



PROJECT SNAPSHOT

Exploring Indigenous Transfer Students Data Sharing Feasibility between Northwestern Ontario Institutions

Project Lead: Lakehead University

Project Collaborators: Confederation College of Applied Arts and Technology, Oshki-Pimache-O-Win Education & Training Institute, Seven Generations Education Institute

Project Summary

Recent provincial investments and legislation with respect to degree-granting and increased independence for Indigenous Education Institutes have led to a renegotiation of relationships between postsecondary institutions, particularly in Northwestern Ontario. As performance-based funding is implemented across Ontario (Spooner, 2019), it is necessary for institutions throughout Northern Ontario to provide data that ensures the province continues to fund equitable, accessible, and effective education for current and future Indigenous post-secondary students. As prior research indicates (e.g. Ray, Landry, Miron & Toombs, 2019), the creation of Indigenous pathways alone is not sufficient in creating accessibility and equity in postsecondary education. Rather, targeted pathways informed by evidence in their development and evaluation must be created.

This project seeks to support equity through the creation of a system that will provide the necessary body of evidence needed to create and evaluate targeted pathways. The purpose of this research project is to build a data collection process that elicits a comprehensive data set representative of the state of student mobility and credential-related employment outcomes for Indigenous people attending post-secondary institutions in Northwestern Ontario. This data feasibility project was intended to answer the following question from an inter-institutional perspective:

What does a systematic approach to collect outcome-based data on Indigenous mobility and employment in Northwestern Ontario look like?

- a. What sources of data currently exist?
- b. What are the data gaps?
- c. What are the opportunities and barriers to creating a systematic approach to data collection?

References:

Ray, L., Landry, J., Miron, J. & Toombs, E. (2019). Indigenous Program Pathways Inventory Project, Phase Two. North Bay: Canadore College.

Spooner, M. (October 2019). Performance-based funding in higher education. Canadian Association of University Teachers Education Review. Retrieved on December 14, 2019 from https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/caut-education-review-performancebased_funding_in_higher_education.pdf

Project Rationale

This project was one step towards developing a regional student mobility strategy in Northwestern Ontario with an emphasis on Indigenous learners. Project stakeholders who engaged in inter-institutional data sharing exercises through the ONCAT funded “Faculty Fellow” grant stream in 2017 and 2018 found value in sharing internal data sets. The possibility of sharing student mobility variables across the region allows for pathway and transition support development and maintenance, based more on student demand and less on faculty and administrator perceptions.

Research Findings

If every institution agrees to share their internal data and we maintain positive and trustworthy relationships with key staff members, it is feasible to develop a shared student mobility data set in the future. In situations where organizations offer credentials through partnering institutions (example: An Indigenous Institute delivers a college diploma in partnership with an Ontario College) there is a potential to share data where gaps may exist within each individual institution's internal data sets.

Future Research

Now that we have determined the feasibility of sharing internal student information, the next step is to engage in a quantitative exploration of student mobility data from all participating institutions serving Indigenous learners in the region. We are particularly interested in predicting student mobility for new and upcoming Post-Secondary Education (PSE) credentials aligned with the Indigenous Pillar of PSE in Ontario.

Additionally, we are interested in exploring patterns of student mobility where students move back and forth between multiple institutions in the region. If we collectively move forward with a data-sharing research project, it is likely that at the end of that project we will have a comprehensive data set of student ID information. If a willingness exists at that time to prepare a research proposal and ethics application to initiate a retrospective student experience survey to inform the quantitative data, this would benefit all stakeholders in the region.

Student Outcomes

This project benefits transfer students by enhancing the relationship between partnering institutions in the region that provide different types of Post-Secondary Education credentials. It is the first step in creating a data set that guides pathway development using student behaviour instead of perceptions of student behaviour. The resulting transfer pathways will save students time and money in their PSE career.

Institutional Outcomes

As universities, colleges, and Indigenous Institutes move towards a more seamless transfer system we recommend increasing the transparency and visibility of student mobility application, enrolment and performance metrics to support targeted transfer pathway development and wrap-around support allocations.

Sector/System Implications

Governmental and institutional ways of knowing and understanding could be more aligned with Indigenous and Community ways of knowing and understanding. Relationship and emergent, processoriented approaches are worth long-term exploration and integration with more traditional, hierarchical ways of knowing typical to the Ministerial and institutional practices in the field of student mobility.

Tips

We suggest that the research be formally rooted in an Indigenous methodology and worldview from the outset of the project. In particular, applying a reciprocal and relational approach to meetings and collaborative work tasks was beneficial for everyone involved in this data feasibility project.

