in determining how to implement some of this research to create effective change mechanisms from a policy and an organizational perspective. The effects of disseminating knowledge on Indigenous worldviews, ancestral identity, or reconciliation narratives through organizational systems, could provide interesting information on mechanisms for improving social relations and building more effective institutions. Reconciliation between Indigenous and other Canadians, particularly through key social institutions, sits at the intersection of many social sciences. Global awareness of Indigenous philosophies provides an alternative to increasingly homogenizing cultures, and this raises broad questions in relation to human economies and the environment.

A limitation of changing institutional environments is the complexity of human social relations, which involve a combination of behaviours and attitudes that are both conscious and unconscious. These behaviours and attitudes are individual attributes that manifest in complex ways in small groups and at multiple levels of social organization, including family, community, culture, and society. Despite this complexity, further study will provide some generalized mechanisms for how the people within an organization react to the implementation of a provincial policy. Further study could record if complex historical societal patterns, such as relations between Canadian settlers and Indigenous peoples, can be changed at a single organization for the benefit of the organization and the people it serves.

Summary

Through this research, I analyzed the social relations aspects of the Indigenization process that is challenging the BC post-secondary education system and many others across the world. I found that social relations have been neglected, and I propose the Social Indigenization Model
as a way of addressing this deficit, which may affect Indigenous student success. This work synthesizes much of the current research available and seeks to deepen the indigenization work already being undertaken to include the social environment of institutions. It draws together anti-racism work, reconciliation methods, and ways of addressing historical injustices in a specific context of post-secondary education and intercultural relations. By proposing a method to affect change in social relations between people and the institutional environment, I hope that reconciliation will provide increasing success for Indigenous students and changes to institutions that benefit all students and the society that they will form in the future.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Key Terminology


2. *Advanced Settler Society*: One of several contemporary and highly industrial nation states in which immigrants from other geographic regions displaced an Indigenous population through the establishment of colonies that eventually formed the politically dominant majority population.

3. *Decolonization*: The process of a cultural group re-establishing self-sufficiency in governance, economy, and social relations following colonization by another form of governance, economy, and social relations.

4. *Exosystems*: In social ecological systems theory, the social actors that directly or indirectly influence a complex social environment externally.

5. *Indigenization*: The process of integrating the philosophy and worldviews of a cultural group Indigenous to a geographic location into a social institution that originates from a cultural group from another geographic location.

6. *Indigenous Education*: Any formal education that is structured or delivered using specific pedagogy or andragogy to provide better outcomes for Indigenous students.
7. **Indigenous peoples**: Cultural groups who have rights and responsibilities based on historic and current practices and whose cultures and economies are intricately interconnected with a particular ecosystem.

8. **Interculturalism**: The ability to use knowledge of the diversity of human cultures and worldviews to inform more effective communication with people who are culturally different.

9. **Macrosystem**: In social ecological systems theory, the social actors that indirectly affect the individual or group of interest in a complex social environment.

10. **Mesosystem**: In social ecological systems theory, the social actors that interact indirectly with the individual or group of interest or directly with the microsystem actors in a complex social environment.

11. **Microsystem**: In social ecological systems theory, the social actors that interact directly with the individual or group of interest in a complex social environment.

12. **Reconciliation**: The process of people or cultural groups negotiating a positive and peaceful way of existing together following major conflict or intensely negative social relations.

13. **Social Ecological Systems Theory**: A framework for discovery of patterns of influence on people or groups within a complex social environment by examining direct social interactions with the individual or group target and increasingly distant yet interrelated social actors.

14. **Social Relations**: Schemas that influence the regular and repeated interactions of individuals and groups in social settings.
15. *Traditional Indigenous Knowledge*: Knowledge of how to live and relate to the physical and social environment contained within an Indigenous culture and language.
Appendix B: Interview Guide

1. Relationship to students

How would you describe the relationship to students of your role in the institution?

- My role directly impacts individual students through regular direct interaction that is designed to facilitate the learning experience. [Please answer questions 2 and 3]
- My role helps students with their studies or supports their basic needs but not with regular direct contact to facilitate the learning experience. [Please answer question 4]
- My role provides support for instructors and student services staff to assist them in facilitating the learning experience. [Please answer question 4]
- My role has limited direct interaction with students but assists in establishing organizational climates and organization culture that impact the education experience of students. [Please answer question 5]

2. Intercultural Social Relations

a) How do you recognize the cultural references of people with different cultures?

b) How do you recognize the cultural references of Indigenous peoples of Canada?

c) How do you adapt your cultural references when dealing with people with different cultures?

d) How do you adapt your cultural references when dealing with an Indigenous person from Canada?
e) What are some cultural rules for behaviour by which Indigenous students may be operating?

f) What are the institutional rules for behaviour that Indigenous students may be occasionally violating?

g) What are the cultural rules for behaviour for Indigenous students that you may be occasionally violating?

h) What are the institutional rules for behaviour that you may occasionally be violating?

i) What are the dominant social rules for behaviour that Indigenous students may occasionally be violating?

j) What are the dominant social rules for behaviour that you may occasionally be violating?

k) What are new rules for behaviour that have been established in your engagement with students?

l) What are new rules for behaviour that have been established in your engagement with Indigenous students?

m) What skills, knowledge, or techniques that recognize cultural difference have you used to provide a learning experience to students?

n) What skills, knowledge, or techniques could you use to provide such a learning experience to students?

o) What barriers do you see to the institution providing such experiences?
p) How could you provide learning experiences to Indigenous students within their cultural worldviews?

q) What barriers do you see in providing a learning experience to Indigenous students within their cultural worldviews?

3. Civil Social Relations

Civility is a standard of behaviour in relationship to a citizen's involvement in society.

a) What are your behaviours with students that may foster civility?

b) What are the behaviours of students that may foster civility?

c) What are the behaviours of Indigenous students that may foster civility?

d) What are your behaviours with students that may occasionally foster your incivility or defensiveness?

e) What are the behaviours of students that may occasionally foster your incivility or defensiveness?

f) What are the behaviours of Indigenous students that may occasionally foster your incivility or defensiveness?

4. Indigenous Education Rights

a) In your view, do the Indigenous peoples of Canada have the right to receive education from a public institution that respects their culture and does not require their assimilation into dominant culture?

b) The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous peoples Article 14 says, “States shall, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for Indigenous individuals, particularly children, including
those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.” Do you think this article, which is described by the UN as “a standard of achievement to be pursued in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect,” is being adhered to at your institution?

c) How is the institution supportive of Indigenous students?

d) How is the institution hostile to Indigenous students?

e) How does the institution accommodate students with different cultures?

f) How does the institution accommodate students who are Indigenous peoples of Canada?

g) What are the institutional rules for behaviour that front-line staff may occasionally be violating?

h) What are the dominant social rules for behaviour that Indigenous students may occasionally be violating?

i) What skills, knowledge, or techniques that recognize cultural difference have been used to provide a learning experience to students?

j) How could front-line staff provide learning experiences to Indigenous students within their cultural worldviews?

k) What barriers do you see in providing a learning experience to Indigenous students within their cultural worldviews?

5. **Institutional Social Relations**

a) What is the approach of the institution to the provincial policy of indigenization?
b) What has changed at your institution as a result of indigenization efforts?

c) Has there been any measurement of indigenization?

d) How do you see change emerging in organizational culture as a result of indigenization?

e) How has the institution supported intercultural dialogue?

f) How has the institution developed a reconciliation narrative between Indigenous and other Canadians?

g) What are the barriers to the indigenization of organizational culture?

h) What policies has your institution adopted to support indigenization?

i) How has your institution applied affirmative action for hiring Indigenous staff?

j) Who has accountability for indigenization in the organization?

k) What interventions have been more effective in supporting emerging changes to social relations in the institution?

l) What evidence is there of emerging changes to social relations in the institution that are increasing the achievement of Indigenous students?