

Faculty of Education, Office of the Dean
The University of British Columbia Vancouver Campus



“Indigenous Education Should be Everyone’s Responsibility”

External Review Report

October 2018

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Office of Indigenous Education at the University of British Columbia is responsible for Indigenous curriculum across the Faculty of Education and facilitates the Indigenous Teacher Education Program (NITEP), and graduate programming for Indigenous students.

History

The NITEP program came into existence in 1974 as a 4-year Bachelor of Education degree (BEd) program for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. The program is guided by Indigenous philosophies, understandings, pedagogies, methodologies and practices, and has maintained strong relationships with local Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers to inspire the NITEP community through their wisdom, teachings, and holistic supports. The Office of Indigenous Education continues to strengthen the program and supports available for Indigenous graduate students, and is active in community engagement.

External Review Team & Review Process

To enhance growth and opportunity within Indigenous education in the Faculty of Education, an external review was conducted to provide directions and highlight new opportunities in the NITEP program and graduate programming for Indigenous students. The Review Team is comprised of three Indigenous scholars: Dr. Evelyn Steinhauer (Cree, University of Alberta), Dr. Michelle Pidgeon (Mi'kmaq, Simon Fraser University), Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann (Anishinaabe, University of Saskatchewan). The Review Team spent 3 days from May 14th-16th, 2018 interviewing senior and academic leaders, department heads, instructors, Indigenous graduate and undergraduate students and NITEP alumni.

Questions asked by the reviewers were related to: the strengths and gaps in the NITEP program, curriculum, services, and resources; the effectiveness of the program in relation to students and to the field of teaching; opportunities and new directions for the program; and, Indigenous graduate programming. To provide deeper insight, supporting documentation (self-study report, NITEP Think-in reports, program data, summary material of strategic planning; 40-year NITEP Celebration Overview book) was examined. The resulting written report highlights the reviewers' findings and recommendations specific to the NITEP program and aspects of the Indigenous graduate program. NITEP and Indigenous graduate programming, which includes Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement (SAGE), a province wide peer-support/faculty mentoring educational program, was appreciated by all that were interviewed. The Indigenous ontological and epistemological underpinnings were

deemed the core strengths of Indigenous education within the Faculty.

The study found that NITEP continues to be guided by the seven principles or values that it was originally built on: regional access based/family approach, Indigenous education focus, enhanced educational experiences, community ties, partnerships, and holistic student support (Archibald & La Rochelle, 2018, p. 2010). Finally, Indigenous Education at UBC supports the Truth and Reconciliation 94 Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Recommendations

(More detailed descriptions of these recommendations are interspersed throughout the report)

For NITEP to hold onto its core values and grow alongside the complexities of providing teacher education to rural Aboriginal communities within the urban setting of Vancouver, the reviewers recommended that the following suggestions outlined below should be considered:

- *Hire an on-campus program advisor:*
This individual will oversee academic and cultural support for all NITEP students on the Vancouver campus.
- *Appoint a program administrator that is dedicated to NITEP:*
This individual would address inquiries, support site coordinators, and ensure that a communication plan is implemented. This role could expand to support admissions (e.g., deal with inquiries, support completing of applications) and also help with academic advising needs of NITEP students.
- *Clarify roles and responsibilities within the program manager role:*
This would ensure that the responsibility of overseeing and coordinating the sites and working closely with the team of coordinators across each site is focused and supports the work of the IE team across the Faculty.
- *Restructure field centres and coordinator roles:*
Examination of the relationship between the coordinator to outreach role and the importance of a team for support.
- *Clarify the roles & responsibilities of field centre coordinators:*
The roles and responsibilities of the field centre coordinators must be clear and

explicit in relation to them supporting the NITEP cohorts in-community - (e.g., advising, recruiting, student services support). If the site centre coordinators are being asked to also teach, then they must have the appropriate credentials and related teaching experience to support that role. Coordinators who are also teaching must be given appropriate compensation on top of their coordinator contract salary.

- *Increase Indigenous faculty directly tied to NITEP:*
Should increase the number of faculty members directly involved with the program, in both urban and rural settings.
- *Maintain high academic rigor:*
Academic rigor needs to be high with a commitment from the instructors and students to raise the bar; Year 1-3 needs to better prepare students for the expectations/workload of Year 4 and 5 in the 21st Century.
- *Shift from online to blended approach:*
A shift from online to a blended approach to program delivery; blended and face to face approaches were seen to promote a greater sense of community by most of the participants in the study.
- *Re-strategize recruitment and retention plan:*
There is an opportunity for NITEP and other units at UBC to work to develop recruitment and retention strategy for NITEP students at the field and urban centres.
- *Elder in residence and mentorship opportunities:*
Elders play an important role in supporting and guiding both undergraduate and graduate students. Having access to Elders was seen as an important cultural and emotional support for the students. The students also saw value (e.g. networking and career guidance.) in mentorship opportunities with alumni.

The sustainability of the NITEP program will be dependent on the level of financial and human resourcing available. Over the last 44 years, UBC's Faculty of Education NITEP program has served to inspire students and Indigenous education programs across the nation. It is because of this and, most importantly, for the benefit of future students that it is resourced to realize the recommendations that are deemed most important to the Faculty of Education, in conjunction with the Office of Indigenous Education.

Conclusion: “We resource what we value”

The Indigenous graduate students that were a part of the focus group were grateful and enthused for the opportunity to share their successes and challenges, and their experiences as graduate students at UBC. The bottom line is that most of the recommendations cited in this report depend on financial and staffing resources and these suggested changes will require increased budgets for Indigenous education.

By resourcing Indigenous education (NITEP, Indigenous graduate students, research, space and place etc.) a strong message of what is valued is communicated to Indigenous peoples - students, faculty, and staff. Dialogue on how these funds can be acquired and sustained need to begin as a result of this report. Since racism and discriminatory behaviours that students were exposed to in the classroom and on campus emerged as a finding, the Faculty of Education, especially senior and academic leadership, should consider strategies that challenge racism (e.g., anti- racism education, unconscious bias training) within the Faculty and across the UBC campus. Culturally appropriate wellness programs, mentorship opportunities, and “counselling” time with Elders are examples of holistic supports that could be enriched, or developed, for Indigenous students.

The Raven story, which is part of the NITEP logo, can provide an ongoing impetus for positive change:

Raven pitied the people who were living in darkness and decided that he would find the sun for them, so that they could have a better life. Raven went on a journey and after lots of effort and trickery, found a hole in the sky, and captured the sun. Raven brought the sun back to the people of the earth. (As cited in Archibald & LaRochelle, 2018, p. 2019)

The title of the report, “*Indigenous education is everyone’s responsibility*” (a participant quote), reminds the Faculty of Education, and UBC, of the importance of collective responsibility for ensuring the quality and sustainability of Indigenous education.

EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAM

The three-member external review team is composed of the individuals whom possess extensive knowledge and experience in Indigenous education:

Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann is Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), and has been actively involved within the school system as a former elementary and high school teacher and principal. She was at the University of Calgary for 13 years where her roles included Coordinator of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit undergraduate teacher education program and Director of Indigenous Education Initiatives within the Werklund School of Education. She also co-chaired the Werklund School of Education Indigenous Strategy, and alongside the Provost, the University-wide Indigenous Strategy. Jacqueline is now a Professor and the Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement at the University of Saskatchewan.

Dr. Evelyn Steinhauer is an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Policy Studies (Faculty of Education) at the University of Alberta. She also serves as the Director of the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP) in the Faculty of Education. Evelyn serves on various committees at both the University of Alberta and at large. She is a member of the Saddle Lake Cree Nation.

Dr. Michelle Pidgeon is of Mi'kmaq ancestry from Newfoundland and Labrador, and currently an Associate Professor, Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. Her research agenda is located within the areas of higher education and Indigeneity. This research agenda, with the goal of empowering Indigenous success, focuses on university and college responsibility and accountability to Aboriginal higher education from policy to practice. Dr. Pidgeon is also the Director of the Centre for Educational Leadership and Policy and the editor of the Canadian Journal of Higher Education.

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Indigenous Education in the Faculty of Education at UBC is committed to advancing Indigenous education priorities across the Faculty, University, and within local, national, and international communities. Their work extends beyond classrooms and schools to consider Indigeneity at the intersections of social, ecological, linguistic, and political justice in other places, locally and internationally. The promotion of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous engagement are signature strengths of UBC's Faculty of Education, and they are critical components of our Indigenous Education Strategic Plan.

There is significant mobilization in Indigenous education across Canada and internationally. This creates opportunities for continued growth and innovation for the Faculty of Education at UBC that focuses on:

- Increasing access to and retention, persistence, and success within post-secondary education for Indigenous learners in teacher education and graduate programs;
- Strengthening community engagement through meaningful partnerships and collaborations;
- Engaging in research and curriculum development that advances Indigenous priorities and program opportunities;
- The role of Indigenous faculty and staff;
- Advancing Indigenous priorities at the local, national, and international levels.¹

The purpose of the review was to investigate and address the following questions:

Identify strengths and gaps in NITEP program, curriculum, services, and resources

- What is working well?
- What is valued?
- What are areas of need or change?
- What areas might be strengthened?

Assess the effectiveness of the program in relationship to students and to the field of teaching

¹ This information was retrieved from the Office of Indigenous Education Self-Study April 2018.

- How can teaching and learning of students be best supported?
- How well is NITEP approaching the preparation of students for a career in teaching?
- What is the impact of NITEP from the perspectives of educators and educational partners?
- How is NITEP viewed among educators within the field?

Identify opportunities and new directions for the program

- What services, resources, curriculum, and structures could be developed or strengthened?
- How might NITEP foster stronger connections between NITEP and TEO (Teacher Education Office) that lead to more seamless integration?
- What roles and responsibilities could be developed among those working in NITEP to strengthen supports and program delivery?

Meet with stakeholders (e.g., students, faculty, administrators) to identify opportunities for strengthening programs, services, curriculum that support access, retention, and successful completion of Indigenous graduate students. These findings and recommendations are separate from this formal NITEP report.

NITEP's Objective & History

NITEP was developed in response to the need expressed by First Nations throughout British Columbia for a more relevant and effective teacher education program. The general objective of NITEP is to increase the number of certified Aboriginal Teachers in BC by offering an alternative program appropriate to the educational background, heritage, needs and desires of Aboriginal people in the province. Since 1974, over 380 students have graduated from the program with many achieving successful careers as teachers, administrators, provincial and federal government employees, and other highly valued positions in Indigenous education. A large proportion of the graduates have continued their studies and have received their Masters and Doctorate degrees. Graduates of the BEd program (Elementary or Secondary) are prepared to be effective educators for public, band-operated and independent schools.²

² This information was retrieved from the NITEP brochure.

NITEP began as an elementary teacher education program in September of 1974 in response to needs expressed by Indigenous people throughout BC for a more effective and relevant teacher education program. As of September 2004, a secondary option for those who want to teach Grades 8 to 12 was established. The current Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program provides the options for both Elementary & Middle schools and Secondary schools. Indigenous people want a teacher education program that addresses educational issues pertinent to public and First Nations schools' settings where their children are in attendance. These issues include curriculum, teaching pedagogy and methodology, testing, assessment, and evaluation. Indigenous people want a teacher education program that honours and builds upon Indigenous cultures.

There is a shortage of Indigenous teachers in BC, and an increasing number of Indigenous people desire to become teachers. NITEP was designed to meet these particular needs. The intention of the program is to build upon and strengthen the cultural heritage and identity of the professionals in training. Using these strengths as a base, students develop the skills and academic knowledge expected of beginning educators.

NITEP is a five-year concurrent program, although many students choose to complete the requirements in less time. Up to 12 credits may be completed during summer sessions.

The First Nations Education Council*,³ which develops and advises the program and curriculum policies, is made up of Aboriginal educators, UBC Faculty, coordinator representatives, a BCTF representative, and NITEP student representatives.

The FNEC in consultation with the NITEP leadership decides on the location of the regional field centres. The FNEC considers the commitment and strength of the Aboriginal community host/partner, whether the region has had a centre previously, and the various partnership resources that are available for students. Their decision is respected and accepted by the Faculty of Education's Teacher Education Office (TEO) and Dean's Office. The regional field centre ensures that students begin their teacher education program close to their home or in a location that has strong Aboriginal community supports and relationships. (Archibald & La Rochelle, 2018, p. 121)

The partnership that NITEP has with FNEC is long-standing and integral to quality programming facilitation.⁴

³ The NITEP Advisory Committee underwent a name change as of February 1995.

⁴ This information was retrieved from the NITEP website - <http://nitep.educ.ubc.ca/about/>

Consultation Process

The consultation process occurred over three days and involved individual and group interviews with faculty, staff, department heads, directors, and senior leadership. The interviews conducted were one hour long, and the Review Team sought to gather the following information from the interviews:

“Where have we been” asks us to consider:

- What is working well and what is valued?
- What is the impact of our programming and/or services that support Indigenous education for Indigenous students and all learners?

“Where are we going” asks us to consider:

- What opportunities exist for Indigenous education across departments, schools, units in terms of programs, coursework, research, curriculum development, and/or services?
- How might we increase access, retention, persistence, and success for Indigenous students at all levels?
- How can we address faculty priorities concerning increasing the number of Indigenous faculty members, establishing relevant and much needed graduate programs concerning Indigenous education, and/or other priorities?
- What supports are needed for professional learning concerning Indigeneity in areas of teaching and research for all faculty, staff, and students?

“How do we get there” asks us to consider:

- What structures, resources, supports, services are needed to advance opportunities for growth and change in the schools and across departments and/or units?
- What role can the Office of Indigenous Education play to better support work, goals, and planning for Indigenous education in departments, units, and schools?

Questions related to Indigenous Graduate Programming:

- What is working well?
- What is valued?
- What are areas of need or change?
- What areas can be strengthened?

The three reviewers recorded the answers that emerged from the participants and informally discussed the findings during breaks one at the end of each day, and the second after the data collection period concluded. Subsequent analyses conducted from the notes that were recorded helped to highlight emerging themes.

FINDINGS OF NITEP CONSULTATION

This report provides an overview for four main areas identified in the NITEP Terms of Reference. These areas include the following:

1. Strengths of NITEP
2. Challenges of NITEP
3. The Effectiveness of the Program in Relationship to Students and to the Field of Teaching
4. Opportunities and New Directions for the NITEP Program

Each of these areas may include any or all of the following:

Confirmation:

The general adequacy and validity of the information provided for each area is confirmed and any significant gaps are identified.

Commendation:

The significant area strengths are highlighted and commended.

Recommendation:

Significant area improvements are recommended if needed.

Area 1: Strengths of NITEP

Within this section, we report on what stakeholders valued about NITEP, what they identified as working well and areas that need to be strengthened and/or changed. Overall, there was resounding support and deep appreciation for NITEP's 40-year history, long standing presence in the province, and the impact NITEP alumni have made to Aboriginal education. Within these comments, stakeholders were also aware that NITEP also needs to evolve, as it has in the past, to meet with the contemporary needs of Aboriginal communities, school systems, and Aboriginal learners themselves. We reflected on the following questions within this process:

- What is working well?
- What is valued?
- What are areas of need or change?
- What areas can be strengthened?

External Review Team Findings

The stakeholders were very forthcoming when asked to identify the strengths and gaps of NITEP in relation to the program, curriculum, services, and resources. We have organized this section thematically and provide a descriptive narrative to share what participants in the review process shared with the Review Team.

"We were welcome to bring in our own knowledge, our ways of being. In my opinion NITEP prepared me for my career by educating, mentoring, and supporting me while I attended UBC. Our NITEP cohort taught me through the lens of First Nations people NITEP gave me tools for my teaching tool box and I'm very grateful for their support."

First and foremost, the program's centrality of Indigenous knowledges, ways of knowing and being were highly valued. The program's focus on culture-based pedagogy (e.g., experiential learning) aligned with Indigenous pedagogical approaches, and role- modeled for the students as to how they can be within the classroom as Indigenous teachers. The learning environment was described as a safe space for sharing and learning together and a place where students developed a sense of belonging within the University. The inclusion of Indigenous Elders within the learning was also highly valued. Related to this, it was noted that the program would benefit from increased Elder involvement both in the urban and rural sites. NITEP evolved to meet the needs of Aboriginal education within Aboriginal

communities and that value still was emphasized as a core value of the program. The rigor and quality of the NITEP coursework helps prepare students to become teachers, as they learn how to put theory to practice. The supports provided through Elders, lunch and learns, and other events were seen as important parts of the program. The opportunity to choose the Indigenous Education specialization option for the professional year was also noted as a valuable component of Indigenous education within the Faculty of Education.

“Staff try to help the students with everything. They are not administration; they are someone the students can connect with.”

There are other factors that support students in the NITEP program: they have 10 years to complete the program and they can re-enter twice; students can enter the professional year without completing all the electives, although this can be interpreted as a strength or otherwise.

The emphasis of culture, language, and identity within NITEP was valued as it created a culture of support and learning where NITEP students and alumni felt valued and supported in being who they were in the classroom as Indigenous peoples. For example, in the teaching of language, cultural teachings helped to recreate the values of self-worth, language and culture.

“Language gives more depth and value- an established connection of what and who you are connected to.”

Some acknowledged that attrition rates were related to issues of intergenerational trauma (lack of confidence, triggers set when teaching in one’s own communities contributing to wellness issues) and other challenges connected to lack of finances, housing, childcare, relocation, transition from the home community to UBC, culture shock, partner schools not being welcoming, tokenism, and personal issues experienced by Indigenous students within the program, especially during their fourth year. It was also clearly recognized that NITEP, as an Indigenous-centred program, allowed them to find their voice and to heal. It was seen as a transformative process for the students:

“The strengths are the connections NITEP has with the community, and this in return gives students strength.”

“NITEP was a great experience, a bit intimidating at first, but as a result of the cohort, I have made life-long friends.”

As the above quote suggests, another core strength of NITEP was the cohort-model, where students journeyed together in their learning, and also learned how to be a teacher while navigating through the complexities of colonization and systemic racism. The community-based model with small class size works well; this is important as it allows students to reside in a supportive environment and community which values their contributions, rather than viewing them as just a number. As one stakeholder shared *““planning with community, bringing them together to see how they would fit into NITEP”* was a valuable part of the relationship building process between a community and NITEP. An alumnus shared the impact of having the choice to do their NITEP program in their community:

“I would not have had the opportunity to be a teacher; my parents could not afford to send me to university.”

It was noted that many of the students have family responsibilities and staying in the community ensures that family obligations are maintained. Being culturally-based in-community programs was a strength of NITEP that was also seen as an opportunity for growth. Several alumni spoke of their NITEP cohort as a family, and the kinship relationships they established within the program extended into their professional lives as teachers once in the field. As one shared *“Once a NITEP-er, always a NITEP-er”*. The NITEP alumni network across the province was also helpful in off-site observation and placements for practicums:

“Coordinators meet the students where they are; providing supports. Students acquire the skills they need; the staff cares about them.”

The NITEP coordinators and staff were seen as a core-support system of the program. Coordinators meet four times per year (twice by phone) to discuss curriculum development and recruitment - among other topics and issues. While later in this report the reviewers share that being both a coordinator and instructor has proven to be a challenge of the NITEP program— resoundingly, coordinators were valued for their holistic and nurturing support of students (e.g., emotionally, physically, intellectually, and culturally).

Coordinators helped students navigate the university system and one NITEP alumni shared that their coordinator went above and beyond for them when they were struggling and reached out on their behalf to their professors. The fact that coordinators were also from the local community hosting the NITEP cohort was valued. Coordinators provided one-on-one support, advising, and counselling, which required understanding and empathy of each student’s circumstances. Through this approach to supporting students, coordinators could

help scaffold the learning based on where the students were and help support them to get them where they needed to go.

“As a student. Skills to find own path. As a coordinator: strengths are connections with community. Support no matter where you are – a voice. How does NITEP do this? One to one meeting with students. Empathy, going beyond roles and responsibility. Go beyond extensions and due dates etc. Meeting them where they are; get skills. Breaking things down in a different way – scaffolding.”

This strengths-based view of NITEP students was something some participants wanted to emphasize as a core-value to ensure that the systemic racism and deficit discourse often attributed to Indigenous students did not happen within NITEP or Indigenous education overall.

Other strengths of the program noted were the practicum placements and preparation. For example, NITEP offers students the opportunity of 10 practicum days in the community – 5 consecutive and 5 non-consecutive, which is over and above the regular required practicums. The fact that they also learn how to do lesson plans within the first three years was seen as valuable to prepare them for Year 4/5. Stakeholders within the Faculty spoke of the influence NITEP has had not just within the province but within the Faculty itself. They shared that without NITEP, other departments/units in the Faculty of Education wouldn't have opportunities to develop Indigenous program (e.g., Kinesiology), modeled how to do partnership, intentional relationships, e.g., NITEP mentor Kinesiology students. On the Vancouver campus, NITEP was seen as having an influence on the Indigenous education cohort. Having UBC leadership and administration go to the NITEP sites in communities was noted as important to the relationships with the community and demonstrating value of NITEP to UBC. The electives allowed for within NITEP created opportunities for the students to take courses from other faculties, notably, they sought out courses taught by Indigenous faculty.

The admissions process was seen as working well to increase access and flexibility for Indigenous students. For example, to remove the barrier of finances, the application fee for NITEP has been waived from 2018 onward. The flexibility of the field centres allowed them to adapt to the needs of the students and to the strengths of the on-site coordinator. Of note were the comments related to the desire for NITEP to be more present in the communities; the frustration that full practicums could not be completed in First Nations communities and band schools because they are not recognized as part of the provincial system; and, the financial challenges related to remote communities (e.g. travel costs to bring students to

UBC, and for UBC representatives to visit the communities).

The wellness initiatives and the leadership of NITEP were acknowledged by some of the participants. Wellness teachings included suicide awareness and prevention workshops (these are open to the community), wellness peers on Wednesdays – on campus; where activities related to wellness are conducted (e.g., weaving, crafts, gather weekly because they were missing connections other than coursework); and dietitian information. This learning is presented at field centres by the coordinators. The Director of the NITEP program was recognized for her strong leadership and evidenced-based approaches to practice. Concern was voiced about the significant workload associated with the directorship and the need for greater support mechanisms.

Overall, the participants expressed ‘gratitude’ that NITEP existed for the reasons outlined in this section, this including the practice “of meeting students where they are at” and its “transformational” experiences. Of note were the comments that highlighted NITEP’s “great beginnings” with Verna Kirkness at the helm and the great opportunities that lie ahead for NITEP for the next 7 generations.

Confirmation

The Self Study Report, and the interviews and focus groups held with students confirms that NITEP is a valuable contribution to Indigenous education in the province, and to the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia. The values of community relationships, holistic support, Elders and the embeddedness of Indigenous cultures, languages, and ways of knowing throughout the NITEP program ensured that Indigenous teachers felt they could be who they were, as Indigenous peoples, within the program and most importantly, in their teaching practice.

Commendation

The NITEP team must be commended for the continuation of a program that for 40 years has made a significant impact, not only to Indigenous education but to the K-12 education system in British Columbia. As a leader in Indigenous education, NITEP has an established relationship within communities and alumni networks across the Province. It is in this deep respect and recognition of the NITEP legacy, that the recommendations put forward in this report sustain the values and core goals of the program to meet the needs of the next 7 generations of Indigenous teachers, students, and communities.

Recommendations

- *The enhancement of financial & human resources:*
NITEP in the preparation of Indigenous teachers, are also preparing tomorrow's leaders for many Indigenous communities. Indigenous communities, in this time of reconciliation, are looking to work with NITEP, in true partnership; subsequently, it is recommended that the financial and human resources be put in place to undertake this work going forward.
- *Continued relationship with the Ministry of Education:*
The Faculty of Education work closely with the Indigenous Education and Teacher Education Offices to continue to lobby the Ministry of Education and the Teacher Regulation branch to allow NITEP and TEO students do their full practicum at band and community-based schools. This is a common practice in other provinces (e.g., Alberta) and would help support the work of Indigenous education and reconciliation across the province.
- *Continued respect for Indigenous Knowledges:*
Respect for Indigenous Knowledges must remain central to NITEP and community engagement matters. Therefore, attention and care must continue to be paid to the needs of Indigenous communities and how they are wanting to work with NITEP. The flexibility of off-campus programs is a strength of the NITEP program because it is responsive and adaptive to community needs. This core value of the program should continue to be supported and explored in terms of opportunities for growth. Being part of UBC was an expressed value by some participants, consequently, enrolling in NITEP regardless of the site of the program must be seen as, and valued for, representing UBC.
- *Adapting support services to represent all student demographics:*
Recognizing that who NITEP students have been over the 40 years have changed and NITEP must also evolve to meet the needs of the students who are now applying for NITEP. As stated, Indigenous students are getting much younger and they are expecting more from the program, their instructors, and the overall experience. With this, a younger student applying directly from high school challenges the assumption that NITEP students are older, returning-to-school learners. While the older female student with dependents is still strongly represented in NITEP cohorts, these younger students are also part of the program

and adapting support services to all students in NITEP is important in terms of student recruitment and retention.

Area 2: Challenges of NITEP

The stakeholders were also very forthcoming when asked to identify the challenges and opportunities of NITEP in relation to the program, curriculum, services, and resources. Building upon what was viewed as NITEP strengths (Area 1), stakeholders, both internally and externally to NITEP, saw the review as an opportunity to have NITEP evolve to mirror the current realities of Indigenous education in the Province, for the provision of curriculum and learning opportunities, and to become more responsive to their learners, despite whether located in the urban or rural cohorts.

Systemic Racism and Colonial Biases

One of the challenges that NITEP and its students face are the systemic racism and colonial biases that exist within the institution and broader society regarding Indigenous-focused programs and Indigenous peoples themselves. Comments related to addressing this included the following:

- there is a need to understand prejudice and racism;
- students need coping strategies to combat racism on and off campus;
- teachings of land and identity are important and will act as a buffer to racist acts that students experience;
- and UBC should work at changing the culture and climate to be more welcoming.

NITEP has a reputation for academic and cultural excellence, and is well-known across the province. In some regards, the perception was that the supportive nature of the program, with extension of deadlines and compassion for the complexity of Indigenous students' lives, perpetuated the stereotype that NITEP students are held to lesser standards than other UBC teacher education students. Others shared stories of some NITEP graduates is that once in the field they were not prepared for the demands of being a classroom teacher within their own, other Indigenous rural communities, or urban schools. However, there were some differences in opinions expressed: while some see NITEP graduates as excellent trained professionals, others spoke that the lack of rigor within NITEP is evident when their graduates come to districts for interviews and/or their practicums and are not equipped with the skills required for the work.

An external stakeholder stated, in terms of the needs of Indigenous education and teachers in the province: *"We are beyond just culture now, how does one Indigenize the curriculum? How do we build capacity and career pathways for NITEP graduates?"* Another participant commented that the "program needed tweaking so it could be at the same standards as

other teacher education programs”, while another participant stated that the system may not be ready for NITEP students; they may not be hiring and if they are, the recruitment and selection committees may not have Indigenous representatives. They continued to express concerns about non-Indigenous educators and leaders who do not have in depth Indigenous education (e.g., histories). The suggestion was that there needs to be more opportunities for both Indigenous NITEP students and non-Indigenous educators and leaders.

Governance, Leadership, & Institutional Responsibility

To examine how NITEP bridges capacity and career pathways of NITEP graduates, this next section speaks to the internal organization (e.g., governance, leadership, responsibility) of the Faculty of Education in relationship to NITEP, Indigenous Education, and the Teacher Education Office (TEO). It is also directly connected to subsequent section of moving NITEP into the 21st century.

It was evident to the Review Team that considering the leadership and governance structures in which NITEP currently operates is an important aspect of this review. It was clear that a communication strategy and committee structure is required to not only improve the work that is being done within NITEP, but to also support the work within the TEO. Historically, NITEP and TEO representatives met collectively only once every other month, which contributes to the communication and relationship issues. The topics for these meetings were described as focused problematic (e.g., student issues), rather than programmatic issues. An attempt to change this occurred last year in 2017 when the NITEP’s Assistant Director (who is also the Manager of Indigenous Education) made it her goal to meet with TEO once per week to discuss NITEP student advisory questions and issues.

A NITEP student shared that they didn’t see NITEP separate from the Faculty of Education, they were part of the Faculty and should be able to go to any office to get help and support. This implies that the TEO, IE, and NITEP need to have better lines of communication to ensure that students are getting the support and advice they required. Although it is clear that NITEP has the primary responsibility in the first three years, the question that was asked more than once was, “Whose responsibility is it for the transition to year 4?” We learned that the TEO does oversee field experiences in Year 4, and thus meaningful integration and collaboration around planning (not just a student case approach) between NITEP and TEO is needed. Another example is having NITEP coordinators attend the TEO coordinator meetings

to discuss roles and responsibilities, focused programmatic planning, and engage in constructive dialogue on how to better support NITEP students.

While it is recognized that NITEP needs to maintain authority and oversight of its program, it also needs space within Faculty of Education for presence and connections to students. Further to this, it was suggested that the current structure of the First Nations Education Committee terms of reference be revisited. It was shared that currently, there is no troubleshooting process with FNEC (e.g., no information shared on student data and progress), and some felt that this group could be playing a larger role. For example, feedback should be collected from students and this information would be then utilized by the council to support program development and resources, and assist with responding to concerns and challenges.

Need for Connections, Communication, and Coordination

In articulating the core values of NITEP in the previous section, stakeholders were mindful that the cultural practices and academic rigor experienced in some of the NITEP sites was not a consistent practice or expectation. It was also pointed out that there seemed to be more program support provided to off-campus NITEP sites and that the outreach available was seemingly unavailable at the on-campus sites. A participant commented that there was no UBC identity for off-campus students and questioned how this could be improved. Conversely, the on-campus programs had some programming, like its wellness programming, that wasn't available to off-campus sites until they came to UBC for their last couple of years (year 4 &5).

Stakeholders acknowledged that there needs to be more opportunities for instructors and coordinators to meet and discuss teaching and retention strategies on a regular basis. It was suggested that technology could be used more to help different sites connect and learn together and bring together the coordinators on a more regular basis.

Many of the participants expressed the need for more communication between NITEP administration, staff, coordinators, and students. Some suggested stronger lines of communication be created between coordinators and NITEP administration. Others noted the negative impact that addressing email requests from students/faculty/staff by NITEP staff and administration has on resolving issues, having questions answered etc. Students in particular noted their frustration with the lack of email communication with their coordinators/instructors and their physical absence from their offices. Others noted that

NITEP News is losing its impact and not reaching its potential like it had previously done so in communicating with students and the community.

Finally, there was a suggestion that the roles and responsibilities should be reworked, where one could work on advising while another coordinator's focus would be on teaching.

Financial & Human Resources Constraints

Another challenge that directly connects to institutional responsibilities for NITEP are the financial constraints of the program. This has a direct impact on and challenges how things were done in the past, impeding potential growth into the future. Several stakeholders expressed that the budget cuts impacted NITEP's ability to offer supports and services such as tutoring, traveling to field centres, and professional development for coordinators and NITEP gatherings that bring together all the field centres, students and coordinators. For example, orientation was a two-day event and now it is only one day. The impact of losing three faculty positions and reduced access to a teacher assistant has been significant.

Although the effort to disseminate a sense of community by the UBC leadership who travel within the field centres is appreciated, some members felt that they could benefit from visiting the Vancouver Campus prior to their Year 4 and 5. This was seen as an important program support to student retention given the heavy academic workload and scheduling demands of students in their professional year and connects to the theme of retention and recruitment.

Recruitment & Retention

Connected to program leadership and governance is the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students into and through NITEP. While there is a high interest in NITEP programs, which is measured through applications, there remains an ongoing challenge of retention. In part, this requires an understanding of the demographics behind the Aboriginal learners who are choosing their programs in-community or at the UBC- Vancouver campus. For example, the in-community population tends to be composed of older women with children, whereas the Vancouver campus draws a younger group of students, both male and female.

There was mention of the challenges of off campus recruitment, which is an additional responsibility of the coordinators. The entrance requirements of English 12 and Math 11 were noted as barriers for some older learners. Advertising for NITEP, due to funding

constraints, has predominantly been online. However, this may be preventing communities and potential students, who may not be reliant on technology, from learning about these opportunity. Some stakeholders suggested that intentional marketing and promotion is needed to support the recruitment of students into NITEP and IE pathways within Faculty of Education. Others felt that increased uses of social media, or at least, being where the students were (both physically and technologically) was important to recruitment into the program. Others focused their comments on the retention of current NITEP students, noting that some on-campus activities were not available to the off-campus NITEP sites.

The main challenge that was proposed is the relocation of rural students to the UBC Vancouver campus, a transition that is not supported well. Field centres require social spaces for students as well as learning spaces. A NITEP specific orientation in the fall would help bring students together and help to orient them to UBC before classes start. Finances and relocation costs were also barriers to students' persistence in the program, once they had to move to UBC- Vancouver.

Others noted that the attrition rates are too high and noted that student's withdrawal was not due to academic ability but due to life circumstances. They expressed that NITEP and UBC, could be doing more to support students in these ways (e.g., family housing, childcare, schooling, and finances). Others suggested that intergenerational mentoring that builds on Indigenous ways of knowing, could potentially support the retention of NITEP and Indigenous students. NITEP could create an intergenerational mentoring program that ladders students in Year 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, with NITEP alumni who are teaching and/or administrators with the intentions to connect students to those in districts to build early relationships and learn from experienced Indigenous teachers.

"Mentoring could be taken up like an apprenticeship so more applied and hands-on-for guidance and support within and beyond NITEP."

In 3rd year students exploring connections with teachers in the field— having 4th years share their experiences would further help build networks. There is also an inherent need to think of succession planning at community sites and within UBC Vancouver campus both in terms of staff and faculty. Connected to recruitment and retention is the difficulties of having a program that is current and adaptable to the changing learner and learning environment within the K-12 system.

21st Century NITEP Programming, Curriculum, & Assessment

The next challenge of moving NITEP into the 21st century is mitigating the clear tensions

between the program needing to honour and respect the core values that make the program unique and the critical importance of adapting pedagogical and curriculum advances (e.g., technology, blended learning, and other technologies) to support NITEP students to enable our future teachers to evolve with fast-paced learning environments, particularly in regards to the BC new curriculum.

By far, the most feedback we received from participants was related to the NITEP programmatic challenges, curriculum and assessment. Stakeholders, particularly the alumni, current students, and external partners were all cognizant that Aboriginal students have higher expectations of themselves and for their academic programming and can be challenged to do more within NITEP. As stated previously, NITEP students are expected to be leaders, so in what ways can NITEP also prepare them for leadership roles within their teaching practice. Participants called for curriculum revision, and we learned that this will be occurring over the next two to three years. Within this process, courses will be rewritten to effectively use online resources, which will be connected to the field centres. In addition to this, language pathways will be developed, and a dual degree explored.

Advising

NITEP can work better with external partnering institutions to help field center students and coordinators navigate two institutions. There was also a need for NITEP students to be able to go to TEO for advising rather than only go to their NITEP coordinators. Consequently, the pre-requisites, at the junior level, needs to be clear. Degree courses and prerequisites need to be mapped out early for students, so they know what they need to take each semester or year:

- exploration of policies (e.g., admissions), programming, and strategies (e.g., bridging) that alleviate barriers (e.g., Math, English 12) NITEP access;
- sequencing mapped out for the whole program (e.g., organization of courses) with clear communication on deadlines;
- specific program planning required for secondary pathway;
- the option of being able to do 60 credits over 2 years (instead of 1) needs to be communicated to current and incoming NITEP students. The institution must recognize the financial impact this scheduling may have with a heightened awareness that funders may not be willing to provide money for a 5th year;
- information on the value of academic pathways (e.g., two degrees, one degree, diploma, certification) on professional salary.

It was also suggested that academic and career advising was not the only support needed for NITEP students, and an advisor that would help with funding and local community resources would be valuable. The summer institute was viewed as a potential opportunity to bring all NITEP cohorts together to share learning experiences; it was recognized that such an event requires resources (e.g., financial) and other supports, and its value would be returned in the opportunity to provide one-on-one advising to students to ensure they have all the credits necessary to advance in their degree. The summer institute also was seen as a time where students could 'catch-up' on missed or needed courses, take additional courses to condense the program, and meet, learn from, and be inspired by NITEP alumni.

Core Competencies through Curriculum & Assessment

It was critically important for this review committee to listen and respectfully report back what we heard in relation to the challenges of NITEP to allow the program to grow and thrive over the next 40 years. However, this does mean addressing some ongoing issues with the program curriculum and instruction. For example, core skill competency requires scaffolding across the NITEP program, building blocks that help see learning and X-program connections. Yet, some current NITEP students shared that they did not see that building of courses upon each other or their core competencies as a teacher. While math readiness was seen as a barrier to student success in NITEP, there was little support provided within NITEP to help build numeracy competency of students. NITEP staff also identified a need for more support with math. The NITEP program used to have tutors and a separate section for NITEP students, but now the math courses are either blended with other students or they have to take it online. Quality of NITEP program needs to be consistent across the delivery of sites.

The current model of having the same NITEP instructor for two years has provided an opportunity to pause and consider alternative pedagogical models that would allow more exposure to other Indigenous faculty or instructors in those early years of NITEP. Some suggested that the First Nations history content, for example, could be delivered by the First Nations Studies Department, and NITEP courses could be more about curriculum and lessons planning, learning outcomes and goals, with more of an education focus. This may also help students, and others, better understand the differences and similarities between the Indigenous education cohort and the NITEP program.

Current students spoke of a lack of email communication and inconsistent feedback on assignments and evaluations. This lack of communication and connection (e.g., in the classroom or online) is a problem that should be addressed as it not only impacts student efficacy and retention, but also the overall reputation and credibility of the program. For example, clear assessment rubrics tied to course learning goals and objectives would ensure

the assignments were relevant to the students' learning. In having regular check-ins about their progress, students can be responsible for their learning in a particular course and also within the program.

Blended Learning

We heard from program administrators that it takes 2 years of building relationships with communities to establish a NITEP site. This entails building capacity and a sense of community to support the cohort and also ensure the program is sustainable beyond one-cohort. The ability to offer a 4 year degree within a community is an exciting opportunity; however, it requires forward thinking and planning in terms of program sustainability and a clear program evaluation framework to ensure it meets not only the expectation of the learners, but also program goals and objectives are supported.

While there needs to be better access to technology in the various field centres, most stakeholders felt that integrating technology as a learning platform was an important evolution of NITEP. However, it was also very apparent that NITEP should not be a fully-online program, as the values and essence of NITEP would not and could not be recreated virtually and could even be lost in such a learning environment. Currently, the shift to the online challenges the face-to-face support that NITEP is valued for. The increased email and video takes time away from support roles that are valued by the coordinators. An Elder shared that NITEP could also consider a part-time option to build competency and capacity of those learners who have families, community responsibilities, or need to work while studying.

A blended learning approach would be more in line with NITEP core values and practices. However, for any advances to be made on this front, both the classrooms and the instructors must have the necessary knowledge and skills to allow for effective use of technology as a learning platform. NITEP online and hybrid learning increases both access and adaptability, and an increase in technological literacy to help engage online learning would be a core skill for the 21st century educator. Using a blended model would allow for active engagement of learning and will allow communities to build capacity of learning from one another; however, there is a lot of effort required both technically and pedagogically to create such a supportive online learning environment. One way to encourage both NITEP instructors and students see the value of technology in teaching is to collectively create that learning environment and have discussions surrounding the implications to their teaching practice. It was noted by some stakeholders that while online pedagogical strategies and approaches need to be

shared online; currently not seen as a value of their time.

Therefore, in preparing faculty to teach blended courses there is a need to increase capacity of staff and to set a culture of expectations regarding the academic work within the online and in-class components. Subsequently, NITEP students should also be provided support in online learning so they can maximize their learning in this blended environment.

Instructional Competency

The NITEP program must also evolve with the changes in teacher education and educational technologies to better support NITEP learners becoming teachers in this changing and evolving practice. It was recognized that for this to occur the core competencies of staff needs to be able to increase the competency of the students. Instructors were seen as needing stronger teaching skills within Indigenous Education that supports cross-curriculum engagement. For example, role modeling how practical skills as an educator connect to Indigenization by drawing upon current research, resources, and ideas from Indigenous education. This competency development will also make a stronger connection between the learning goals and the course curriculum and should be measurable in terms of students' course evaluations. It was also recognized that instructors could also be more proactive by spending time with students and communicating (and maintaining) high expectations of them both in the online and face- to-face learning environment. Concerns that were shared by some participants were related to the fluidity of the NITEP program with lack of communication, assessment practices, and follow through with course expectations as outlined in the syllabus contributing to these conclusions. Developing instructional competencies would strengthen the NITEP program on many fronts.

Who can teach Indigenous students (e.g., co-teaching, mentoring) was also questioned within the review process. It was clear that Elders were essential to the NITEP program, and some indicated that they would like to have more instruction from Elders. It was also clear that both students and stakeholders wished to see more engagement of Indigenous faculty (assistant, associate and full professors) in the teaching (or co- teaching) of NITEP courses. With this, some of the participants were cognizant of the heavy academic and scholarly responsibilities of Indigenous faculty. Others expressed the desire to have instructors draw from real-life classroom experiences when teaching NITEP students. Some felt that the increased use of Faculty and seasoned educators would help raise the status of NITEP. Others felt that increasing faculty presence and teaching within NITEP would allow coordinators to better support students and prevent individuals from having the dual role of teaching and supporting. A theme that emerged was for students to be exposed to more

pedagogical and methodological perspectives by educators who are current in teaching and learning theories, programming and strategies. With this, strategic hiring was recommended.

To have Indigenous faculty (or other faculty for that matter) teach within NITEP, Department Heads must be aware of the opportunities for teaching and then allocate faculty teaching loads accordingly. More communication and agreements between NITEP and Department Heads will help see that challenge hopefully addressed. There is still recognition that the Faculty of Education requires more Indigenous faculty to meet demands of NITEP and Indigenous graduate programming and students. It was mentioned that recruitment of Indigenous faculty was a challenge due to the research- intensive position of UBC and the expensive cost of living.

Indigenous graduate students held a very positive attitude about NITEP. A few students noted that there were a few things that could be reviewed, similar to other stakeholders, such as:

- course delivery – online courses are good, but there should be more flexibility for other kinds of delivery and including how to use technology as a teacher in their own classroom
- NITEP students need more support for academic courses
- NITEP students need their own advisors or Aboriginal advisors as there was recognition that NITEP coordinators cannot do it all (e.g., teach, advise, council, mentor, and support)
- Critical thinking should be a core skill developed in NITEP and math tutoring support should be offered more
- NITEP should provide opportunities for students to role play so they can learn how to respond to critics, and how to do job interviews. They need to answer things like, “Why do you think you can apply for the job?” and be able to expand upon the response, “Because I have a Bachelor of Education Degree”.

We need to find a way to engage with NITEP students and other Indigenous undergraduate students.

Issues & Trends- Evidence-Based Problem Solving

Bigger issues and trends in education must be supported by evidence-based decision making to shifts and changes made within NITEP to support the next seven generations of future teachers, which leads to opportunities for NITEP such as an Elders in Residence program that is accessible

to both on-campus and off-campus cohorts. Students clearly expressed a stronger desire for Elders on a regular basis, to mentor and support them on their journey:

- The institution needs to uplift Elders to a prominent place of importance – validate and value them.
- Elders would like to see more diverse Elders come to share life stories and experiences
- Elders also felt they should be contributing to the TEO not just NITEP.

Clearly, professional development for instructors and students was another big opportunity for NITEP to harness the energy and learning in the new BC curriculum and integrating technologies into the program. There was also a vision of expanding placement opportunities for NITEP and Indigenous education cohorts. It was argued by several stakeholders that exposure to different school and community contexts during their program would help students see and experience how a school community can be different, experience different classroom contexts and leadership styles of school administrators. While currently, NITEP students cannot do their full practicum in Indigenous schools, it provides an opportunity for advocacy and leadership to work with the Ministry of Education and the Teacher Regulation Branch to include these schools as suitable practicum placements. NITEP graduates need to be prepared for the culture of expectations of teachers regardless if they are teaching in their communities or elsewhere.

Confirmation

The Self Study Report, the interviews, and focus groups held with students confirms that the values and strengths of NITEP are the core aspects of the program. But, with the identified challenges and opportunities there are clear ways that NITEP can evolve in the future. This review, in some ways, confirms what the NITEP stakeholders may already know: it is time for NITEP to evolve to support the needs of its learners, who will be teachers of 21st century learners. These students are younger and have high expectations for programming, curriculum and practicum experiences. The advances in technology must be implemented and role modeled effectively within NITEP and IE so that students can see how they will be expected to use technologies within their own teaching practices. The governance model of NITEP requires revisiting to ensure that stakeholders have a voice and that there are strong communication lines between NITEP, TEO, and the Faculty of Education internally. Financial, human, technological, and instructor resources are all required to address the opportunities emerging from this review.

Commendation

NITEP stakeholders are to be commended for their honesty and forthrightness in identifying challenges facing NITEP, whether structural, instructional design, or curriculum and assessment. What was clear was the fact that NITEP stakeholders remain firm in their resounding support for NITEP, its values, and its impact. Within their commitments, is also a desire to evolve and have supports in place (financial, human, and leadership) that will allow NITEP to hold onto the values and evolve to meet the contemporary needs of Aboriginal communities, Indigenous students, and most importantly, Aboriginal children in the K-12 system. NITEP graduates are to be held to high account in their training, as one stakeholder shared: “the cost of not having high standards is too great for our children”.

Recommendations

- *Systemic racism and structural challenges = system changes:*
Racism still exists, so there is a need to start a discussion on how the Faculty of Education will address the perceptions within faculty and some in society that NITEP is a “less than” program. Faculty of Education structure needs to challenge stereotypes and treat programs/students equally. Consequently, NITEP students need to be given the skill sets and competencies to address systemic biases and racism once they are a classroom teacher.

In addition, instructors, faculty, senior and academic leadership should also engage in learning (e.g., unconscious bias training, historical teachings etc.) that sheds light and knowledge on, and challenges, racism in all its forms. As such, cultural competency training could be integrated into the NITEP curriculum (e.g., unconscious biases and cultural shadow) and bring awareness to tools so they know how to address racism when they face it within the university, within their school district, or in their classrooms/schools.

- *Recognizing the other barriers to recruitment and retention:*
Specific bursaries could be established to support Indigenous students within NITEP, Indigenous Education, or at the graduate level. Bursaries could include a transportation bursary, an accommodation bursary/subsidy, and/or a childcare bursary/subsidy.

- *Limited financial and human resources must be addressed:*
Increased and sustained financial planning to help with delivery and long-term planning such as the alignment of course work and delivery, timing/succession of courses, increased awareness of 4th year criteria, and advising at Year 3 for subsequent years (e.g. on campus meeting support).
- *Communication & relationships:*
The relationships between NITEP and TEO, Students and the Faculty of Education, and the Departments and the Faculty of Education all need strengthening.

Coordinator team collaborations and communication regarding program decision making will require having the coordinators at the table and part of process. If they understand the decisions, they can help support students and others in understanding decision making and be able to communicate the ripple effects (e.g., budget decisions could be shared and they could help identify where to cut etc.)

Departments within the Faculty of Education need to be more aware of what each other is doing in relation to Indigenous education. Having an all department heads council, with scheduled regular meetings with Dr. Jan Hare would be more efficient use of her time rather than meeting with each department head one-on-one. This will be time efficient and will generate a collective understanding of the complexities of NITEP and Indigenous graduate programming.

Department heads could be coming to this council with a clearer understanding of what is happening in their units to influence change and create synergy and opportunities.

- *Hiring more indigenous faculty:*
The faculty should consider targeted hiring for NITEP/IE, especially working with the Department Heads to have faculty teach Indigenous courses, recognize the challenge of recruiting faculty is cost of housing, and ensure that hires must have real-life experience in classrooms.

- *Blended learning & staff/student professional development:*
NITEP leadership and instructional teams could consider what approach or balance is needed between teaching face-to-face and online within NITEP that is also considering of curriculum design and depth of content that enriches and gives students core competencies they need to enter the classroom. How do we support instructor professional development to empower them in the teaching of NITEP students (e.g., resources, support networks, training courses)?

Area 3: The effectiveness of the program in relationship to students and to the field of teaching

Within this section, we report on the effectiveness of NITEP in relation to students and the field of teaching. Although some challenges and opportunities of NITEP in relation to the program, curriculum, services, and resources were reported earlier in this report, overall, there were many more strengths and benefits reported. In an effort to better understand the student (pre-service teacher) experiences while in the program, and then their experiences once they began their teaching careers, the following questions were asked:

- How can teaching and learning of students be best supported?
- How well is NITEP approaching the preparation of students for a career in teaching?
- What is the impact of NITEP from the perspectives of educators and educational partners?
- How is NITEP viewed among educators within the field?

Other stakeholders, such as administrators, coordinators, community members, and Elders were also asked the above questions, and every stakeholder group was more than happy to share their thoughts. Like the previous, this section will be thematically organized to respond to the above questions. Within these thematic headings, stakeholder's narratives will be shared.

External Review Team Findings

Teaching and Learning Supports

- ***How can teaching and learning of students be best supported?***

The participants recognized that although much was being done to support the teaching and learning of the students, much more could be done in this regard. A variety of factors contributed to the shortfall in this area, with finances being at the top of the list, as is demonstrated in the following quote:

“NITEP could be offering so much support for students, such as mentoring and tutoring, but the money isn’t there. Indian Affairs used to fund the program, but they cut that a few years ago, and now the funding comes from the Faculty of Education.

Budgets have been cut there too.”

A withdrawal of funding from the Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, has impacted the program in significant ways. Participants spoke about everything from orientation being cut down to one day rather than two, to course delivery going completely online. Although this might be the way of the future, “the changes came too rapidly” and without proper resources and supports for the instructor professional development and the students’ adjusting to the online learning modality. Students who come from oral cultures, face-to-face contact, and being with family and friends, with limited technology skills were suddenly left to study alone at their kitchen tables.

Students who lived in Vancouver, came to NITEP on campus believing they were going to study with peers and have opportunities to work collectively, quickly became disheartened when they learned their classes were going to be primarily online. A participant said:

“I did two years studying at Vancouver Island, and then came here to do the Bachelor of Education program. I was recruited to NITEP, but little did I know I would be studying online. The only opportunity we have to get the ‘community feel’ is when we come to the Longhouse. Other than that, there is no community of peers.”

This particular student was not aware that many of the recent changes to NITEP were due to financial cutbacks. She could not understand why there was no one on campus to offer her advising and support. She could not understand why the coordinator/instructor attached to her did not get back to her emails. She shared that her coordinator/instructor never got her course syllabus out on time, that it was not being followed, and that the syllabus was consistently changing throughout the year.

The Review Team learned that NITEP has two coordinators/instructor for the on-campus program. One coordinator/instructor is responsible for teaching and coordinating Years 1 and 2 of the program, and the other is responsible for doing the same for Years 3 and 4 of the program. In Year 5, the students join the main Bachelor of Education program on campus. The field centres do have coordinators that travel from site to site. Many of the participants that we spoke to believed that having one person teach all the courses in years 1 & 2, and another teach all courses for years 3 & 4 was not the best practice, as “students need to be exposed to different perspectives and practices” (participant). This method was further complicated when students stopped having the opportunity to meet face-to-face, and all course delivery was moved to an online forum. Another participant shared:

“Students have come to me to talk about NITEP programming. The question often is, ‘Why am I leaving my community, spending extra money to come take online courses on campus?’ Online courses are a specialty itself. How does that type of delivery build a community?”

The whole online delivery not only stresses the students, but obviously stresses the instructors as well. Learning to manage an online forum is new and very time consuming for all involved, as a participant explained:

“It is not only an added burden for the students, but obviously for the instructors as well. This could be determined by the comments the students make to me about, the syllabus not be clear, assignments not being clear, assessment not being clear. This lack of understanding is often interpreted as the instructor being lax.”

Preparation to Teach

- ***How well is NITEP approaching the preparation of students for a career in teaching?***

Overall, all students, and alumni of the program felt that NITEP did prepare them for a career in teaching. The following quote from a graduate of NITEP demonstrates her confidence to teach once she finished her program:

“NITEP graduates are making an impact on the Indigenous Education all over B.C. Because of all the preparation we received, I felt very confident going into the classroom when I was done. I am now working in a leadership role.”

Alumni reported that they felt prepared to teach when they completed their programs, however, the difference between the time they were students and the reality of what NITEP has morphed into now, is extreme. Most of their program was delivered face-to-face back then, now many of their classes are done online. Many of the alumni we spoke to felt that this shift in delivery has the potential of having significant impact on the confidence level of future graduates coming out of the program. An Elder talked at length about the impact NITEP is making across the province, and he clearly believed that *“NITEP grads are the best grads in education.”*

The current students recognized the importance of technology and understood that some online platforms are necessary; however, all felt that a blended delivery method would work better. Also, all felt that even, if courses had to remain online, it might be beneficial to have all students studying together in a dedicated NITEP classroom at the same time, working on the same course. A participant says this about the online format:

“Most students are having extreme difficulty with the online format. The strength in this program is with the cohort model. The cohorts bond and they help each other. The new model came in three years ago because of budgetary concerns, and now there is declining enrolment, so there has to be some correlation there.”

NITEP has had a very successful 44 years of operations. Most alumni felt that they were very prepared to take on their own classrooms when they were finished their program. They attributed this success mostly to the “practice” they had in the first 4 years of their program. The students spoke about learning to do lesson plans right from year 1 (putting theory to practice) and having the opportunity to do the 10 practicum days in the community before they even began their professional term. All of this on the ground experience boosted confidence levels.

All participants we interviewed recognized that some negative perceptions about the program existed. While most of the school boards recognized the importance of hiring NITEP graduates, some stakeholders felt that school boards often felt that the students who came out of this program were not as well prepared. A participant elaborated:

“School boards are concerned that NITEP grads are not as strong as the grads from the general program and maybe this is because the grads don’t know how to sell themselves. Or maybe NITEP grads are just not getting the interviews because the Principals see they came out of NITEP.”

“Unfortunately, there will always be that perception that all Native programming is watered down, and this is so far from the truth.”

Sometimes, students wondered if even the Faculty of Education thought this as well, some particularly felt that way when the Teacher Education Office staff did not seem interested in helping them navigate their program. Students interpreted this lack of assistance as “*not really caring about us, as we are doing a different kind of program*” (student). This may not be the case, “but something even as small as not being on the Faculty listservs can send that message as well”. She shared:

“I sometimes feel we are not full immersed in the system. They are not on the listservs. Their admissions don’t align or attach to the Faculty of Education systems. Deadlines don’t align with on campus deadlines. They don’t receive housing or scholarship information. NITEP’s Impact on Education”

- ***What is the impact of NITEP from the perspectives of educators and educational partners?***

As mentioned above, NITEP has had significant impact on education, across the country. The following quote clearly demonstrates the impact of NITEP and reflects the perspectives of education and educational partners:

“And here we are, 40 years later. NITEP has grown into a superb, far-reaching program that has positively affected the lives of hundreds of First Nations student teachers and thousands of First Nations and non-First Nations students. As of early 2014, 919 students have entered NITEP, 371 have graduated, 13 have earned the three-year Standard Teaching Certificate, and 61 are currently enrolled (personal communication, NITEP Office, January 2015). NITEP graduates are now teaching in schools across the province; some have gone on to graduate degrees, including doctorates; some are principals and administrators; some are in leadership positions in the provincial and federal governments; some have moved into other professions; and many are working for First Nations organizations throughout Canada... NITEP is having an impact far beyond anything we dreamed about in 1974.” (More, 2015, p. 37)

There is no doubt that the impact of NITEP has been far reaching. Everyone we interviewed attested to this impact, and the only hope is that this continues. As this student stated, “I worry, because, this was not the NITEP I applied for.” She was unaware of the financial picture, so she might have not had any idea as to why there were changes to the program delivery. To her these changes meant students were being “cheated out”, and NITEP was being held to a lower standard. The comments below reflect her perception of the program:

“There is huge potential for NITEP, but it has to be held to the same standard. Everything is online and there is no space for students to come together unless they come to the general longhouse space. We get asked how would do this in a classroom? How can we answer that when we have not even studied together in a

classroom? There is a lack of classroom practice It is very risky to have one instructor teaching all the NITEP courses. We need to have different professors teaching in years 1, 2, and 3.”

Another student added that she liked her coordinators/instructors, but stated they were not there for the students. This could be attributed to their busy roles, and the part-time hours they held; however, this student could not accept that as an excuse because she knew she deserved something better. She said:

“No one answers emails. It is impossible to try to reach professors, to track them down. I feel like the classes are a waste of time, especially when we are making poppies out of post-it notes. Course evaluations are inconsistent, and there appears to be a lack of transparency.”

Even with all the cuts in the program and the frustration felt by the students, they all came to NITEP because of its stellar reputation. They came because they all knew about the impact that NITEP has had on education in the province. Dr. Jo-ann Archibald, in the NITEP’s Celebrating 40 years publication sums up the impact of this program when she said:

“My appreciation for this Indigenous teacher education program and the critical part it plays in shaping future Indigenous educators has continued to grow through the decades. The NITEP Raven and Sun story and logo remain as relevant today as it was 40 years ago. The impact of NITEP is like the Sun, bringing a better life through education. The Raven symbolized Indigeneity through its actions, caring and commitment to transform the world that was dark. (p. 2)”

The article entitled, “Is B.C. Getting it Right? Moving toward Aboriginal education success in British Columbia” by DeDe DeRose, a NITEP alumni, and Jo-ann Archibald (June 9, 2014), articulate the impact of the program:

“NITEP alumni are role models and mentors for their families, many of whom are inspired to become teachers because they have seen their parents, aunties, and uncles complete the program and then teach. NITEP graduates are teaching in public and First Nation schools, colleges and universities. They take on leadership roles in schools, school districts, professional organizations, and Ministry of Education positions. They are advocates for systemic change, they engage in new curriculum development, and they maintain community relationships...”

<https://www.edcan.ca/articles/is-b-c-getting-it-right/>

Educators' Perceptions of NITEP

- ***How is NITEP viewed among educators within the field?***

The Review Team did not have the opportunity to interview school districts, principals, and school leaders; however, we did have the opportunity to interview Department Heads within the Faculty of Education. All of their comments were very positive; however, each expressed very limited knowledge about NITEP, as none of them worked directly with the program. Dr. Jane Hare, who is not only a professor in the Faculty of Education, but also the Director of NITEP, did her best to connect and inform the Department Heads of all that pertains to Indigenous education (i.e., NITEP, Indigenous graduate programming, etc.). A few NITEP presentations within the Faculty of Education might deepen this understanding.

Confirmation

The Self Study Report, the interviews and the focus groups held with students and stakeholders confirmed that NITEP has had a significant impact on Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities across the province. The Review Team set out to have the following four questions answered: 1) how teaching and learning of students can be best supported; 2) how well is NITEP approaching the preparation of students for a career in teaching; 3) what is the impact of NITEP from the perspectives of educators and educational partners; and 4) how is NITEP viewed among educators within the field. The responses helped set the context of the program's purpose, and also clearly revealed that over the years, NITEP has remained true to its foundational principles of: facilitating access to a credentialed teacher education program (B.Ed.) for people of Indigenous ancestry; offering a good portion of its program in regional sites in BC through Field Centres; and ensuring that Indigenous culture, values, knowledge, and languages are a vibrant and meaningful part of the program. "Tried" is the key word here as funding cuts have seriously impacted how, when, and where this program could be delivered.

Commendation

The NITEP team must be commended for their continued commitment to deliver a quality teacher education program that privileges Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. Despite the financial cutbacks and various other challenges such as, "limited student and program finances, colonial impacts, personal and institutional racism, skepticism about an Indigenous program, declining numbers, and declining enrolments...and major programmatic changes in the field of teacher education", graduates are still leaving the program very well prepared (Celebrating 40 Years, p. 3).

Recommendation

The Faculty of Education needs to give more priority for supporting NITEP, both financially and academically. The Faculty must spend some time listening, learning, and understanding the unique program needs. It is the understanding of the Review Team that the NITEP coordinators all work part-time and that they not only “coordinate” the program but that they also “instruct” the classes.

The questions should be asked: *should the coordinators be doing all the instruction?* The Department Heads that the Review Team had the privilege of speaking with, expressed an interest in sharing this teaching load with their Faculty. This might be something the Dean and the NITEP Administrative Team could consider. Having faculty teach these courses as part of their workload might expose the students to more teaching perspectives, and also result in less online learning, something that all of the students we spoke to did not appreciate. Having a dedicated classroom for NITEP students in the Longhouse might be a good way for Faculty to build relationships with Indigenous peoples, thus building institutional capacity to undertake the work of truth-telling and reconciliation.

Area 4: Opportunities and new directions for the NITEP program

- What services, resources, curriculum, and structures could be developed or strengthened?
- How might NITEP foster stronger connections between NITEP and TEO (Teacher Education Office) that lead to more seamless integration?
- What roles and responsibilities could be developed among those working in NITEP to strengthen supports and program delivery?

External Review Team Findings

Advising and Career Guidance

Based on the discussions and document review, the following ideas and visioning were shared with us as opportunities and new directions for NITEP. Structurally, there is clear opportunity to enhance the support and services already provided to NITEP students through advising and better career preparation and guidance. It was evident from these discussions that Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students would also benefit from having culturally appropriate academic and career advising. One might even argue for more holistic advising (e.g., cultural, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual) is an appropriate model that integrates both the curricular and co-curricular needs of Indigenous students across the Faculty of Education.

Adult & Community-based Education

Programmatically, there was much enthusiasm expressed around the opportunities that lie ahead for NITEP for its next 40 years of leading Indigenous education in the province. For example, expanding NITEP to not just focus on K-12 education but to expand its cohort offerings to specialize in Adult/Community-based education would be an opportunity that would address a clear need in many Indigenous communities.

Community Partnerships with local First Nations

Further to these opportunities and building on the current efforts of NITEP to be in-community with true partnerships with the local First Nations, it would also be an opportunity for NITEP to expand opportunities and partnerships with First Nations Band

Schools. We noted elsewhere in the report, but it was also evident from the consultations that NITEP needs to move forward in the 21st century with teachers who can respond to the teaching of a dynamically changing learning environment. NITEP must be resourced to support the development of a blended model of delivery (e.g., mix of online and face-to-face).

Faculty engagement within the program

Faculty engagement in NITEP and other Indigenous focused activities (e.g., supervision of Indigenous graduate students; teaching EDUC 440) must be part of the plan going forward for the Faculty. During the site visit, it was made clear to the review team that more faculty engagement, particularly that of tenured faculty members, even full professors, would add leadership and further demonstrate the commitment of the Faculty to Indigenous education. Research has shown that mandated courses, such as EDUC 440, the required Indigenous Education courses for all teacher education students, results in resistant learners who then take out their frustration on the instructor, whether in-class or at the time of the course evaluations. We also heard that the current model of 100+ student enrollment in EDUC 440 made it a difficult learning environment that could not appropriately role modeled Indigenous pedagogy. Such a large class size also prevents opportunities for enrichment and deeper engagement in difficult topics covered in such a course. It was suggested by some participants that providing teaching opportunities to have full professors teach in this course would also support untenured (or precariously employed) Indigenous professors/instructors from systemic racism and negative evaluations. In thinking that it is the Faculty's responsibility to Indigenous education, there needs to be mechanisms to support faculty when contentious evaluations in EDUC 440 may deter untenured faculty members from wanting to teach in such courses.

Stronger staffing

Indigenous Education requires a stronger staffing complement both in academic and administrative staff to meet the needs of undergraduate, NITEP, and graduate students and related programs. Consequently, the funding models within the Faculty must align with the priorities of Indigenous education.

Confirmation

The following table provides an overview of future opportunities and directions for the Faculty in relation to Indigenous education and NITEP in particular:

Future Opportunities & Directions for NITEP, Indigenous Education, and the Faculty of Education

Program	Resources (Human and Financial)	Practice & Policy
Integrated career advising X-program for NITEP and Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students in the Faculty of Education	Dedicated student advisor who supports students, and has technology competency to support virtual learning environments and has ability to go to each site to provide support to local coordinators and students	DATA Management- keeping track of Indigenous teachers within the BC School districts- where they go, what are their experiences, how to better mentor and support. Could be a partnership with other organizations
Wellness programming for ALL NITEP sites	Professional development of non-Indigenous faculty to support teaching within EDUC 440 and NITEP	Cultural protocol policy that allows cultural activities within and outside of NITEP program
Student centred and culturally appropriate holistic advising and supports are needed for both NITEP and Indigenous graduate students	More Indigenous faculty directly tied to NITEP and Indigenous graduate students	Elders and Advisory Board policy and revisited terms of reference to guide the work of bringing Elders and other Indigenous stakeholders from communities to support the work of NITEP and IE
Commencement of NITEP curriculum redesign. Protocol planning and partnership with community-community centres and co-designed program and curriculum	Dedicated financial resources to support the activities of the IE office, and NITEP in particular - food, conferences, writing retreats, Elder in residence, tutoring, and community-outreach and engagement; program recruitment and promotion/marketing	FoE has Dean's advisory with First Nations members; IE at FOE also needs to re-engage the FNEC and clear terms of reference.
Indigenous governance w/in FOE and Community	Co-teaching model to increase engagement of FoE faculty with program coordinators?	
Quality and consistency in curriculum, instruction, course delivery and practice. High expectations in all aspects of the NITEP program	More supports are needed for instructors/TAs in sustaining the blended learning environment that NITEP aspires to support.	

Recommendation

For NITEP to hold onto its core values and grow alongside the complexities of providing teacher education to rural Aboriginal communities within the urban setting of Vancouver, the reviewers recommend that the following suggestions outlined below:

- *Hire an on-campus program advisor:*
This individual will oversee academic and cultural support for all NITEP students on the Vancouver campus.
- *Appoint a program administrator that is dedicated to NITEP:*
This individual would address inquiries, support site coordinators, and ensure that a communication plan is implemented. This role could expand to support admissions (e.g., deal with inquiries, support completing of applications) and also help with academic advising needs of NITEP students.
- *Clarify roles and responsibilities within the program manager role:*
This would ensure that the responsibility of overseeing and coordinating the sites and working closely with the team of coordinators across each site is focused and supports the work of the IE team across the Faculty.
- *Restructure field centres and coordinator roles:*
Examination of the relationship between the coordinator to outreach role and the importance of a team for support.
- *Clarify the roles & responsibilities of field centre coordinators:*
The roles and responsibilities of the field centre coordinators must be clear and explicit in relation to them supporting the NITEP cohorts in-community - (e.g., advising, recruiting, student services support). If the site centre coordinators are being asked to also teach, then they must have the appropriate credentials and related teaching experience to support that role. Coordinators who are also teaching must be given appropriate compensation on top of their coordinator contract salary.
- *Increase Indigenous faculty directly tied to NITEP:*
Should increase the number of faculty members directly involved with the program, in both urban and rural settings.

- *Maintain high academic rigor:*
Academic rigor needs to be high with a commitment from the instructors and students to raise the bar; Year 1-3 needs to better prepare students for the expectations/workload of Year 4 and 5 in the 21st Century.
- *Shift from online to blended approach:*
A shift from online to a blended approach to program delivery; blended and face to face approaches were seen to promote a greater sense of community by most of the participants in the study.
- *Re-strategize recruitment and retention plan:*
There is an opportunity for NITEP and other units at UBC to work to develop recruitment and retention strategy for NITEP students at the field and urban centres.
- *Elder in residence and mentorship opportunities:*
Elders play an important role in supporting and guiding both undergraduate and graduate students. Having access to Elders was seen as an important cultural and emotional support for the students. The students also saw value (e.g. networking and career guidance.) in mentorship opportunities with alumni.

The sustainability of the NITEP program will be dependent on the level of financial and human resourcing available. Over the last 44 years, UBC's Faculty of Education NITEP program has served to inspire students and Indigenous education programs across the nation. It is because of this and, most importantly, for the benefit of future students that it is resourced to realize the recommendations that are deemed most important to the Faculty of Education, in conjunction with the Office of Indigenous Education.

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