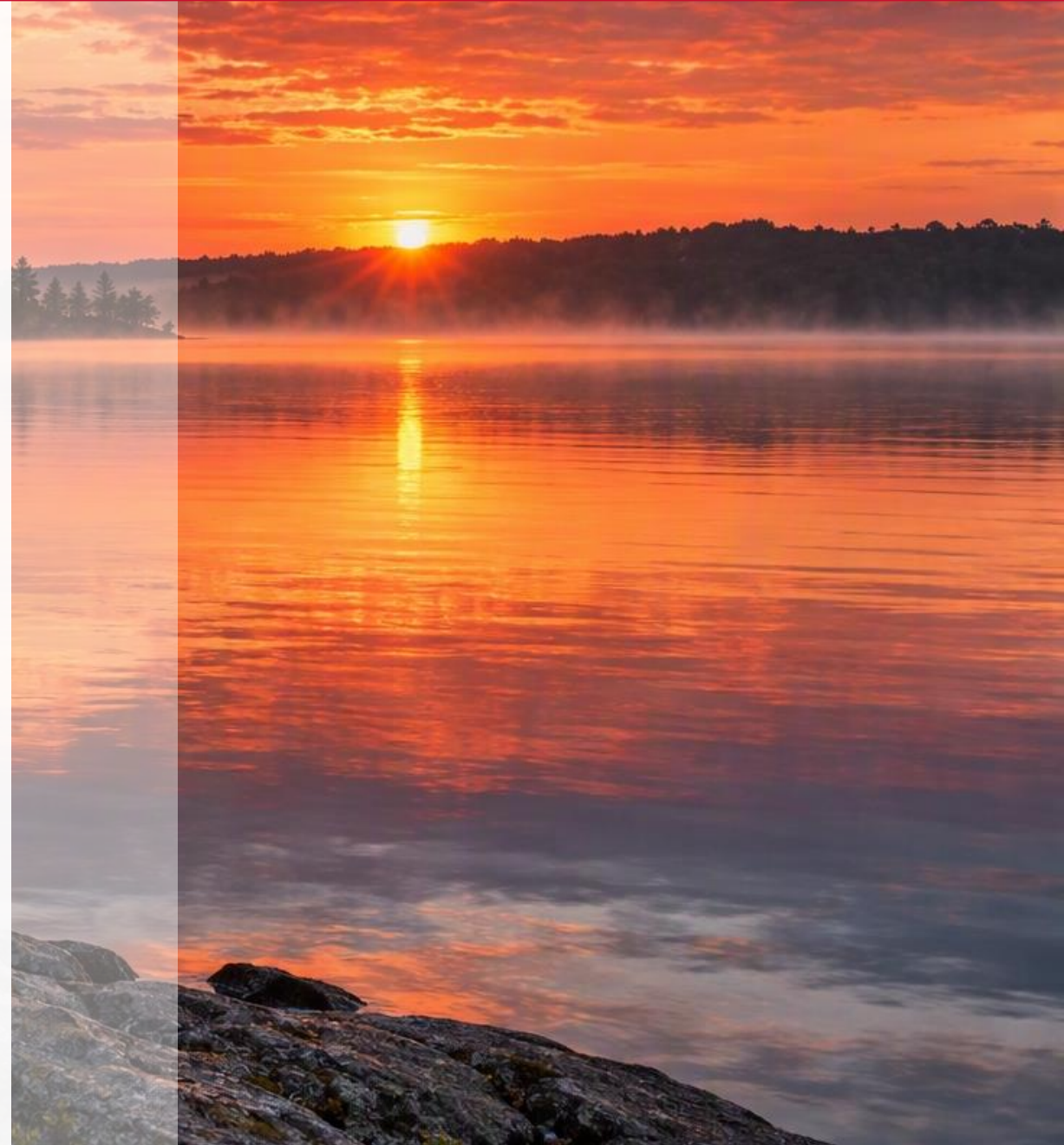


Recognizing learning. Creating pathways.

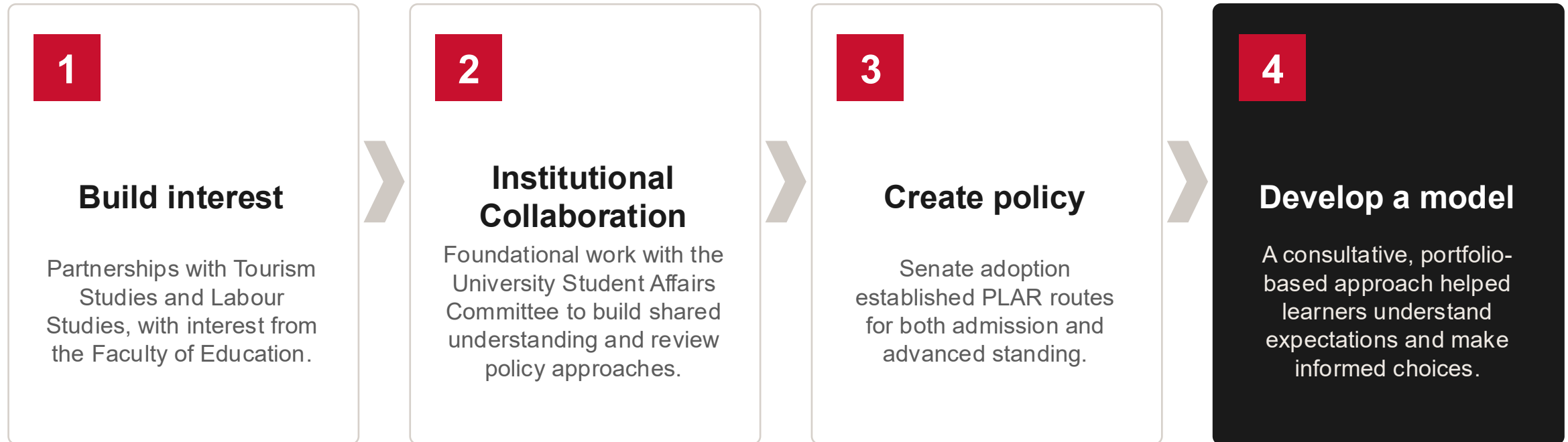
Brock University creates a culturally inclusive PLAR pathway for Indigenous learners

ONCAT Connect + Learn | Pauline Dawson, Director, Admissions



Our PLAR journey at Brock

The Indigenous PLAR project grew from broader institutional work already underway.



This work created the institutional foundation. It also showed us that one PLAR process would not serve every learner equally.

Why the next phase needed to be different

A sound institutional framework was the starting point, not the finish line.

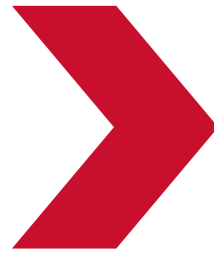
The broader PLAR model gave Brock:

Policy authority

Portfolio-based assessment

Academic standards

A consultative learner pathway



The question that followed

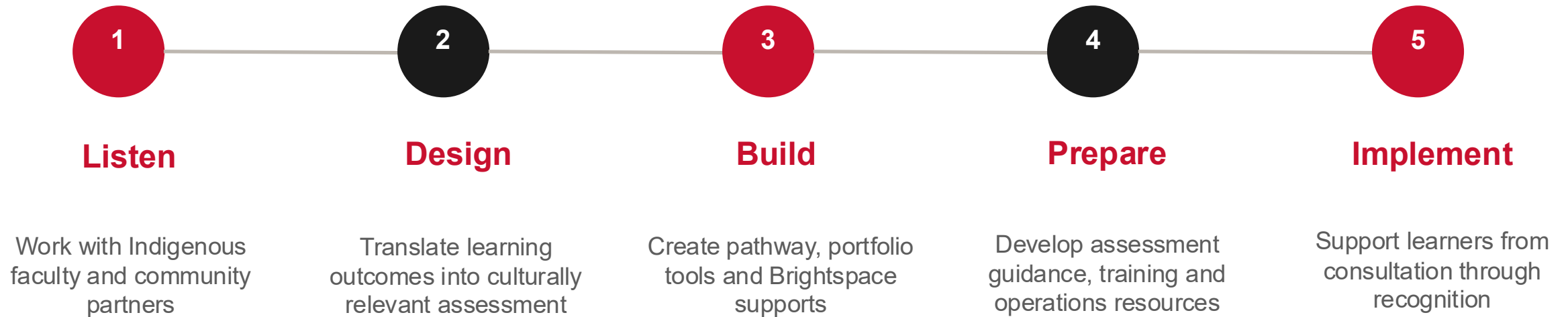
How could the pathway recognize Indigenous learning in ways that were culturally relevant, respectful and academically rigorous?

That meant moving beyond adapting the existing process. The next phase required collaboration with Indigenous faculty, culturally grounded resources, and a Two-Eyed Seeing approach to assessment.

The Indigenous PLAR project

With ONCAT support, Brock moved from a general framework to a culturally relevant pathway.

\$75K ONCAT Capacity Grant | PLAR for Admissions and Advanced Standing



Collaboration and conversation kept us moving

Designing recognition differently

Learners demonstrate learning through reflection, evidence and connection to program expectations.

Canoe of Life

A culturally grounded narrative that explores identity, roots, direction and reciprocity.

Competency statements

Learners articulate what they know and can do, not only what they have experienced.

Supporting artifacts

Evidence may come from community, cultural, volunteer, employment and creative contexts.

Course outcomes

For advanced standing, evidence is assessed against the learning outcomes of three identified courses.

Evidence can be written, oral, visual or creative, where appropriate.

How learners move through the pathway

Consultation and clear guidance reduce uncertainty at every stage.



The consultation is not a gatekeeping step. It helps learners understand the pathway, assess fit and make an informed choice before investing significant time.

A support ecosystem, not a single form

Resources were designed for learners, assessors and the people who sustain the pathway.

For learners

- Indigenous PLAR webpage
- Learner guidebooks
- Self-paced online module
- Portfolio Builder and videos
- Consultation and feedback

For faculty and assessors

- Assessment guidebook
- Learning-outcome guidance
- Training and engagement activities
- Culturally relevant assessment practices

For staff and operations

- Operations manual
- Defined workflow and roles
- Brightspace infrastructure
- Consistent records and communication

Design principle: make the pathway understandable before asking the learner to navigate it.

What changed

The project strengthened both the learner pathway and institutional capacity.

Recognition

Prior learning can be validated in ways that reflect Indigenous knowledge systems.

Access

Learners may receive credit for courses, saving time and recognizing existing learning.

Alignment

Admissions, assessment and learner support processes are more closely connected.

Early indications

- Early interest in PLAR-supported admission
- Improved alignment between institutional processes and learner needs
- A stronger foundation for expanding culturally relevant PLAR practice

What we would invite others to consider

Three questions for institutions exploring culturally relevant PLAR.

- 01** Whose learning is not being seen by our current processes?

- 02** Who needs to be at the table before the pathway is designed?

- 03** What supports will make the process clear, respectful and achievable?

Thank you | Questions and conversation