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CHAPTER 13

Decolonising Knowledge for Social Change

Experiences of the Salish Sea K4C Hub, Canada

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Abstract

The history and impacts of colonisation in Canada are important for the efforts of the Salish Sea K4C Hub in decolonising knowledge. In this case study, a brief understanding of this history is presented to contextualise the ongoing movements towards Indigenous self-determination across all aspects of life and for the building of capacity for research and training in support of these rights. Delving into the principles and vision of the hub and a brief background of the university credited CBPR course offered by the hub helps discern the key impacts of the course, and offers some reflections and recommendations in bridging different knowledge cultures between universities and communities.

Keywords

colonisation of knowledge – decolonising knowledge – Indigenous self-determination – CBPR course impacts

1 Introduction

The Salish Sea is the network of coastal waterways surrounding the traditional territories of the Coast Salish and Straits Salish Territories of the ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples and the southwestern portion of mainland British Columbia (BC), Canada.[1] The term Salish Sea was selected as the name of the Hub to reflect the desire to focus its work in this area of Canada, to value the knowledges and life experience of local Indigenous people, and to describe the intricate ways we hope the hub will extend into local communities.[2]

Established in 2018 as part of the Knowledge for Change (K4C) Global Consortium, the Salish Sea Hub (SSH) is a partnership between the University of Victoria (UVic), the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) and the Victoria Foundation (VF). The overall purpose of this hub is to decolonise knowledge production and promote the co-creation of knowledge through community-based and Indigenous-led research training and mentorship.

The SSH consists of a group of six certified mentors of multidisciplinary, multilingual, and multicultural backgrounds (see UNESCO Chair CBR-SR, 2022). Together we have co-developed an upper-level undergraduate course offered through the Department of Geography at the University of Victoria, which introduces students to the theory and practice of community-based participatory research (CBPR) and Indigenous ways of knowing, and exposes them to experiential learning opportunities with local community partners. With a special focus on addressing community-identified research needs linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the overarching objective of the course is to advance community-engaged research and learning within and outside academia, and contribute to the decolonisation and Indigenisation of higher education in Western Canada. In this chapter, we discuss some of the challenges and learnings we came across as we incorporated Western and local Indigenous knowledge systems into the design and delivery of this course, taking into consideration colonial, hierarchical, patriarchal power structures that still influence the work of community-university partnerships in Canada. As part of the BKC project, we were also interested in exploring the impacts of the hub's undergraduate course in working across knowledge systems outside and within the academia.

We begin this chapter by briefly describing the history and impacts of colonisation in Canada and the ongoing movements towards Indigenous self-determination across all aspects of life (i.e., general knowledge environment). Situating this history is important within the context of the efforts and priorities of the hub's institutional members to build capacity for research and training in support of the rights and well-being of Indigenous peoples and other social groups that have been historically marginalised (i.e., institutional knowledge environment). We then describe the local knowledge setting and practice by delving into the principles and vision of the hub and a brief background of the course. To discern the key impacts of the course, we present the findings of a case study of the hub that was carried out with the collaboration of its mentors, partners and students. Lastly, we offer some reflections and recommendations in bridging different knowledge cultures between universities and communities.

2 General Knowledge Environment: Impacts of Colonialism in Canada

In Canada, there is an on-going history of racism, oppression and discrimination towards Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems, which has led to the annihilation of Indigenous ways of being and knowing. This epistemicide (de Sousa Santos, 2016) has forced the disconnection and displacement of Indigenous peoples from their land, culture, language, and community, stretching back to hundreds of years when European settlers seized unceded Indigenous lands for resource extraction and conquering of new settlements. In furthering their colonialist and imperialist agenda, the European colonisers intentionally implemented displacement and assimilation policies with the aim of removing and severing Indigenous peoples from their lands and culture.

One of these policies was the Indian Act, passed in 1876 by the Canadian government, which still operates today undermining Indigenous peoples' identity, sovereignty and nationhood (Bartlett, 1988; Dickason & Newbigging, 2015; MacDonald & Steenbeek, 2015; Ray, 2016). The Indian Act controls many aspects of the daily lives and wellbeing of the Indigenous peoples in Canada, and it has had a profound adverse impact on the translation and transmission of knowledge in Indigenous communities. With the aim of assimilating the Indigenous population and bringing them under one form of law and one way of life, the Indian Act abolished traditional forms of governance, including the restriction of women in decision-making and replacing their leadership roles with a patriarchal, male-only elective system that are contrary to the often matrilianal leadership roles of Indigenous women in political, economic and social life in their communities (Sayers, 2001).

Until 1951, the Indian Act also prohibited *potlatches*, an Indigenous cultural ceremony that involves gift giving and feasting on important occasions such as naming ceremonies, change of leadership, births and deaths. Potlatches were considered a major barrier to assimilation as it maintains legal traditions of the Coast Salish people with the redistribution of wealth, refinement of oral histories, and affirmation of territorial boundaries (Cole & Chaikin, 1990). The prohibition of these cultural ceremonies has resulted in a major breakdown in the ability of older generations to preserve their own culture and to share important stories about laws and traditions with younger generations (Kan, 2015).

Further genocide and oppression of Indigenous knowledge systems occurred during the implementation of the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) system – operated by the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, United churches, among others, and funded by the Canadian government – in

which Indigenous children were abducted from their homes in attempts to 'kill the Indian in the child' and assimilate them into the Western culture (Charles & Lowry, 2017). Canada's last residential school closed in 1996, and over the course of 125 years, more than 150,000 children were forcibly removed from their communities and placed into IRS; many of them never returned home (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The majority of children were held captive and isolated from their families and all their kinship ties for the entire time they attended IRS.

In this regard, it is important to note that, within Indigenous communities, the extended kinship system plays an integral role in the function of children learning and inter-generational transfer of knowledge (Poonwassie & Charter, 2001). The education system of residential schools replaced a reciprocal and holistic learning and teaching cycle strongly founded in relationships and cultural pedagogies of discovery and interdependency, with a pedagogy based on authority, control, force, individualism and competition. The IRS education system introduced a new way of learning to Indigenous peoples as a mechanism to Christianise, colonise and assimilate Indigenous children (by teaching them foreign values and customs), and to destroy their cultures, beliefs, languages and sense of pride (by shaming them into rejecting their own culture, traditions, spirituality and language) (Haig-Brown, 1988). Indigneous children who were forced to attend IRS suffered from physical, psychological and emotional abuse which affected the generations that followed, causing intergenerational trauma (Charles & Lowry, 2017; Methot, 2019). These traumas are still felt today and have left a legacy of poverty, economic marginalization, unemployment, addiction, homelessness, and ongoing racism and stigmatization in systems such as health care and education (Methot, 2019).

3 Decolonizing Knowledge Production and Dissemination

In recent years, conscious efforts have been made in decolonising knowledge and institutions, including recognising Indigenous ways of knowing, to address the harmful impacts colonialism and imperialism have brought onto Indigenous communities (Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Within a broader movement across Canada and globally, a number of initiatives have taken shape in support of meaningful community engagement and Indigenous-led research, as a response to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) created in 2022, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action in 2015, among several others.[3]

The Canada Research Coordinating Committee (CRCC), for instance, was created in 2017 to help advance federal research priorities and the coordination of policies and programmes of Canada's research funding agencies. One of its key priorities is to support and enhance the capacity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities to lead their own research and partner with the broader research community.[4] The CRCC, with extensive engagement across the country, launched a national Indigenous research framework to strengthen Indigenous-led research in November 2019. Alongside these national shifts, several First Nations and Indigenous organisations have developed their own research protocols and strategies should they choose to partner with external institutions and organisations (e.g., the National Inuit Strategy on Research). Indigenous communities have also been at the forefront in creating research principles and ethics to assert control over data gathering processes and governance (e.g., the Ownership, Control, Access and Possession [OCAP] principles[5]) and have advanced Indigenous research approaches, most of which are community-based. In 2018, the Tri-Council Policy Statement set the ethical standard for research that involves the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada.[6]

In line with this decolonising and Indigenising movement, mainstream universities –the University of Victoria included– have been developing spaces for recruiting and retaining Indigenous students and faculty members (e.g., through equity, diversity and inclusion policies and programmes, and preferential or target hirings), and offer programmes that incorporate Indigenous content. According to the 2016 Canadian Census, Indigenous peoples constitute 5% of the population and, although in the last two decades there has been a steady increase of Indigenous students in the postsecondary sector (now reaching also 5%), there has been a consistent 14% gap in the completion rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous undergraduate students since the 1990s (Smith and Bray, 2019). Also, Indigenous PhD students are still highly under-represented in Canadian universities (i.e., 1%), in the same way that Indigenous peoples comprise of only 3% of college instructors and 1.4% of university professors, and there is between 15% to 20% wage gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous professors (ibid.).

4 Institutional Knowledge Environment: The Salish Sea Hub Partners

The SSH works to contribute to the decolonising of knowledge production and dissemination within and outside acedemia. The hub supports its partners to come together and co-lead research that has been identified by the

communities in which we serve. Each partner organisation of the SSH has a strong mandate to improve the lives of the people and communities in which they operate and is committed to doing so. They are each recognised in the region as being leaders for their commitment to community engagement and decolonisation. These commitments are woven through the strategic visions and mandates of the organisations that have various mechanisms and programmes that support this work.

4.1 *Victoria Native Friendship Centre*

The Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) is an urban Indigenous organisation grounded in Indigenous worldviews and cultures, which serves the diverse Indigenous communities living in the Capital Regional District of Victoria, BC. The VNFC is one of 118 centres across Canada that are part of the Friendship Centre Movement that helps connect people to the local community, provide cultural support, and aims to bridge some of the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in urban settings. The VNFC's mandate is to encourage and promote the well-being of urban Indigenous people, by strengthening individuals, family and community. Community engagement is central to achieving VNFC's mandate, and CBPR methods have been at the core of that engagement since opening in 1969.

All programming offered at VNFC is culturally enhanced and developed specifically to respond to the needs of the surrounding urban Indigenous community. Urban life for Indigenous peoples is considerably different from that of reserves and other rural areas given a number of distinctive characteristics they face, such as: (a) economic marginalisation – urban Indigenous residents tend to be poorer than their non-Indigenous neighbours (Obonsawin & Howard-Bobiwash, 1997) and are also likely to experience higher rates of unemployment, single parenthood, homelessness, and domestic violence (Janovicek, 2007); (b) cultural diversity – urban Indigenous population is made up of individuals and families that arrive to urban centres from many different Indigenous communities, whether from reserves, smaller towns or other cities (FitzMaurice & McCaskill, 2011);[7] and (c) legal diversity – urban Indigenous residents represent a complex mix of legal classifications across conflicting responsibilities of the federal government and other levels of jurisdiction (FitzMaurice & McCaskill, 2001; Palmater, 2011).[8] These characteristics create real challenges in terms of providing programmes, services and funding to urban Indigenous people.

VNFC has developed a strong leadership team who works with community to undertake research for the purpose of enhancing programming, securing funding, and creating programmes that aptly respond to community needs in

a culturally safe and timely way. The VNFC services are available to the 17,000 Indigenous people living in the Capital Regional District, including the 2,500 residents from the First Nations communities in the southern Vancouver Island region. The VNFC, as other Friendship Centres, can be considered a hub of Indigenous culture (Howard, 2011). It works with and shares several Indigenous knowledge systems reflective of the diversity of Indigenous peoples that are part of their community and benefit from their services. Protocols for sharing and disseminating these knowldeges is often guided by the Elders and Advisory councils who ensure that the appropriate measures are followed. This might include specific ceremonies, gifting protocols, witnessing, and ways of working together that are unique to the customs and traditions of local Indigenous peoples and their communities.

4.2 *Victoria Foundation*

The Victoria Foundation (VF) is a philantropic organisation that has a vision to create a vibrant, caring local community. The Foundation grounds its work in community knowledge, and it supports hundreds of initiatives, both large and small across southern Vancouver Island and beyond. In doing so, it enables non-profit organisations to respond to the most pressing concerns and needs in this community such as housing, food equity, gender equality and inclusion, to name but a few. The Foundation also works closely with the local community to conduct the annual Victoria's *Vital Signs* community report, which measures the vitality of the region, identifies concerns, and supports actions on issues that are relevant and critical to improving quality of life. VF has been a strong proponent and leader of advancing the UN SDGs in the local community and has introduced the SDGs as a framework into the Vital Signs initiative as well as its other leadership initiatives.

The Foundation was one of the initial signatories to the Philanthropic Community's Declaration of Action as a pledge to maintain an active commitment to reconciliation based on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. The VF Reconciliation Task Group provides input and recommendations to the Board of Directors and staff to continue its work to engage in reconciliation.

4.3 *University of Victoria*

The University of Victoria (UVic) is a mid-size, public research university highly engaged with its local, regional and national communities, respectfully acknowledging its unique place situated on the traditional territories of the lək̓ʷəŋən Peoples and W̱SÁNEĆ First Nations. Guided by the values and wisdom of the Coast Salish First Peoples, the University's first Indigenous Plan

(2017–2022) provides an important path for reconciliation that is informed and woven throughout the university's research, teaching and service initiatives. A focus on and appreciation for the unique cultural, physical and social environment on which the campus sits is part of the university's identity. UVic is ranked strongly for promoting Indigenous visibility, and first nationally for Open Access publications, commitment to Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, and open curriculum (University of Victoria, 2022).

4.4 *Principles, Visions and Institutional Challenges of the Salish Sea Hub*

The work of the hub is oriented to address and create community interventions and innovations addressing the UN SDG with a particular focus on good health and well-being (SDG3), quality education (SDG4), gender justice (SDG5), reduced inequality (SDG10), and climate action (SDG13). The SSH is committed to promoting the full and effective participation in all matters that concern Indigenous peoples and their right to remain distinct and pursue their own visions of economic and social development. As such, the hub is specifically grounded in Indigenous ways of viewing and knowing the world to bridge knowledge and research out of academia and into communities. A focus of the hub is to centralize the voices, stories and experiences of underrepresented communities through CBPR, including youth, Elders/seniors, 2SLGBTQ+ peoples, new Canadians and refugees, and the unhoused community, to name a few.

While the SSH demonstrates a respectful working relationship between all of its partner organisations, it has to be acknowledged that relationship-building has not been spontaneous or without challenges. Interviews conducted as part of this research for the BKC project reveal that, from the university's perspective, building trust with community partners is often seen as 'invisible work', usually not recognised in the academia, while community organisations find it difficult to navigate relationships with the university, not knowing 'how it works or which support to connect with'.

Although the collaborative work of the hub is institutionally established by a non-binding MoU signed by the three partner organisations, personal relationships play a crucial role in breaking down barriers between community organisations and the university. For instance, at present, the SSH mentors affiliated to the VNFC depend on their personal contacts with the UVic representatives of the SSH to help them connect with the right person or department at the university. VNFC and VF have the insight and familiarity of working with each other and other community organisations due to the similarity of their mandates and works cultures, compared to working with UVic. The lack

of cultural awareness, community knowledge and familiarity at the university does not contribute to the advancement of community-university engagement and knowledge co-creation outside the boundaries of academia.

5 Knowledge Setting: Training the Next Generations in CBPR

In working towards the hub's goals of decolonising knowledge production and dissemination, while featuring diverse voices and centring Indigenous ways of knowing, we have co-developed a university credited CBPR course. The course was developed in consultation with Elder Advisors, and is offered as a 400-level Geography course in the Department of Geography, where Tremblay, the academic lead of the SSH, is a faculty member. The course is grounded in decolonisation, knowledge democracy, anti-oppressive, arts-based, and Indigenous methodologies through study of the literature, case studies, presentations by community-academic partners, practicum term projects in community and self-reflection activities.

The CBPR course has been offered during four academic terms between 2020 and 2022 for a duration of three months each, and a total of 61 students have completed the course successfully. While this course is offered to upper-level undergraduate students, several graduate level students have also enrolled in it due to its unique design and content. There have been eleven community organisation partners to date, many of whom have ongoing projects spanning throughout the terms, with students handing off projects to the new cohort. Since the course launched in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been delivered virtually, including all community-led projects with the students for the first two terms with the support of Zoom and Brightspace, a learning management system that the university uses. The third term was the first time that the course was conducted in person; however, as COVID-19 policies at the university and some community organisations differ, a few community-led projects were conducted online.

Indigenous Elder Advisors in partnership with the VNFC play an active role in the course to provide guidance and training to students and hub mentors. Despite this important collaboration from the community partners, the UVic faculty member is the only one responsible for sourcing, finding and designing community-based projects, and the timing of the course, reflecting the continued power imbalance in favour of the university in terms of decision-making and governance of the course. Similarly, other SSH mentors who are not UVic professors are not formally recognised or funded by the university, and funds to support their participation needs to be obtained each term the

course is offered, inhibiting the achievement of our goals as a hub and keeping the course offering precarious.

6 Case Study: Knowledge Co-Creation at the Salish Sea Hub

The case study research for the BKC project started in August 2021 and ended in November 2021. The hub's mentors co-designed the study; however, not all mentors were able to be active participants of the project due to the lack of capacity and resources (i.e., time, funding), which has been an ongoing challenge of the hub. For the duration of the research, we frequently met via Zoom to design the research, choose appropriate conceptual frameworks, research questions, timeline, participants, and methods, which are discussed in the following sections.

We identified several groups to recruit for the research – previous students who had completed the CBPR course, representatives from VNFC and VF as community partners of the hub, and representatives of UVic from the Office of the Vice President Research as an academic partner of the hub. We contacted former students via email regarding the project and six agreed to participate. The student participants received a gift card of $25 as a gesture of appreciation for volunteering their time. Further, each mentor of the hub identified and communicated with their colleagues and were invited to participate in an interview.

6.1 *Methods: Focus Group, Interviews and Arts-Based Activity*

Due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions we conducted one focus group and several interviews with our participants as these were the safest and most feasible methods to carry out the research under the given circumstances. To engage the students, we facilitated a 90-minute focus group via Zoom at the end of the first week of September 2021. Two SSH mentors from UVic facilitated the focus group with the six students. The students were invited to reflect on their understanding of multiple knowledge systems (i.e., Indigenous, community-based, arts-based) introduced in the course, their experience of being involved directly in community-led projects, and the impacts the course had on their learning and their personal and professional lives.

In addition to asking the students discussion questions, we also incorporated an arts-based component where we requested them to draw or share a photo of what 'knowledge' means to them. Towards the end of the focus groups, the students were given 10 minutes to do this arts-based activity. By using an arts-based method, the students were able to conceptualise their

understanding of knowledge critically without the limitations of words. Using the arts in learning and teaching can "foster deeper awareness of self, one another and the world, richer engagement with study, greater confidence and resilience" (McIntosh, 2013, p. 4), which can complement our understanding of the course's impacts on the students learning.

The interviews with hub partners (UVic, VNFC and VF) were conducted between September and October of 2021. We separately interviewed a total of six participants (two representatives from each institution/organisation). Responses from the focus group and interviews were analysed and thematically coded by two SSH mentors using the inductive approach, allowing the data collected to determine the themes. Upon analysing the content of focus group discussion and interviews, the two mentors identified the themes from the data separately. They then met up to discuss the themes that they had each identified. Both mentors identified similar themes without major discrepancies.

7 Findings

The common themes that emerged in all of the interviews and focus groups, and the findings of the project are shared below.

7.1 *Theme 1: Re-defining 'Knowledge'*

For centuries, 'knowledge' had been understood through Western Eurocentric lenses. For Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), a world-renowned professor of Indigenous education,

> the arguments of different Indigenous peoples based on spiritual relationships to the universe, to the landscape and to stones, rocks, insects and other things, seen and unseen, have been difficult arguments for Western systems of knowledge to deal with or accept. (p. 84)

Yet, it is crucial to challenge the Western points of views in order to bridge the different knowledge cultures. We must first understand what we know and consider as knowledge. One clear theme that emerged was the expanded understanding of what 'knowledge' is. Different knowledge cultures may view, consider, and accept different elements as knowledge.

In the perspectives of civil society organisations, both SSH community partners – i.e., the VNFC and VF – perceive knowledge as place-based and community-centred. Community knowledge is what informs their programmes,

services and other projects for their organisations as they are designed and built based on a needs-based approach in their local communities. In the case of VF, their work has shifted from donor-focused to community focused, as one of their representatives mentioned that they were "taking action based on what is coming from [the] community", recognising that knowledge comes in different forms. They acknowledge that as an organisation they work as an intermediary between donors and community members, and have the obligation to learn from the community as "without them, we do not know much" about what is really needed. Using this community-centred approach, the VF releases a yearly report called *Vital Signs*, and creates programmes to help address community issues highlighted in the report, ensuring that all voices are heard.

Similarly, the VNFC is community-responsive by gathering community knowledge from its members to provide them with services and programmes that are Indigenous-led and created based on their needs. Hence, all of their services and programmes are unique to their own site. They describe knowledge as "the accumulation of information … things that have been tried, that worked, that failed, learning from those processes brings us knowledge". Knowledge also needs to be easily shareable and accessible. In the 52 years of providing services to urban Indigenous communities, they share the knowledge and best practices collectively among other Friendship Centres across the province on services of shared priority. This could be, for example, information about "financial literacy, nutrition, counselling, folded into training processes", highlighting that the oral transmission of knowledge remains very important to their organisation.

On the other hand, UVic views knowledge in the form of research, scholarship and experiential knowledge, which they describe as "evidence-based and sustained experience knowledge" and bringing these different kinds of knowledge together at the university. They elaborated on experiential knowledge as "transmission of extended experience", for example, from working with Indigenous communities such as the Elders. The knowledge is then produced typically in the forms of publications and conference presentations that are often aimed to measure impact factor. Notably, UVic is in the midst of creating a committee to reevaluate and measure knowledge production as a way of not excluding knowledges cultures and navigating a new way of translating the impact measurement of these knowledges.

Therefore, knowledge is not limited to just academic knowledge. We acknowledge and accept that knowledge expands beyond the restricted academic/scientific knowledge including but not limited to Indigenous, local and other types of knowledge systems that derive from the community. The

students from our CBPR course also noted how the course impacted their new understanding of 'knowledge', which is discussed as a subtheme below.

7.1.1 Subtheme: New Understanding of 'Knowledge'

By using the arts in our CBPR course with community partners, we invited the students to reflect on the expanded definition and meaning of 'knowledge' as a way to connect the different types and sources of knowledge. To demonstrate this, the focus group participants, who were former students of the hub's CBPR course, were asked to draw or share an image that expressed their understanding of 'knowledge' since completing the course. Through visual representations, they shared their outlook that knowledge was represented in different forms. Using the images they had drawn or selected, they highlighted the importance of recognising knowledges that were outside of the university, and that the process of knowledge creation had to be collaborative. Speaking specifically to the relationship with local Indigenous communities, the participants mentioned that this collaborative process was pertinent to reconciliation as the process was sometimes more important than the outcome. We share below some of the participant's visual representations and interpretations of 'knowledge' in their own words. All names used are pseudonyms.

One former student, Molly, drew this image (Figure 13.1) in describing her expanded understanding about 'knowledge' upon taking the CBPR course:

She shared,

> When asked to picture our thoughts about knowledge, I imagined something very vibrant, fluid and collaborative, much like a garden can be. In the image, you can see components both above and below the soil, demonstrating that knowledge may not always be where we expect and that it can appear in many forms. In the photo, there are many contributors, such as pollinators and the sun and a lot of diversity, much like my experience in the class. What is not pictured here, though could be demonstrated further with this concept, are spaces where there is only one entity creating knowledge, which might result in a mono-crop, or areas where knowledge extraction is harmful, perhaps resulting in a garden with poor health. For the most part, however, I wanted to represent the knowledge that we encompassed in class, one that prioritises not only the product, but the process as well.

Another former student, Samantha, drew this image (Figure 13.2) of what she understood of knowledge from taking the CBPR course:

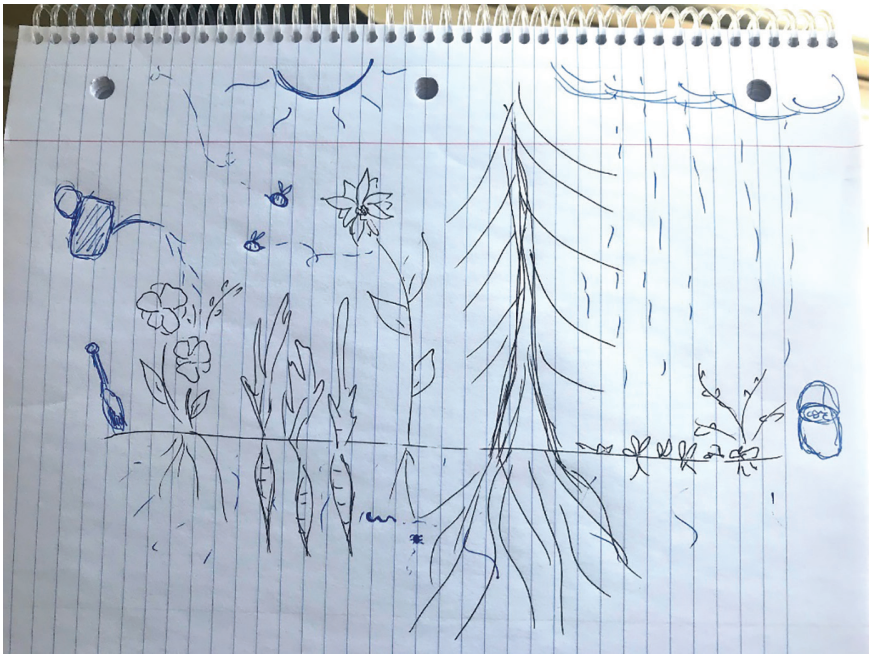

FIGURE 13.1 Molly's drawing of her representation of knowledge as a garden with many different contributors

She explained,

> This image is a conceptualisation of human made knowledge through comparison of thoughts and knowledge. Thoughts are resembled by the curvy lines and knowledge is resembled through the curvy lines that lead to a bubble. People are resembled by diverse stick figures. I view human made knowledge as something that stems from thoughts and experiences that can stem from an individual and/or a collective.

Instead of drawing, Sierra shared this picture (Figure 13.3) to describe her new understanding of 'knowledge' from her involvement in the CBPR course. According to her,

> The photo is what I think of when I hear the word knowledge after taking the CBPR course. I learned how incorporating Indigenous (non-Western) epistemologies and ways of knowing is integral on the road to reconciliation. It inspired me to become a more confident student by validating my learned experiences and my natural ability to relate to the environment around me. There is no knowledge without the earth and all those who

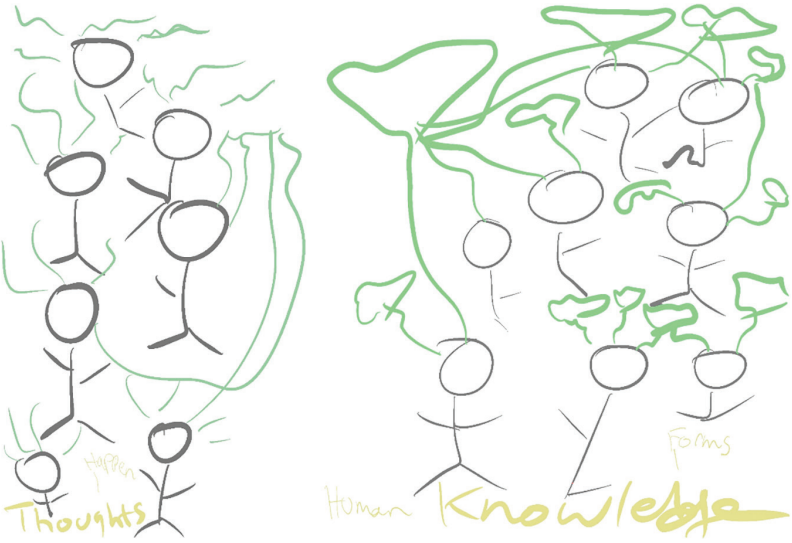

FIGURE 13.2 Samantha's drawing of knowledge as exchanges of thoughts and experiences

FIGURE 13.3 The image Sierra chose to represent her understanding of knowledge
SOURCE: DREAMSTIME.COM, AN ONLINE ROYALTY FREE STOCK PHOTO COMMUNITY

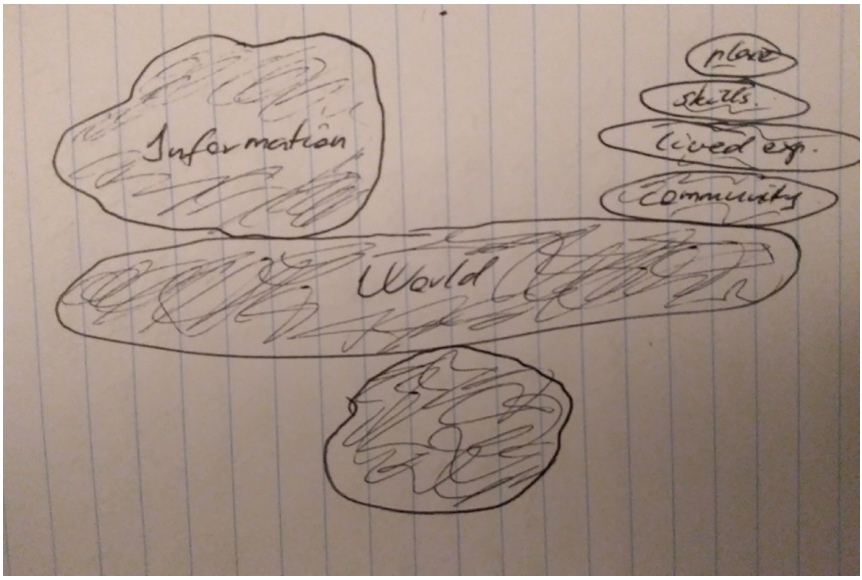

FIGURE 13.4 Kisborkai drew his representation of knowledge as having to be in balance

> inhabit it, and CBPR encourages a respectful sharing of that knowledge in hopes of creating a more inclusive world.

Kisborkai drew this image (Figure 13.4) as a representation of what knowledge is to him, following his participation in the CBPR course. He described,

> This image of balancing stones represents the information that we have in society has to be in balance with the lived experiences including all of the little components of the world around us. In the same context, I am really fascinated by the First Nations culture because they are willing to understand everything around them. So, their knowledge comes from their environment as well. And I think that the university's knowledge has to come from the outside in the same way, and when they develop their knowledge, it has to be disseminated back into the community because that is the only way to keep it balanced. We can't have all knowledge in isolation to maintain the balance. To me that is knowledge, to accept everything around us and it is a necessary part of it.

These images that were either drawn or chosen by the students and their interpretations of them, suggest that they now have a new, deeper and richer understanding of what knowledge is. All of them recognised and accepted that there

is knowledge outside of the classroom, outside of the preferential system, and within oneself, that is, each person's experiences. The CBPR course has helped them realise the power over knowledge, on whose knowledge is accepted as 'valid'. It has made them aware of the extractive nature of the relationship between institutions and Indigenous communities, and how important it is for university and Indigenous communities to work together, collaboratively, with reciprocity and respect.

7.2 *Theme 2: Relationship as a Fundamental Aspect of Knowledge Creation and Working Collaboratively*

Scholars highlight that relationships are at the heart of CBPR practice, especially since the approach involves the active participation of co-creating knowledge with groups of people (MacKinnon, 2018; Rappaport, 2020). Unsurprisingly, when it comes to working in partnerships with communities, relationships as the core of CBPR and knowledge co-creation was an overwhelming theme that emerged from analysis of the participants' interviews and focus group responses. All of the hub partners as well as the former students of the CBPR course stated that having a strong foundation in relationships with communities eases the processes of working together collaboratively. It would also set precedents and increase the possibility for future collaborations.

In this regard, a challenge highlighted by the VNFC representatives was the excessive expectation from others when working with an Indigenous organisation as "there is a lot of pressure to help others participate in reconciliation. The responsibility to inform and educate people to help them participate in Indigenous spaces". Separately, this challenge was also acknowledged by the UVic representatives, that as a university, they sometimes "overuse community partners but no one is tracking how much is being asked". Better coordination and organising at the institutional level are needed to avoid overuse issues. In preventing this from further happening, the university is starting to create a community portal to track their requests of community partners.

In managing expectations while working in collaboration with others, one VF representative highlighted that

> it's important to think about what is the best for both sides of the table; decide early on how to work with each other and being clear about expectations at the beginning, discussing deliverables at the start, and not making it up as you go. Knowing when to step away is important too.

An initiative like the SSH allows for a continuous space to establish the work and values that are needed in relationship building, and to practice

the importance of nurturing these relationships bringing the values of trust, respect and reciprocity forward.

As one of the highlights of this CBPR course, the former students mentioned that the course provided them with the opportunity to build relationships with the community partners as well as with others in the course (e.g., other students, professors, mentors) more closely than they normally would have. They recognised that the relationships developed also gave them the opportunity for networking that was lacking in the other courses they were enrolled in. However, while the students enjoyed building these relationships with community partners, they found that their involvement in community-led projects ended abruptly after three months following the university's schedule of the end of a term. Some students shared that the timeframe for the course to complete the project was too short. Further, there had been no clear expectations for both the students and community partners when the course was over. Nevertheless, there are several efforts to continue the student-community partnerships following the course, such as through directed studies, honours projects, work study, or other funding sources that enable the students to continue working on projects after the course ends. This has its own challenge in capacity as trying to maintain so many projects and students (without funding) is problematic.

7.3 *Theme 3: Learning through Active Listening*

Bishop (1994) reminds us that listening is an essential element in building alliances and working collaboratively. In this study, both the hub's community partners and former students identified active listening as one of the important skills required to build relationships with local communities. When working with communities of different cultural backgrounds and ways of knowing, such as the Indigenous communities, active listening is one of the useful skills to understand the community partners' needs as well as to learn from them with humility and empathy. The representatives at the VF highlighted that as humans, "we have innate assumptions about others", and so it is important that "we unlearn and debunk these assumptions by learning about other people through collaborations" with different organisations and populations, and practising active listening. In this regard, it is important that "we make sure all voices are heard, [thus] our work must be driven by real curiosity to learn". Requesting for and receiving feedback from others are also continuous processes of learning when using active listening and reflection.

Likewise, the VNFC practices active listening with its community members, especially when the programmes and services are catered specifically to the members' needs. This makes the practice of active listening vital to their work.

Interestingly, the VNFC representatives highlighted that from their many experiences of working with universities, people in academia have the tendency of overthinking, and so they often over-speak as well. This shows there is a lack of practice in active listening that academics need to start adopting into their work, particularly when it involves working with communities to address problems and needs they have identified.

It is particularly interesting that there was no mention of active listening by the university as a key element in bringing together knowledge with communities. This is especially important given their observations of asking too much, and not compensating enough when asking Indigenous peoples to participate in university activities and research. Thus, it appears that there is more of a need to emphasise and include active listening in university practice when it collaborates with communities, something that CBPR requires researchers to do as a way to foster reciprocal collaborations with humility and respect. Through active listening, academics will be able to learn, appreciate and respect the value of other experts' knowledge that is all around them. Active listening is one way of fostering openness and humility in learning that the university must normalise. Active listening in CBPR is not just an asset or recommendation, it is a need.

7.4 *Theme 4: Reflection as an Important Practice in CBPR*

According to H. S. Kim, an expert in nursing practice, reflection is "a process of consciously examining what has occurred in terms of thoughts, feelings, and actions against underlying beliefs, assumptions and knowledge as well as against the backdrop in which specific practice has occurred" (1999, p. 1207). Building on this definition, Cameron et al. (2000) explain that by applying reflective practice we gain "new understandings [which] can lead to a transformation in perspective and an eventual change in practice" (p. 218). Indeed, the importance of reflection is the next theme that emerged. Although addressed separately, it is closely connected to active listening.

The representatives from one of the hub's community partners and the former students of the course mentioned how they found reflection as an important component of CBPR. According to the representatives at the VF, they discovered that reflective practice helped them improve the effectiveness of their work and programme with the community. They mentioned that the VF as an organisation has always worked in partnerships with different communities that came with their own sets of knowledge, experiences, concerns, ideas and suggestions. Reflection helped them make informed decisions and take local actions.

Reflection requires the skill of active listening in order to truly understand a situation. Practicing reflection can also lead to reflexivity when we are aware of our judgements, assumptions and biases before making a decision or committing to an action. The students enrolled in the CBPR course also found this to be true. They mentioned that participating in the course had allowed them the opportunity to reflect on a regular basis through discussions, assignments, as well as their interactions with community partners, mentors and other students. Being involved in the course offers them the possibility to learn, unlearn and re-learn the nature of relationships between colonial institutions (e.g., universities) and Indigenous communities, making them aware of the impacts of historical and ongoing colonisation, privilege and power imbalance between the two entities. Learning this had allowed the students to be both reflective and reflexive of their own positionality in society, their biases, judgements and assumptions. One student shared that being involved in this course had challenged him to be accountable of his white privilege and encouraged him to practise decolonisation in his daily life.

8 Reflections and Recommendations to Bridge Knowledge between Academia and Community

First, there has been a discrepancy in perception of what knowledge is, and the value it holds. Indigenous knowledge and knowledge from local communities, for example, are often viewed as 'inferior' and at times deemed 'invalid' by universities for the fact that they are not knowledge produced or validated by the institution. As a consequence of this colonial hegemony held by universities, it contributes to the epistemicide of other knowledge systems and the perpetuation of colonisation in our systems and everyday lives. As a way of preventing this from further happening, universities need to decolonise research and teaching practices by recognising and accepting knowledge in all forms, including those that are community based and outside of academia. By integrating different knowledge systems into the design and delivery of our course, we have helped students, who are the next generation of researchers, to expand their perspectives and create a new understanding of what is considered as 'knowledge', which we hope will have broader impacts in their lives and communities going forward.

Second, we learned that there are challenges for local communities to navigate relationships with universities given the specific mandate and complex organisational structure of the institution. The shifting structures of the

university in regards to community engagement has been a challenge and remains as one of the barriers for community-university partnerships and engagement. Local communities currently depend on personal contacts at universities, and at times, universities tend to overextend community partners, especially non-profit and Indigenous community organisations. In bridging this gap, better coordination and planning at the institutional level of universities is needed. Universities should consider to prioritize relationship building with local communities by investing time and resources to get to know them and their (working) culture. Universities also need to dedicate a unit or structure to community-university engagements that allows for easier navigation to foster collaborations. This unit could assist with enhancing and facilitating cultural awareness among university researchers when it comes to working with communities.

Third, there has often been a lack of practice in listening to communities by universities when working with communities. University researchers have the tendency to over-speak and assert their ideas without, first, listening to the communities and, second, taking their needs into consideration. Due to this lack of active listening, universities struggle to view local communities as 'experts', or compensate them fairly for their contributions, when in fact Indigenous communities have their own highly evolved knowledge systems and ways of being that include vast knowledge of the territories they call home. Active listening helps to promote and bridge the understanding of these different knowledge cultures. As uninvited guests to the Indigenous territories, universities must start listening actively to Indigenous communities, and honour, respect and learn from, with humility and openness, the knowledge these communities have and share. Academics are urged to embrace and incorporate active listening in their work when they collaborate with communities, as it helps to understand their needs and allows for an open and respectful learning environment. The CBPR course has highlighted the usefulness of active listening when working with communities. Particularly, the course provided a space for students to practice and apply this skill. While active listening is one of the core aspects of CBPR, it requires practice.

Fourth, there is a need for reflection when working with local communities. We learned that reflection contributes to the effectiveness and improvement of community programmes and collaborations. Reflection helps to bridge different knowledge cultures as it provides us with the space to learn, re-learn and unlearn our assumptions and biases, which can ultimately lead to changes in beliefs and behaviours. Being both reflective and reflexive is important when we collaborate with communities as they enable us to make more informed decisions and take more purposeful actions. It is important to note that active

listening and reflection go hand in hand as one needs to be able to listen attentively before reflecting. The CBPR course has allowed for a space that promotes reflection on a regular basis among students through the different activities facilitated in the course. This has challenged the students and instructors to reflect on their positionality, biases, assumptions and privileges when working with the local communities.

9 Conclusions

This case study shows a series of challenges and lessons we have encountered from the inception of the SSH to the on-going delivery of a pedagogical product that contributes to bridging the different knowledge cultures of the partner organisations that make up the hub. We hope that by sharing our learned experiences and best practices we will inspire more universities to foster ethical, reciprocal and respectful partnerships with communities.

The collaborative course design and delivery by the civil society organisations and higher education members of the hub, along with the support of local community partners, have been proved effective in developing soft skills in community engagement that are useful not only for students' academic work, but also for their professional and daily lives. The SSH's CBPR course has been able to provide the space to train students to be more attentive listeners and learners. Former students of the course shared that they were able to learn and sharpen their skill in active listening through their hands-on learning with the community partners in the community-led projects. Being able to apply that skill and knowledge on the ground was very important to them as it added meaning to their experience in community engagement. One of the students found the skill of active listening she had learned in the CBPR course so useful that she started to practise it in other parts of her life, such as in her workplace. Through this course, the SSH also managed to introduce the students to the benefits of critical reflection and provided them with the environment to apply this practice, heightening their awareness of the importance of co-conducting ethical research with community partners.

The way we have worked as a hub has also contributed to strengthening existing institutional relationships among the partner organisations. We have consciously prioritised building and nurturing relationships of trust and respect among the members of the hub and with our local partners. This has helped to strengthen and ease the collaborative work and projects we undertake together, despite significant epistemic differences. Recognising that relationships are at the core of community-university engagement, we aim to

enhance and better support this practice in academia by promoting respectful and mutual collaborations with community. Students also had the opportunity to build relationships organically with the community partners, instructors, mentors and other students – an opportunity they typically do not have in other courses.

Without minimising these important achievements at the level of knowledge setting/practice and institutional knowledge environment, the hub has also faced critical challenges at the institutional and policy level to meet its objectives. Our pedagogical practice had to adjust to a more traditional teaching approach that does not fully allow for the application of pedagogical principles that underpin the teaching of CBPR and promote equitable and responsible partnerships between universities and communities (see Tandon et al., 2016). The impossibility to extend the students-community relationships beyond the formal duration of a university course (13 weeks) and the lack of formal recognition of non-university instructors have been some of the challenges hindering student learning. Regarding the former, while students were required to adhere to the timeline and expectations of an undergraduate course, the end of the course represents, for the most part, the interruption of the student-community partner relationship, which contradicts CBPR practice that encourages flexibility and continued fostering of relationships. Although we as a hub tried to incorporate CBPR values as much as possible –while complying with university requirements– working within these boundaries has proven challenging for the course participants. Regarding the latter, it is important to acknowledge and work to reduce the differences in material conditions of partners involved in participatory research and teaching. That is, when community groups engage in a participatory academic project, their committed time is usually unpaid and is in addition to their day-to-day responsibilities; however, academics are often paid for the time they devote to research and teaching, and even students ultimately receive credentials and higher status because of their work in/with communities. As one of our community partners expressed, "there seems to still be a real commitment to status through what letters follow your name and if you don't have [any] letters after your name then you are treated different[ly], especially when Indigenous knowledge [keepers] get paid in coffee mugs and parking passes, and not as experts in their field".

Overall, it is important to recognise that while significant progress has been made in terms of inclusion of Indigenous content and epistemologies in curricula, engaged research and community engagement at many universities in Canada, UVic included, much remains to be done to deliver community-based pedagogy. The way teaching is generally delivered in Canadian higher education institutions remains culturally biased and inadequate to preserve, protect

and promote Indigenous languages and knowledge, as well as to acknowledge cultural sensitivities surrounding the integration of Indigenous and traditional worldviews into Western educational systems.

10 First Author's Note

As a Malaysian, I do not have a family name. To cite this chapter, please use my full name: Suriani Dzulkifli. This is another way to create visibility for non-White women like myself.

Notes

1 The term 'Salish' refers to a linguistic grouping of North American Indigenous tribes located in what are now the province of BC, and the northwestern U.S.

2 In Canada, the word Indigenous is capitalized because it is used as a proper name to refer to a group of ancestral political and historical communities and societies – and any aspect of their cultures – that existed in particular territories prior to contact with Europeans (Weeber, 2020; IJIH, n.d.). The term is also capitalized as a sign of respect in recognising it as an identity, and not just an adjective.

3 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was active from 2008 to 2015. It was organized by the parties of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which included Residential Schools Survivors, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit representatives, the federal government and the church bodies (NCTR, 2002). To inform about what happened in residential schools, the TRC documented the truth of Survivors, their families, communities and anyone personally affected by the residential school experience. Its final report outlined 94 calls to action for reconciliation between settler Canadians and the Indigenous People in Canada. The report be found in full here https://nctr.ca/records/reports/

4 The Canadian Constitution recognizes 3 groups of Aboriginal peoples: First Nations, Inuit and Métis. These are 3 distinct peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs (Government of Canada, 2022). The First Nations are Indigenous peoples who are not ethnically Inuit or Métis. The Inuit are the Indigenous communities who live primarily in Northwest Territories, Nunavut, northern parts of Quebec and coastal Labrador, while the Métis refer to Indigenous peoples who are mixed First Nations and European ancestry (see The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2022; IJIH, n.d.).

5 The OCAP principles assert that First Nations have control over data collection processes, and that they own and control how this information can be used. These principles support strong information governance on the path to First Nations data sovereignty by ensuring that the data are collected, protected, used and shared ethically, respectfully and responsibly. See more information on the OCAP principles: https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/

6 Tri-Council Policy Statement is a a joint policy of Canada's three federal research agencies –i.e., the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada– that provides ethics guidance that applies to all research involving human participants. See: https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/tcps2-eptc2_2018_chapter9-chapitre9.html

7 A study completed by the VNFC in 2022 found that there are over 70 distinct First Nations represented by the Elders and Seniors group that participate in the VNFC programming.

8 Different categories apply to Aboriginal peoples in Canada (status Indians, non-status Indians, treaty Indians, non-treaty Indians), in addition to the distinction between First Nations, Métis, Inuit. The term 'Indian' is still commonly used in legal documents, although it has fallen into disuse in Canada, and most people consider it to be pejorative.

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