

What can you learn from Indigenous cultural training? An evaluation of “Building Bridges through Understanding the Village”

What you need to know:

The Ministry of Children and Family Development’s workshop *Building Bridges through Understanding the Village* supports Indigenous cultural understanding by having a positive impact on the way people see themselves engaging with Indigenous People. Many participants leave the workshop with more respect for Indigenous People and knowledge of Indigenous histories, and want to build on putting what they learn into practice.

What is this research about?

The British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) requires that staff take a workshop on understanding the impact of residential schools, colonialism, and intergenerational trauma on Indigenous people. The workshop is called Building Bridges through Understanding the Village. Staff at the ministry asked University of Victoria (UVic) graduate student researchers to evaluate the effect the workshop had on participants.

What did the researchers do?

The researchers evaluated the training by gathering and review data to find themes including:

1. Feedback surveys given at the end of each workshop from 2013-2017 was used to analyze overall feedback for 49 workshops and 568 people surveyed.
2. A web-based survey went out to past workshop participants. 130 people responded and the researchers analyzed the results.

The researchers evaluated both streams of data based on these criteria:

- Did participants like the training and learn from it?
- What did participants feel?
- Did the participants use their training?
- What do participants need to continue learning?



Researchers Nadia Salman and Jane Buchanan present their findings to the staff at the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (Photo credit: UVic staff, with permission).



What did the researchers find?

The evaluation showed that the workshop increased participants' understanding of the impact of residential schools, colonialism, and ongoing intergenerational trauma experienced by some Indigenous People in Canada.

The respondents largely agreed that their understanding of Indigenous history grew increasing their respect for Indigenous People. Most participants described the workshop as emotional. The majority of participants said the workshop had a good impact on the way they engage with Indigenous People.

Going forward, participants indicated that they wanted to continue learning about cultural protocols and how to specifically support their Indigenous clients. The results show a clear desire among workshop attendees to continue learning about the topics covered in the workshop.

The most common negative feedback was that participants did not think the workshop should be mandatory. Some people felt those attending who did not wish to be at the workshop lessened the workshop's impact for others.

How can you use this research?

Employers, teachers, and professional development agencies can use this information to review and evaluate Indigenous cultural understanding training courses. For organizations working closely with Indigenous communities or seeking to create an inclusive work environment, these findings show the results of one method for cultural learning.

About the researchers

Jane Buchanan and Nadia Salman are University of Victoria (UVic) graduate students. This project was completed as part of the [Graduate Studies \(GS\) 505](#) course and supervised by instructors Drs. Gord Miller and Wayne Mitic. Facilitated by UVic [Research Partnerships and Knowledge Mobilization](#), GS 505 is a partnership between MCFD and UVic. This project was prepared on behalf of MCFD.

Keywords

Indigenous cultural training; cultural acumen; cultural sensitivity training; Indigenous child welfare; cultural safety; intergenerational trauma; cultural learning

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