

**Staff and Faculty Aboriginal Cultural Training (SFACT)
Needs Assessment Report**

LE, NONET Project
University of Victoria
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The SFACT Needs Assessment was conducted on Coast and Straits Salish Territory, both on the University of Victoria (UVic) main campus and within local First Nations communities. Staff of the LE,NONET Project acknowledge the Coast and Straits Salish peoples as the traditional stewards of this territory.

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Report-At-A-Glance

LE,NONET is a four-year pilot project at the University of Victoria (UVic), funded by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation and designed to support the success of Aboriginal¹ undergraduate students through innovative programming. As part of this initiative, it was identified that the experiences of Aboriginal people at UVic would be greatly improved by efforts to increase the levels of cultural awareness and knowledge on campus. The vision was to increase faculty and staff awareness around Aboriginal cultures and perspectives in order to create a more respectful and culturally safe environment for Aboriginal students. A needs assessment was conducted with stakeholder groups, including students, staff, faculty and professionals in Aboriginal education, requesting their input on what elements should be prioritized in the training.

As a result, this report outlines innovative ideas for designing and delivering training to UVic staff and faculty to improve their knowledge of Aboriginal cultures and issues faced by Aboriginal students. It provides concrete ideas for the contents and format for delivering training models, and the practical next steps for institutionalizing the training at UVic.

The report consists of four sections, with supporting documents in the appendices. The first section provides information about the creation of SFACT as a component of the LE,NONET Project, including how it fits within the University's overall goals to improve Aboriginal relations. Section B outlines the research methods used for the needs assessment, including the project goals, participant recruitment and data collection methods. The findings of the needs assessment are outlined in Section C, comprised of a profile of the participants, support for the creation of staff and faculty training, recommended content, and preferred delivery formats. Additionally, some suggestions for improving Aboriginal student experiences are outlined, extending beyond the scope of this project. The final section consists of a brief update on what has been accomplished since the needs assessment was first initiated, as well as outlining recommended next steps for implementing the findings in this report.

The intended audiences for this report are members of the UVic community, including students, faculty, staff and senior administrators. We also hope the findings will be useful to Aboriginal organizations and First Nations communities who have a relationship with UVic. The report has been designed to inform the development of future programming at UVic which focuses on making the university environment more welcoming for Aboriginal learners.

¹ Throughout this report the term "Aboriginal" is used to refer to First Nations (Status and non-Status), Métis, and Inuit peoples. This term was selected to remain consistent with other LE,NONET Project publications, though we recognize that "Indigenous" has replaced "Aboriginal" in most contexts at the University of Victoria.

A. Background

Support for Aboriginal cultural training for UVic staff and faculty has emerged over the past ten years. During the consultation phase of planning for the LE,NONET Project, this issue was raised again as one component of better meeting the needs of Aboriginal students². While aimed primarily at providing direct support and programming for Aboriginal undergraduate students, the LE,NONET Project proposal (submitted to Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation in May 2005) included an overall goal of making the university a more welcoming environment for Aboriginal people, in part through raising UVic staff and faculty awareness.

In a report on racism at the University of Victoria, recommendations were made to offer cultural sensitivity training to students and employees, as well as a course on cross-cultural communication and understanding for students, faculty and staff (Martin & Warburton, 1998). In October 2005, an employment equity survey conducted with UVic employees on workforce diversity and representation identified feedback from respondents on the topics of 'definition,' 'recognition,' 'accommodation,' and 'representation' of Aboriginal persons working at UVic. As one participant stated, "As an Aboriginal woman, I am exhausted by the amount of time and energy I am forced to exercise in simply educating and informing other classmates and professors and instructors regarding Aboriginal experience in Canada" (University of Victoria Equity and Human Rights Office in association with Human Resources and Social Development Canada's Federal Contractor's Program for Employment Equity, 2005).

The need for increased awareness of Aboriginal issues has also been identified in literature on Aboriginal education. As Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001) state: "The most compelling problem that First Nations students face when they go to the university is the lack of respect, not just as individuals, but more fundamentally as a people." In 1996, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) Report recommended that universities develop "cross-cultural sensitivity training for faculty and staff" (RCAP, 1996). As enrolment of Aboriginal students in post-secondary institutions has steadily increased over the past ten years (R.A. Malatest, 2004), this type of training is increasingly important. Despite significant increases, Aboriginal people continue to trail non-Aboriginal people in university graduation rates; in 2001, 8% of Aboriginal people over the age of 25 had a university degree, compared to 15% of the rest of the Canadian population of the same age (Holmes, 2006). A recent study conducted by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada showed that more than half of the Canadian post-secondary institutions that

² See Appendix A for an outline of the SFACT modules originally proposed in the 2005 revised funding proposal for the LE,NONET Project. See Appendix B for an outline of the existing online SFACT module being utilized as part of the Research Apprenticeship Program.

responded to the survey “offer some kind of cross-cultural sensitivity training to their employees which include Aboriginal perspectives” (ibid).

During consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders for the development of the LE,NONET Project, these themes also arose as a central component of making the university aware of the unique needs of Aboriginal students. Key informants talked about the prevalence of systemic and direct racism that Aboriginal students face from faculty, staff, and other students. As one student said,

Racism in the classroom is such a huge issue for me. I’ve had so many mean, damaging experiences of just walking out and wanting to cry and run away and never set foot on this campus. And I don’t know one Aboriginal student on campus – I don’t know one who hasn’t had those experiences (Lalonde, 2004).

In interviews from the initial LE,NONET Project consultation, respondents identified examples of the ways that students experience discrimination:

- Professors target individual Aboriginal students to speak on behalf of all Aboriginal peoples
- Discriminatory use of policy by not giving extensions for valid cultural obligations
- Students receive poor evaluations on assignments for not providing Euro-centrally accepted references for Aboriginal knowledge (sometimes despite having been given permission to write from an Aboriginal perspective)
- Students face ignorant comments from students, faculty, or staff
- Students are left to defend themselves against racist comments made in classroom situations while instructors stand by silently not knowing what to do
- Stereotyped judgments made by faculty and staff due to the overall lack of appreciation for the diversity of Aboriginal peoples (Lalonde, 2004).

Key informants felt that these incidents of discrimination stemmed from a prevailing lack of accurate knowledge regarding Aboriginal peoples in Canada, rather than intentional acts of discriminatory behaviour aimed at Aboriginal students.

Cultural training for staff and faculty also supports the goals outlined in the University of Victoria’s Strategic Plan. The plan identifies the goal, “to recruit and retain a diverse group of exceptionally talented students, faculty and staff and to support them in ways that allow them to achieve their highest potential” (University of Victoria Planning and Priorities Committee, 2007). This goal is to be met by identifying and implementing “ways of enhancing the recruitment, retention and graduation of Aboriginal students in all faculties” (ibid).

Clearly, Aboriginal cultural training for staff and faculty is consistent with both the goals of the university as a whole, and the LE,NONET Project’s mandate of

supporting the success of Aboriginal undergraduate students. In order to implement this type of training, a needs assessment was identified as a first step toward the creation of educational materials that will be well-received by staff and faculty.

B. Research Methods

While funding for the creation of Aboriginal cultural training for UVic staff and faculty was included within the LE,NONET Project budget, the task of developing the training was not specifically assigned to anyone within the project. In May 2006 an online training module for faculty participating in the LE,NONET Research Apprenticeship Program was developed under the guidance of a committee consisting of LE,NONET staff members, and chaired by the Research Apprenticeship Coordinator. The Staff and Faculty Aboriginal Cultural Training (SFACT) Committee assumed the responsibility of developing the online and face-to-face modules available for all staff and faculty at UVic.

SFACT Committee membership fluctuated over the course of the LE,NONET Project due to staffing changes. While the membership included both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff members, a non-Aboriginal person consistently headed the committee. For most of the time this was the Research Apprenticeship Coordinator, except for a period when the Project Manager chaired the committee while the Coordinator was on maternity leave. The committee also oversaw the creation and implementation of this needs assessment, under the direction of the Research Apprenticeship Coordinator.

Purpose

Although it was an important launching point, the initial LE,NONET proposal fell short of offering a clear plan for initiating SFACT across campus. Additionally, the target participants (all staff and faculty at UVic) came from a diverse population with unique learning goals and objectives. For these reasons, the SFACT Committee decided to conduct an assessment of the needs, desires, barriers and interests of UVic staff and faculty, Aboriginal students, and professionals with expertise in Aboriginal education. The intention was for the results of this survey to inform the creation of future staff and faculty cultural training at UVic. Three main research questions were developed to guide the further development of the SFACT needs assessment:

1. What are the current perceived Aboriginal cultural training needs of the university staff and faculty community?
2. What methods and/or modes of delivery of Aboriginal cultural training do university staff and faculty prefer?
3. Based on the experiences and recommendations offered by UVic's Aboriginal students and professionals with experience as/or working with Aboriginal students and post-secondary education, what training is needed and what methods are seen as most appropriate for offering training in these areas to faculty and staff at UVic?

To answer these questions, the needs assessment was designed to gain a diverse sample of UVic staff and faculty members' thoughts regarding the training, through an in-depth exploration of diverse stakeholders' impressions around major aspects of developing and offering the training to UVic staff and faculty.

Participant Recruitment and Data Collection

To access information from various groups across campus, interviews, focus groups and surveys were conducted with representatives from the following groups:

- Professionals in Aboriginal Education
- Aboriginal Students
- UVic Staff
- UVic Faculty

Professionals in Aboriginal Education

LE,NONET Project staff provided contact information for a number of professionals with experience in Aboriginal education in the Victoria area, including members of the larger community and UVic staff and faculty. Snowball sampling was used to identify the final list of participants, starting with the original list of local professionals. Some experts were also recruited through informal conversations at LE,NONET events.

A total of 10 interviews with professionals in Aboriginal education took place, including 7 Aboriginal and 3 non-Aboriginal people.

Students

Opportunities were created for both undergraduate and graduate Aboriginal students to participate in the needs assessment. Support was gained from the Native Student Union (NSU) to access their membership of undergraduate students through their listserv (see Appendix C for a copy of the letter of support provided by the NSU). Additionally, posters were put up around campus in order to attract the broader Aboriginal student population. Students affiliated with the LE,NONET Project were also invited to participate, either verbally or via email.

A total of 70 students participated in the needs assessment, including 60 students who completed surveys and 10 who participated in interviews or small focus groups of 2-3 people. Both graduate and undergraduate students were invited to participate, but they were not asked to identify specific information about their degree program; the number of graduate and undergraduate participants is therefore not known.

UVic Staff

UVic staff were invited to participate in the needs assessment through interviews and surveys, including online and paper surveys. Working with the Human Resources (HR) Department, a list of potential participants was created.

A total of 102 surveys were completed by UVic staff, and an additional 12 staff participated in interviews. Participants included staff from the CUPE 951, CUPE 917 and PEA labour groups, which include workers in a variety of roles e.g. administrative, technical and maintenance. In total, more than 40 facilities and departments were represented by staff participants. It should be noted that of the collective agreement groups contacted, only five out of 81 CUPE 917 members completed paper surveys. Comments from members of that group indicated their impression that their needs are not valued as much as other staff groups on campus, which may have contributed to the low participation rates.

UVic Faculty

UVic faculty also participated in the needs assessment through both interviews and surveys. For the interviews, 27 UVic faculty members were randomly selected from a list of employees provided by HR, including representatives from all ten faculties (Business, Education, Engineering, Human and Social Development, Fine Arts, Humanities, Law, Medical Sciences, Sciences, Social Sciences); these faculty members were contacted by email and/or telephone. Of those contacted, 11 participated in face-to-face interviews, and one filled out responses to the interview questions and submitted them via e-mail.

To recruit faculty participants for the online survey, 395 faculty were randomly selected to receive an invitation to complete the survey. Of those contacted, 61 faculty chose to participate.

C. Findings of Needs Assessment

Participant Profile

A summary of the total number of participants from the four participant groups is provided below.

Participant numbers by group

A total of 267 people participated in the needs assessment, including interview, focus group and survey participants. Participants were allowed to participate in the needs assessment through either: an interview, a focus group, or a survey; not more than one.

	Interview/ Focus Group	Survey	Total
Professionals in Aboriginal Education	10	--	10
Aboriginal Students	10	60	70
Staff	12	102	114
Faculty	12	61	73
Total	44	223	267

Age by participant group

The participants in each group covered a wide age range, though UVic Aboriginal students were generally younger than the majority of participants from the other groups.

	Professionals in Aboriginal Education	Aboriginal Students	Staff	Faculty	Total
15-19	--	8	--	--	8
20-29	--	41	21	2	64
30-39	3	14	20	13	50
40-49	2	2	35	20	59
50-59	1	5	26	32	64
60-64	3	--	6	5	14
65+	1	--	3	1	5
Blank	--	--	3	--	3
Total	10	70	114	73	267

Ethnic background by participant group

The question about ethnic or racial identity was open-ended, which resulted in a huge variety of responses. Rather than listing the hundreds of responses individually or grouping them together by conventional racial categories, a summary is provided of those participants who identified as Aboriginal (or having

Aboriginal ancestry) and those who were non-Aboriginal. The majority of participants were non-Aboriginal.

	Professionals in Aboriginal Education	Aboriginal Students	Staff	Faculty	Total
Aboriginal ancestry	7	70	11	3	92
Non-Aboriginal	3	--	99	65	166
Blank	--	--	4	5	9
Total	10	70	114	73	267

Gender by participant group

The vast majority of participants were female. The only group that had a higher representation of males was UVic faculty.

	Female	Male	Blank	Total
Professionals in Aboriginal Education	6	4		10
Aboriginal Students	49	21		70
Staff	79	32	3	114
Faculty	34	39		73
Total	168	96	3	267

Self-reported knowledge of Aboriginal history and culture in Canada

Needs assessment participants were asked to rate their knowledge of Aboriginal history and culture in Canada. The majority reported average or higher than average levels of knowledge.

	Professionals in Aboriginal Education	Aboriginal Students	Staff	Faculty	Total
No knowledge		1		3	4
Little knowledge		10	27	20	57
Average knowledge		16	51	23	90
Higher than Average	5	35	28	20	88
Advanced	5	7	5	5	22
Blank		1	3	2	6
Total	10	70	114	73	267

Source of knowledge of Aboriginal people

Participants were asked to list the sources of their knowledge of Aboriginal people, and were allowed to choose as many answers as applicable.

	Professionals in Aboriginal Education	Aboriginal Students	Staff	Faculty	Total
Personal relationships	5	39	48	28	120
Personal experience	9	39	41	20	109
University or college	2	40	36	12	90
Independent study/self-directed education	1	24	30	30	85
Media (TV, newspaper, movies)	1	11	30	20	62
Elementary/secondary school		13	25	6	44
Other	1	12	15	4	32
Research interactions	1	6	5	16	28
Blank		5	4	2	11
Total	20	189	234	138	581

Level of interaction with Aboriginal students

Participants were asked to rate their level of interaction with Aboriginal students. The majority said they had little interaction with Aboriginal students (including the students, who reported having little contact with other Aboriginal students), indicating that the university environment is largely made up of non-Aboriginal students.

	Professionals in Aboriginal Education	Aboriginal Students	Staff	Faculty	Total
None		3	31	14	48
Little	1	20	40	29	90
Same as visible minority students		13	30	15	58
Worked with many Aboriginal students	6	20	7	12	45
Majority of students are Aboriginal	3	7	1	1	12
Blank		7	5	2	14
Total	10	70	114	73	267

Why is SFACT Needed at UVic?

Overall, participants felt that the general environment at UVic is improving for Aboriginal learners, but indicated that educational initiatives such as SFACT are needed to further improve the climate for Aboriginal students. Professionals in Aboriginal education and students provided specific examples of the types of negative experiences faced by Aboriginal people at post-secondary institutions, and ways that increased awareness of Aboriginal issues would positively impact Aboriginal students.

When asked about their experiences with UVic staff and faculty, most of the professionals felt that their experiences are improving. Some participants noted that faculty members have started approaching community members to begin building relationships, and that these relationships are creating networking possibilities between UVic and local communities that increase understanding. Although these positive changes are happening, most of the professionals and Aboriginal students who were interviewed shared at least one story of racism that they, or a student they worked with, had experienced at UVic. Most participants felt that these incidents were errors of ignorance rather than intent, and that such situations could be resolved through education. Some participants were concerned that large class sizes make it challenging for students to build relationships with faculty, and that a positive relationship is dependent on individuals rather than on an overall UVic shift. Two professionals felt that they did not have enough experience with University staff and faculty to comment.

Some Aboriginal students were concerned that offering training focusing on Aboriginal issues could create resentment or “othering,” and felt it important that any training offered should recognize that students from other minority groups also face unique challenges at UVic. Some respondents also commented that training should include an intersectional analysis; that Aboriginal students might also, for example, be female students, or students with disabilities, and that these layers of identity might create different challenges or “a double bias.”

"It's great that Aboriginal students are going for post-secondary education, but the institutions that are soliciting those students, inviting them to come, need to make sure that they're prepared, ready, willing, and able to support up front"

--Student Participant

"Take an Aboriginal person with high academic qualifications... they're coming from way up in northern BC. And they leave their family, they've got nobody down here, they're coming to a city, what's going to keep that person here?"

--Student Participant

"Part of our concern about making this campus more friendly and accessible to Aboriginal students is the hope that they're going to get benefit and gain from knowledge beyond just the intrinsic benefit of getting a university education. There ought to be something that's going back into those communities, particularly because in many cases the community itself is making sacrifices too."

--Faculty Participant

Interactions with instructors at UVic

Surveyed students were asked to reflect on their interactions with faculty at UVic, including classroom discussions, respectful and appropriate interactions, and whether these interactions meet their needs as Aboriginal students.

Several students expressed that course instructors, specifically non-Aboriginal instructors, have difficulty facilitating discussions in class that deal with Aboriginal topics, especially when the discussion becomes heated or racist in tone. Students experiencing this commented that instructors do not know how to handle such situations, so they will either do nothing and let the discussion continue, or they will put the visibly Aboriginal students into the role of teacher, which Aboriginal students feel is unfair as they are also there to learn.

Students also commented that some instructors and teaching assistants have difficulty presenting Aboriginal topics in the classroom; students felt that many faculty members do not have adequate understanding of contemporary Aboriginal issues (e.g. treaties, land claims, residential schools) so they have difficulty incorporating these topics into courses. Students felt that some instructors idealize Aboriginal knowledge, which creates resentment; that other instructors are dismissive and patronizing when presenting Aboriginal knowledge; and that others present material out of a sense of obligation but with no obvious connection to what they are teaching, thus making Aboriginal knowledge seem boring. Some students felt that assignments do not seem relevant to or reflective of their worldviews.

Students stated that some instructors seem to avoid teaching anything that touches on Aboriginal topics, not wanting to “go there,” thus only presenting Eurocentric material. When one participant attempted to raise thoughts on related topics presented in class in order to include an “Aboriginal perspective,” the participant felt judged and labeled by the instructor and classmates as being a “disgruntled Aboriginal.”

Some students who are not visibly Aboriginal (some Métis or mixed-heritage students, for example) felt that their contribution to discussions related to Aboriginal topics are not valued because faculty and classmates do not see them as

*"If [students] knew professors had a deeper understanding of where they're coming from they wouldn't feel they have to defend themselves or explain themselves. They could just come in without that sign over their heads saying "I'm different," because they could feel they're stepping in to a safe, understanding environment."
--Student Participant*

*"When I was a First Nations student, ... because I didn't have the traditional First Nations look, I kind of wasn't allowed to bring [identity] to the table as an issue for me."
--Staff Participant*

*"There's a great deal of anxiety about the right way of doing things and how to do it. And a huge fear in non-Aboriginal professionals that they would be better off doing nothing than doing something wrong... But there's lots of people ready and willing to help them take that first right step, that first step that honours and acknowledges."
--Student Participant*

“real” Aboriginal people. Others felt that they have not been treated any differently because staff and faculty do not recognize that they are Aboriginal.

Some students enrolled in the sciences commented that the survey questions were irrelevant to their studies because there was no cultural content in their field, their instructors treat all students equally, and as Aboriginal students they do not want any “special treatment.”

Other Aboriginal student participants commented that because some instructors lack knowledge, they are unable to understand Aboriginal students’ responsibilities to their respective communities or their unique needs. One common example is the importance of understanding the cultural protocols surrounding death in First Nations communities and the impact this might have on students’ attendance. As one community member stated: “Yes, this might be the third death in this student's family this semester, and that's their reality; so how can you support them? ... Yes, they might have six grandmothers die during the six years they're [in school], because that's the reality, that every elder in their community is a grandparent.”

"I think that some of us come from an environment where we had less. And not that we should be treated differently, but I'm not sure how the scales get to be balanced."

--Student Participant

Interactions with UVic staff

Students were asked to reflect on their interactions with staff at UVic, specifically whether interactions were appropriate and whether staff were meeting Aboriginal student needs. The majority of respondents said that most staff at UVic are helpful and respectful, though some students reported encounters with racism.

"Students have encountered stereotypes like 'Poverty is a choice,' 'Native people are on the street because they want to be,' 'They have all the money in the world to go to school.'"

--Student Participant

Many students identifying as Métis or mixed-heritage, who are perceived as looking more European than Aboriginal, reported challenges in accessing services for Aboriginal students. One student explained that during the admissions process, by distance, s/he was offered many services and treated very well by staff, but upon arriving at UVic was told that the same services were only for Aboriginal students and was questioned about ancestry despite being very connected to culture. S/he stated: “people don’t see me as an aboriginal student just because I am one of the whitest people ever.” Students also reported misunderstandings and rude behaviour when working with staff in areas related to their funding. Some students felt that staff have lower expectations of them, or seem “scared” to interact with Aboriginal students. Students perceived a lack of general knowledge about Aboriginal issues among UVic staff.

"How can we have that respect, or humility between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, in order for that to become [reflected] in the work that they do? Not just in the opening of a classroom setting, but it's also in... the research that they do, and how they acknowledge different things."

--Student Participant

Staff and Faculty Awareness of Available Resources

Staff and faculty were asked about their familiarity with Aboriginal student services on campus, their experience with these services, and their provision of referrals to these services. They were also asked about their level of knowledge of existing diversity training resources available and the effectiveness of these resources.

The majority of staff and faculty participants were not familiar with the available cultural resources on campus. Two service providers were recognized by a number of participants: the LE,NONET Office and the Office of Indigenous Affairs. A few participants noted Aboriginal departments, organizations, and events (e.g. the Indigenous Governance Program (IGOV), the Native Students' Union (NSU), the First Peoples House, the Week of Welcome, the Mini-University Summer Camp, functions in the Law School, cultural safety courses in Nursing), email notifications or postings for lectures, and the Diversity Office as sources for cultural training resources.

Most staff participants had not experienced Aboriginal services personally, had not referred students to them, and were not aware of available cultural training resources. One participant commented that s/he feels that the First Peoples House will help connect services better so the "word will get out to more people."

Half of faculty participants were familiar with on-campus Aboriginal student services; some responded that they worked with few or no Aboriginal students, so this question was not relevant. Approximately half of the respondents reported having accessed or referred others to services, including the Indigenous Student Counselor, the Human and Social Development (HSD) Indigenous Student Advisor, and the LE,NONET Project. These participants reported that these services either increased their own knowledge and understanding of cultural differences, or that the services helped their students respond to a crisis situation. Some participants never received feedback from the students they referred. Faculty members also mentioned that no information was provided at the new faculty orientation,³ and that UVic needs more training opportunities in this area.

Support for SFACT

Generally, all four groups of participants in the needs assessment supported the development of training for faculty and staff at UVic. Many participants felt that the majority of faculty, staff, and students do not have an adequate understanding of contemporary Aboriginal issues in general, or of the unique challenges facing many Aboriginal students. Participants indicated that initiatives like SFACT, if properly designed, could improve the environment at UVic not only for Aboriginal students, but for the university's general population and local Aboriginal communities as well. Participants commented that SFACT fits well with the goals of UVic's strategic plan, including the recruitment of increasing numbers of Aboriginal students, staff, and faculty.

³ The current version of new faculty orientation provides limited information about Aboriginal student resources at UVic, but did not include this during the time of data collection for this study.

Participants were hopeful that SFACT could serve to counter the myths, ignorance, and systemic racism that are currently present at UVic, while promoting awareness of the issues affecting Aboriginal students. Participants commented that many people in Canada still have inaccurate understandings of history; as one staff member commented “staff and faculty were educated in a time in Canada...when First Nations issues weren’t dealt with in the same way ... and so some upgrading is probably needed.”

Participants also felt that initiatives like SFACT are appropriate given UVic’s general commitment to promoting diversity. Students cautioned that it is not appropriate to attempt to recruit Aboriginal students to the university unless appropriate systems are in place to support their success.

Students also expressed that if SFACT succeeds in creating a positive learning environment for Aboriginal students, this would be a powerful recruitment tool. Aboriginal students would tell friends and relatives about positive experiences at UVic. Students were hopeful that SFACT could counter myths and ignorance in the classroom that have resulted from inaccurate portrayals of history. Students felt that the skills that instructors could learn through SFACT would improve the learning environment for all students, as instructors would be better able to facilitate class discussions involving difficult and controversial topics.

Faculty and staff identified the need for this information in order to provide training and support to students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who intend to work with Aboriginal peoples in their future careers. Some staff and faculty also felt that developing this kind of knowledge is necessary “in order to do your job well,” and several expressed that there is both a need for and a great deal of interest in training opportunities.

Professionals in Aboriginal education responded enthusiastically to the prospect of SFACT, with the majority commenting on the importance of, and the need for this training. Most felt that it would be useful and empowering, and students agreed that those who take this training could probably avoid the mishaps

"I certainly appreciate the goals of the university in this regard but often ... goals, visions, and strategic plans, etc., don't fully take into consideration the realities of administering a complex environment place like the [participant's] department. So yes, we have a Strategic Plan in which the interest of the Indigenous students is prominent ... and so it should be. But those visions and strategic plans are often framed without a clear understanding of how programs are delivered day to day."

--Faculty Participant

"It's such a multicultural society and any education and training that we get to make it easier for visual minorities or any minorities because of other ones that aren't visual. Anything that expands my awareness I guess is useful. "

--Staff Participant

"That's got to be part of the message too. [SFACT] is not a fun little thing that will get you out of work. This is something that you need in order to do your job well."

--Staff Participant

that currently occur as a result of “cross-cultural misunderstandings.” Some professionals commented that SFACT could provide a unique opportunity for UVic to continue to build cross-cultural relationships with Aboriginal peoples. One participant stated “We as First Nations people have never had the opportunity to build a good relationship or even any kind of a relationship with the first settlers that arrived.”

When asked what they thought the implications of this type of training would be for themselves, their coworkers, and UVic in general, participants commented that SFACT could create a more welcoming environment that would help UVic recruit and retain not only more Aboriginal students but more minority students in general, because people will be more knowledgeable; thus general attitudes could shift noticeably. Participants felt that this training could inspire a spill-over of openness to other cultures, and could promote better appreciation of one’s own culture as well. One staff member anticipated that employees’ morale could increase because they will feel “honoured” to be included in the sharing of such important information. Further, one faculty member hoped that coming together for SFACT could foster connections amongst diverse faculties or departments.

Many participants did not anticipate any negative implications, provided that the training is voluntary. When reflecting on possible negative implications, most felt that there would be none if it was done well, but potential problems could include: being another draw on time for already over-committed faculty; those who are interested will be those already somewhat informed, yet those that really “need” the training will not attend; if it is poorly attended it will be discouraging to the facilitator (particularly if they are from the local community); and one participant felt that it is important to “avoid reinforcing differences if we’re going to understand each other.”

“I don't have all the knowledge of all Indigenous people, it really frustrates me when [I get singled out], because I feel like I deserve to be able to learn too, and not have to teach.”
--Student Participant

Concerns

Although most of the needs assessment participants supported the development of SFACT, some participants did not support this type of training. Others offered specific advice about aspects of the modules.

Some students, staff, and faculty did not support this training for various reasons. Some students and faculty commented that Aboriginal students do not want to feel “singled out” or receive “special treatment”; as one student stated, “I don’t feel I have needs as an ‘Aboriginal’ student. I feel I have the same needs as any other student within my program.” Many participants expressed concern that focusing training on a single group could create a backlash, especially if the training is

mandatory or “forced.” Some participants felt that any available training should focus on diversity in general, and should include aspects dealing with other minority groups (e.g. recent immigrants, students with disabilities) rather than focusing exclusively on Aboriginal peoples. Students were concerned that SFACT, if not done well, could create “othering” or “stereotyping.” One student emphasized that it is important for staff and faculty to treat all students with respect for their individual circumstances, regardless of cultural background. Some participants from all three groups questioned whether it is appropriate to allocate university resources to SFACT, particularly given that Aboriginal students are a relatively small percentage of the UVic student body.

Some student, staff, and faculty participants focused on the diversity among the potential recipients of the training. These participants felt that SFACT will not be equally relevant to all departments (more relevant to Fine Arts than to Computer Science, for example), based either on the subject area or the numbers of Aboriginal students. Faculty, staff, and students also emphasized that some departments are already sensitive to the issues faced by Aboriginal students and communities. Staff and faculty may also have very different needs for training in these topics because of their different roles in interacting with students; some staff never interact with students at all, so SFACT may not be directly relevant to their work at UVic. Participants also emphasized the importance of recognizing employees’ existing expertise and experience through training that is sophisticated and open to critical dialogue, rather than oversimplifying complex issues. In particular, several students and professionals in Aboriginal education emphasized that the training should adequately address the diversity among Aboriginal peoples; First Nations communities have diverse cultural practices and very different experiences of colonialism, and different students have a diversity of needs (e.g. depending whether they grew up on- or off-reserve, depending on their level of connection to their culture, depending on their family’s financial situation, etc.).

***"The [Aboriginal student] experience is going to be variable, very diverse. And I'm always hesitant about reaching generalizations about experiences from such a complex student body."
--Faculty Participant***

Staff and faculty also presented some logistical concerns. Finding time for the training was a common theme among these participants. Both staff and faculty indicated that they already feel overwhelmed by the demands on their time and that during particular times of the year there is no chance they could devote extra time to training, even though they agreed in principal that such initiatives are very important. Further, because employees have very different schedules, it is essential that flexibility is incorporated both in the times the training is offered and the mode of delivery (face-to-face vs. online, for example). Some staff indicated that they are not able to take time away from their regular duties to attend training unless they have explicit support from their supervisors; at the same time many do not want to give up lunch hours or breaks. Faculty members agreed that for widespread buy-in to be possible, SFACT will need support from higher-level administration.

Given that staff and faculty have so many demands on their time, participants expressed that the goals of any training offered should be clear, and that topics covered must be relevant to participants' work at UVic.

Several members from all groups felt strongly that any training in these topic areas should be voluntary (this will be discussed further in the "accessibility" section of this report). Several participants also objected to the word "training"; one participant in particular indicated that developing knowledge of Aboriginal issues should be an ongoing process, whereas the word "training" suggests finite outcomes.

Finally, several participants expressed particular concerns about the delivery of future training modules; these participants emphasized the importance of planning and delivering these programs in "the right way." One common theme was that any training should be developed by, or with input from, Aboriginal people who are respected within their communities. Participants emphasized that it is essential to have good facilitators with appropriate expertise, who are able to create an open, non-judgmental environment. Some staff and faculty were concerned that the material might be presented in a way that makes participants feel guilty, angry, or uncomfortable; some participants were also clear that they would not want to participate in training that over-generalizes Western or "white" people and worldviews or that presents only negative aspects of the West. Similarly, participants felt it is important to have room for critical dialogue, and to avoid glorifying Aboriginal cultures. Some participants also expressed that they would not be comfortable in an environment in which they were expected to share a lot of personal information, or in dialogues that become "touchy-feely." Finally, some staff and faculty expressed that they and/or their colleagues would be apprehensive of "saying the wrong thing" or "looking racist," particularly in a public forum.

Many staff and faculty also commented that they personally felt no apprehension about participating in SFACT.

"So if the question is general understanding that everybody should appreciate more the experiences, history, and culture of the Aboriginal peoples in BC in an abstract way, then I'd say yes that's a very good idea, but you're dealing with an awful lot of realities and constraints here which may not be possible to overcome."

--Faculty Participant

"If the purpose or the thinking is, well, this needs to happen in the forum of that week-end in the University of Victoria in a welcoming and accommodating place for Aboriginal students, then that has a more practical application and probably would, I think, attract more interest particularly from faculty."

--Faculty Participant

Content and Focus of SFACT Modules

Participants provided a great diversity of feedback on the types of information that SFACT training could include. The areas that received the highest levels of support from all participant groups were:

- Historical context
- Contemporary realities
- Culture
- Local peoples and land
- Diversity of Aboriginal peoples' experiences
- Relationship building
- Practical or practice-based tools

Many participants agreed that it is also important to suggest resources for any SFACT participants who want to pursue a topic area further.

*"Canada is never going to write history books that reflect what they did to Indigenous people, so non-Indigenous people still remain in the dark unless they go outside of their norm and have an Indigenous friend or take an Aboriginal class. And stuff like that that people continue to live with."
--Professional in Aboriginal Education*

Historical context

All groups recognized that the mainstream understanding of Canada's history does not include an Aboriginal point of view, and therefore many Canadians do not understand the historical context of the ongoing challenges facing Aboriginal peoples and students. All groups indicated that an understanding of history from an Aboriginal perspective is necessary for developing a contemporary understanding of Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relationships. Common topics included: pre-Contact history; local First Nations' history; historical and ongoing colonization; Residential Schools and the history of Aboriginal education policies in Canada; the Indian Act; the reserve system; Aboriginal self-government; Aboriginal-state treaty relationships; and a history of federal policies and their impacts.

Contemporary realities

All groups also suggested that SFACT modules should connect the historical context to "contemporary realities." Participants wanted to develop an understanding of current issues covered by the media, presented in class, and/or affecting Aboriginal students' lives. Specific topics related to these broader categories included: realities of on-reserve living; racism/privilege; taxes, housing, medical and educational funding for Aboriginal peoples; current social and health issues and their impacts on students (e.g. suicide, addiction, family violence, etc.) and the context of these issues. Students felt that this information could serve to counter some of the myths and stereotypes they encounter from non-Aboriginal students

and/or instructors.

In addition, all groups wanted positive stories to be included, e.g., role models, decolonizing efforts, and current cultural practices or revitalization projects.

Culture

All groups identified that cultural topics should be explored within the training, and recognized the importance of respecting cultural difference in order to accommodate Aboriginal student needs. Participants indicated that staff and faculty need to understand Aboriginal cultural/community obligations that affect students' attendance, participation, and priorities. Specific topics included: obligations around family/community deaths, obligations around sacred ceremonies, and responsibilities to family and community. Professionals and students cautioned that respecting culture is very important, but that it is not appropriate for people outside of any given community to practice some aspects of Aboriginal culture and ceremonies. Specific suggestions were made about aspects of culture that could be included, such as art, literature and music.

"Aspects of that experience and history and culture that prevent First Nations students from getting here in the first place, which I think is as significant as the experience once you're here."

--Staff Participant

"I explained to two of my instructors that [absences] had to do with suicides in my family, ... and they're like, "Oh yeah, that's a sad story but we're still going to have to doc you those days and we can't do anything about it, unless you have a medical note."

--Student Participant

All groups felt that UVic's initiatives to include traditional welcomes or other ceremonial events at university functions need to be better understood so that they are done properly and not perceived as token gestures. Another recurring theme was the relationship between cultural practices and connection to land and traditional territory.

Other suggestions included information about Aboriginal ceremonies surrounding important life events, such as birth, marriage or death, and ceremonies or activities connected to particular seasons, such as hunting, fishing, or cleansings. Participants discussed the importance of regalia, feasting, and gifting within many Aboriginal cultures, and the impact of

historical policies on current cultural practices, e.g., the banning of potlatch in Canada from 1885-1951.

Many students and professionals in Aboriginal education discussed the importance of including information about the cultural responsibilities surrounding death and mourning in Aboriginal communities. The realities around death in Aboriginal communities are often very different than in mainstream culture, as Aboriginal communities have specific rituals surrounding deaths, which often impact entire families and communities. One student, for example, emphasized the importance of discussing the impacts of high suicide rates on Aboriginal communities, and one professional discussed the reality that several members of a student's family might pass away over the course of the student's degree, and that this could affect the time required to complete the degree.

Local peoples and land

All four participant groups stressed that a working knowledge of local peoples (including nations, cultures, pre- and post-contact histories, connection to the university campus, contemporary realities, success stories, geography/place names, and learning a few words in a local language) should be included. Participants emphasized that Aboriginal people from local communities are most likely to attend UVic, particularly as undergraduate students. As stated by a professional in Aboriginal education, "It's important for the general public to realize that there were people here before you were here, they were people who lived right here, they carried on and they had an existence."

Diversity of Aboriginal peoples' experiences

Students and professionals emphasized that there is a great deal of diversity among Aboriginal populations, based both on cultural differences (e.g. Coast Salish vs. Cree; there is tremendous diversity of Aboriginal cultures in BC alone) and on different lived experiences (e.g. living on- vs. off-reserve, having opportunities to experience cultural practices, etc.). Because Aboriginal students have different levels of connection to their cultures, and come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, Aboriginal students will have a diversity of needs.

Aboriginal participants shared examples of situations in which they were asked to speak on behalf of Aboriginal peoples in general, or about topics relating to communities/First Nations besides their own, and emphasized that such generalizations are not appropriate, particularly in a classroom setting.

Relationship building

All groups identified building relationships as an important aspect of the training.

Faculty and staff hoped to develop a better understanding of protocols and appropriate ways of connecting with local communities. Faculty also appreciated the opportunity to interact with academics from outside their departments.

Professionals in Aboriginal education discussed providing staff and faculty with information regarding protocol for building relationships with Aboriginal communities, appropriate ways for non-Aboriginal people to visit reserves or Aboriginal communities, and connecting

Aboriginal community members with UVic employees. Students expressed the importance of building respectful relationships with staff and faculty, e.g., feeling respected as individuals, and not being singled out in class as the “expert” on everything Aboriginal, gaining a sense of belonging on campus, and having faculty and staff engage with students on a more personal level. As one student participant noted, “We don't want the 'poor you' thing, we want respect, we want it to be even ground. There have been a lot of hardships... but this is the whole point, to make the pendulum in the middle and not swing all the way to the other side.”

Students and professionals also discussed the importance of recognizing that Aboriginal students may have different academic goals or priorities than other students. Many Aboriginal students attend university as mature students in order to receive certification in fields in which they have been working for several years. Some Aboriginal students might perceive their success in unique ways as well, e.g. they might choose to compromise their grades if this enables them to spend more time with their families. As one participant stated, “Success in our communities is people contributing to the community in a good way and being healthy. And that might mean not being a student, not graduating, but taking care of family and community first.”

“If we want other people to feel welcomed, we go to where they live and let them know about it. In our way if you don't go to potlatches and gatherings, then people don't know, and they won't respond. ... So [UVic staff and faculty] need to become more visible to Aboriginal people.”
--Professional in Aboriginal education

Practical or practice-based tools

All groups suggested that aspects of the training should focus on specific, practical application of the knowledge gained. Faculty and staff participants wanted to learn how to apply the information conveyed in the training to their positions in specific ways, including: suggestions for delivering services to Aboriginal students; instructions for inviting elders to speak in classes; what exactly to say when acknowledging the territory and when acknowledgement is appropriate; and how to introduce information relating to Aboriginal peoples into the curriculum. Participants also discussed traditional Aboriginal ways of teaching and learning, and the importance of oral history and listening skills within Aboriginal pedagogies.

Professionals in Aboriginal education and students felt that participants should learn a few words in the local languages (e.g. “hello,” “goodbye,” and “thank you”), and felt that SFACT should provide faculty and staff with suggestions for better representing Aboriginal knowledge in the classroom.

Students emphasized that faculty and staff (especially those in senior administrative positions) should learn how to acknowledge the territory, understand the significance of such acknowledgement, and apply this knowledge in classrooms or at conferences when appropriate. Students also felt that some faculty would benefit from learning skills for facilitating classroom discussions about Aboriginal topics, and particularly that faculty should be confident correcting misinformation when students bring it up in class so that class discussions are safe spaces for all students.

General Recommendations by Participant Group

Generally students felt that the training should include information about the realities that Aboriginal students face while they are growing up, either on-reserve or in urban centers, and the impacts that these may have on the students’ ability to engage in university experiences. Student participants highlighted that these experiences may provide Aboriginal students with a different skill-set, or they may find it difficult to fully participate as an equal in class discussions, and that faculty should be made aware that Aboriginal students in their classroom might face these barriers. Some students noted that this may be true not only for Aboriginal students, but for students from diverse cultural or social

“SFACT could help non-Aboriginal profs take that first step to incorporating Aboriginal information in the classroom in a respectful way, when many are so afraid of doing it wrong that they do nothing.”
--Student Participant

backgrounds as well.

Generally staff felt that gaining an understanding of history from an Aboriginal perspective would be useful, with a focus on the impacts of this history on current student experiences. Several staff were also interested in hearing about Aboriginal student experiences and worldviews in order to better accommodate students' needs. Many staff also felt that topics should be relevant to their specific role on campus.

The majority of faculty participants emphasized that they would be most interested in learning about topics that relate directly to their research interests. For example, a faculty member from the Department of Nursing might be interested in learning about social determinants of health in Aboriginal communities. Several faculty participants also expressed interest in more general knowledge, and many were interested in incorporating new information into their course materials, or using new information to better recruit and work with Aboriginal students. Faculty participants also recognized that faculty from different academic backgrounds would have different interests, and that it might be difficult to create training modules broad enough to be of interest to many different people while remaining sophisticated enough to avoid oversimplifying the materials. Faculty also recognized that different departments might have varying levels of sensitivity to these issues; faculty members in many departments already engage with these and similar issues. Other faculty members expressed that they have many more international students than Aboriginal students, so it would be difficult to justify focusing training on Aboriginal issues if it did not acknowledge other aspects of diversity.

Professionals in Aboriginal education spoke about the importance of incorporating cultural practices into training that would be widely available to the public. Several participants cautioned that local elders who are well respected should be consulted during the development of the training. Participants felt that it is appropriate to discuss cultural events in a general sense – the significance of, or the reasons behind particular events – but that specific details and sacred ceremonies should not be presented. As one participant stated, “curiosity isn’t always welcome.” With regard to local communities, professionals in Aboriginal education felt that it would be useful for staff and faculty at UVic to know when “Big-House season” – or the time of year for local ceremonies – occurs and to know that those participating may need to dedicate a lot of time to these events. Additionally, they felt that the training should include a discussion of the boundaries around which aspects of ceremony are not to be discussed publicly. Several participants emphasized that it is not appropriate for non-Aboriginal people to practice culture and/or ceremonies, except for public events, such as canoe races, sports events, or cultural festivals.

"And that's something that wasn't really stressed when I came to UVic, either, that there's going to be challenges that make your head spin. Because they bring up personal experiences and tell you to academically look at this and analyze it ... to have them question you on how you're feeling about [how much your communities have suffered] and then we'll grade you on it"
--Professional in Aboriginal education

Content Focus for Staff Training

Participants offered several suggestions for topic areas of particular relevance to staff at UVic. These suggestions are summarized in the following table.

Funding for Aboriginal students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Federal and provincial programs for Aboriginal students• Funding/financial assistance available to Aboriginal students• How to help students access Band funding
Student experiences at UVic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Barriers to education for Aboriginal peoples• Aboriginal student adaptation to university life• Positive Aboriginal student experiences at UVic• How to support Aboriginal student success• Challenges students face at UVic• Urban vs. rural and on- vs. off-reserve experiences of Aboriginal students• How previous educational experiences might affect Aboriginal students at UVic (e.g., Tribal schools)
Cultural sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication styles: differences, preferences• Cultural safety• Creating understanding, acceptance, trust and respect• Creating a more inclusive physical environment• Terminology, e.g., the difference between “First Nation,” “Indigenous,” “Aboriginal,” and “Indian”• Protocols for working with Aboriginal peoples• Tools for combating racism in classrooms and departments• How to be a non-Aboriginal “ally”• Outreach opportunities – do’s and don’ts• Systemic violence/racism• Colonial practice in daily life and its impacts• Integrating culture without assimilation
Hiring Aboriginal staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Best ways to interview, appropriate interview questions• Issues Aboriginal peoples face in career decisions
University relationships and campus services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information about on-campus services available to Aboriginal students, including counseling• How to refer students to available services• Appropriate ways to involve Aboriginal students, staff and faculty in university governance• Creating more inclusive targeted services at UVic (e.g. Library services)• UVic’s relationships with local First Nations and plans for

- the future
- Where do Aboriginal students, staff, and faculty want to see change at UVic?

Content Focus for Faculty Training

Participants offered several suggestions for topic areas of particular relevance to faculty members and/or instructors at UVic. These suggestions are summarized in the following table.

Worldview, culture and protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal cosmologies/philosophies/worldview • Aboriginal family structures • Cultural integration with modern society • Written versus oral culture • Significance of UVic's presence on Coast Salish territory • Most common faux-pas non-Aboriginal peoples make • How to appropriately open classes or conferences • Protocol for inviting an Elder to speak in a class • How to contact communities or people in communities in order to build partnerships • How to involve communities in research, including Aboriginal-centered research 	<p><i>"A simple [acknowledgement of the territory], just to bridge that barrier. First Nations students hear that and they go, 'Oh, they know a little bit about protocol,' and all of a sudden it's like okay, I've got a connection, they feel okay to be here."</i></p> <p><i>--Student Participant</i></p>
UVic context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who to contact to ask practical protocol questions • Orientation to the direction the university is going as it pertains to Aboriginal peoples (e.g. current initiatives, Strategic Plan) • Overview of Aboriginal student services at UVic • Orientation to current research on Aboriginal issues happening at UVic • Barriers that exist in the university beyond the level of the individual, or practices that universities are engaged in, that deter Aboriginal students from going to university and/or taking particular courses • The role of universities in the education of Aboriginal people • How to attract Aboriginal students into your Faculty/program (e.g., for the sciences) 	

Classroom environment/teaching skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best ways to work with Aboriginal students in a classroom • Issues of concern to Aboriginal university students • Aboriginal ways of teaching/learning • How the university generally relates with Aboriginal students • How to handle classroom discussions that deal with Aboriginal issues, especially controversial/emotionally charged issues (e.g., Residential school) • Impacts of situations in Aboriginal communities on what happens in the classroom • Providing students with knowledge or skills that they can bring back to their communities • How to respond when course materials trigger strong negative experiences from the past • Sensitivity training applicable to the reality of large classes • Pedagogy and classroom practices that will be advantageous to Aboriginal students (or to as broad a range of students as possible)
Specific topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparative examinations of Aboriginal situations in other countries • Common vs. individual property rights • Aboriginal peoples health • Aboriginal peoples views on stewardship/relationships to land/strategies for survival • Aboriginal 'scientific-method,' Aboriginal science • Aboriginal perspectives on business and economic development • Culturally sensitive counseling/mental health issues • Critical examinations of media representations of Aboriginal peoples <p data-bbox="1114 1178 1373 1457"><i>"I'd be interested in information that I could directly use in the courses I teach, which I think most faculty members would probably indicate as well." --Faculty Participant</i></p>
Curriculum development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics that can be passed on to students (Aboriginal or not) who will be working with Aboriginal peoples in their future careers, e.g. as health care providers, teachers, etc. • Where to find information related to their subject area to teach in their courses • Designing courses to prepare Aboriginal students for

- necessary program prerequisites
- Developing new courses and programs applicable to Aboriginal students
- Using storytelling as a pedagogical tool

Student experiences

- Prior educational experiences, e.g. how encounters with racism in public school affects a student's university experience, how on-reserve schools might differ from public schools
- Band expectations and home responsibilities
- Different customs and traditions involving students
- How to best integrate students into existing programs
- Self-empowerment and positive image development in Aboriginal students
- Effective project supervision (e.g., honours project, thesis, dissertation)
- Understanding generally accepted university expectations (regarding deadlines, attendance, meeting commitments, etc.) from an Aboriginal point of view

Preferred Format and Delivery

Participants were asked about their preferences for training formats, methods, and delivery. Suggestions were diverse, but the majority of participants in all groups preferred that SFACT be delivered as face-to-face workshops. Many participants also noted that the workshops should include interactions with Aboriginal people, either as facilitators or guest speakers, as a first step toward creating new relationships, building understanding and respect, and gaining true appreciation of lived experience. Several participants suggested that a combination of formats might be the most appropriate, depending on the material presented and the target audience. Some participants suggested incorporating several modes of learning, e.g. readings or on-line modules to provide context, followed by workshops with presentations, guest speakers, and facilitated discussions. Many participants also reflected on the need for flexible training options to accommodate the scheduling challenges that both staff and faculty face. Some participants suggested offering training over lunches, or during evenings and weekends, while others stressed that they would not use their personal time to complete training. All participant groups noted that the training environment would need to be open, supportive, and welcoming, but not too "touchy feely," so that participants will feel comfortable discussing challenging topics. Several professionals felt it was

"For those people who are genuinely interested in finding out about Aboriginal culture and have never really had a forum to work in, I think that those people could maybe work as ambassadors in the wider community, and when they do hear those comments, they can say, 'Well, it's not actually like that.'"
 --Student Participant

important to open with a prayer and/or dancers, along with an explanation of the importance and meaning of each.

When asked specifically about offering training to UVic faculty and staff within local Aboriginal communities, the majority of participants supported the idea. Some felt that this is the most appropriate place for the training, with the qualification that this would need to be discussed with members of the communities where training might take place. Potential benefits included enabling community members to interact with people from UVic; giving staff and faculty opportunities to see the realities of life in Aboriginal communities; and the potential to establish relationships with communities that are not often included in UVic activities. Some voiced concern regarding the resources required to host such training opportunities, while others commented that some communities have facilities that can accommodate large groups. Many participants referred to existing programs at UVic that are hosted in community, such as the cultural immersion program within the Faculty of Law. One professional noted that participating communities must be compensated appropriately for their involvement and participation in the training.

Staff and faculty who preferred online methods said they found this option less intimidating, and that online options provide more flexibility in terms of time commitment and accessibility.

One participant suggested branching out by offering courses related to SFACT through the Continuing Studies Department; this participant felt that the information presented in SFACT would be beneficial for many people in Victoria who do not work at UVic.

Format Preferences

Staff and faculty who completed surveys were asked to rank delivery methods. First to third choices are combined below to give a clearer sense of the most preferred methods. The majority of staff and faculty rated “talks from Aboriginal knowledge keepers” as their first choice of delivery format, while the other experiential formats were second and third choice. A much smaller number of participants preferred online or video-based methods.

Staff and Faculty preferences (from surveys only)

	Staff	Faculty	Total
Talks from Aboriginal knowledge keepers	72	45	117
Lecture/talk	58	32	90
Group workshops	49	27	76
Video and discussion	23	22	45
Online program	26	11	37

Encouraging Participation

Staff and faculty were asked what factors would encourage them to, or discourage them from participating in SFACT. In general, most participants noted that they would participate in SFACT if it was available, out of personal interest, a desire to better work with Aboriginal students, or a desire to improve the environment at UVic as a whole.

The majority of participants felt that the most important factors are having time available to participate in the training, and having the training scheduled at convenient times. Staff and faculty also emphasized the importance of content that is targeted and relevant, with clear connections to their academic interests or their goals of improving student experiences and recruitment, particularly because SFACT would take time away from their other responsibilities. Some faculty mentioned that they would appreciate being able to incorporate aspects of SFACT within their curricula. Several participants also noted the importance of visible support of, and participation in, SFACT from senior management at all levels. Some staff in particular noted that they would not be able to take time away from their regular duties to participate in SFACT initiatives without support from their supervisors.

Some staff and faculty felt it would be beneficial to offer recognition for participation in the training, e.g. if the training was offered as one of Human Resources' certificate programs for staff, or was reflected in the faculty evaluation process (toward tenure, promotion, or merit) with institutional recognition through the Learning and Teaching Centre. Other participants objected strongly to the idea of offering a certificate because they felt that understanding diversity is a lifetime process, rather than an outcome that can be achieved.

Several participants felt that SFACT was not very relevant to them because they do not work with many Aboriginal students; this might indicate that they are not aware of the Aboriginal students within their departments. Other participants do not interact with any students through their work at UVic, and again some of these participants felt that SFACT would be more relevant to people in other positions. Some participants commented that their workloads are too heavy, and one staff member noted that staff cannot participate in available training because of heavy

*"I don't personally need a certificate... that indicates that I accomplished something or worse, that I've arrived at somewhere."
--Faculty Participant*

*"Whether or not [workshops] are included in your hourly rate, as part of your work day, or whether it's something you have to tack on at the end of the day when you have other obligations"
-- Staff Participant*

*"If you want faculty buy in -- regardless of the intellectual value or the educational value, you know that has to be sorted out at a higher level than chairs."
--Faculty Participant*

*"[SFACT] will have the backing of faculty when they see that this is part of what the teaching experience is and rather than having this being a separate element over and above, it becomes part of the added element of this particular problem situation that we're looking at."
--Faculty Participant*

workloads and staff shortages in specific departments. Many participants from both groups indicated that they would be disinclined to participate in SFACT if it were mandatory or “forced” training rather than being interest-based. Many participants also objected to the term “training” and suggested that SFACT would receive more interest if it was named differently. A few participants commented that there was not anything that would encourage them to participate.

Accessibility

When asked whether or not Aboriginal cultural training should be made mandatory, a small majority of students answered, “yes” while the majority of faculty and staff said that it should not be mandatory.

Should this training be mandatory for all UVic Staff and Faculty?

(from surveys only)

	Yes	No	Blank
Students	56%	23%	20%
Faculty	24.6%	60.6%	14.75%
Staff	26.5%	50%	23.5%

The majority of participants shared concerns about the training being mandatory, without exception, for all staff and faculty at UVic. Faculty participants, followed by staff, expressed the strongest negative reactions to mandatory training. The most common reasons against mandatory training were that participants already face heavy workloads with many demands on their time; mandatory training does not fit with a culture of academic freedom; participants felt the training would not be relevant for everyone at UVic (because of employment or academic area); there are small numbers of Aboriginal students either at UVic or within specific departments; the training would be “a waste of money” particularly if it is not relevant to everyone; the training does not include other minority groups; and anything mandatory may generate resentment. Aboriginal student participants also cautioned that mandatory training might create a backlash that would result in more negative experiences at UVic. Several participants also noted that there is no enforcement mechanism for mandatory training on any topic for all employees at UVic.

The student group was the most supportive of mandatory training for all staff and faculty at UVic, followed by the professionals in Aboriginal education, who

“It’s got to be mandatory. It’s sort of basic work practices. It’s not optional that you learn how to operate a piece of equipment safely, or a variety of things... Delete out the word mandatory and make it a given. ... Yeah, of course everybody’s got to take it.”

--Student Participant

“Unless it is mandatory AND REWARDED (capitals in participant’s response) most non-Indigenous faculty will ignore it.”

--Faculty Participant

“I think this is something that all faculty members should be taking part in. At the same time, I think it would be nice if all faculty members wanted to do this voluntarily. I suspect that there would be a good deal of resistance if this was mandatory and I don’t think that in all cases it would be resistance to what is being taught or the opportunity to learn a set of practices.”

--Faculty Participant

expressed some trepidation regarding whether it should be mandatory for everyone, but who saw training opportunities as an important step in building better relationships.

Participants from all groups felt that SFACT is most appropriate for faculty and staff who work closely with Aboriginal students on a regular basis. Several participants also suggested that new faculty and staff could participate in the training if it was added to existing new faculty and staff orientation sessions. Participants in all groups who supported the idea of mandatory training offered the following reasons: those who need training most are unlikely to volunteer to participate; a basic understanding is needed across the university to improve the university environment; SFACT could improve staff and faculty relationships with Aboriginal students and local communities; it would force supervisors to allow their staff time to participate in the training; and, SFACT should be treated like a job requirement, the same as any other. Several participants also noted that UVic has committed to increasing the population of Aboriginal students, faculty and staff, and it is irresponsible to do this “without a widespread understanding of Aboriginal culture and an openness to the changes that will result in the institution” (Staff participant).

Several participants noted that SFACT should not be mandatory for staff and faculty who are Aboriginal.

"Mandating compassion, mandating understanding...it may actually not attain what one wishes to attain which is understanding and learning."

--Faculty Participant

"I think the minute you make something mandatory, you defeat your whole purpose, I think it has to become cool to take it, I think it should be encouraged but I don't think it would be right to make it mandatory."

--Professional in Aboriginal education

Additional Suggestions for Improving Aboriginal Student Experiences

Some of the recommendations made by students and professionals in Aboriginal education fell beyond the scope of training for staff and faculty at UVic. Suggestions included changes to the overall university, specific suggestions for staff and faculty, and strategies for improving classroom settings.

- Staff and faculty should make an effort to attend the cultural activities offered by Aboriginal students when invited
- Take the initiative to self-educate and remain informed about emerging Aboriginal issues
- Staff should stay informed about student resources both on and off campus, and have the ability to refer students as needed, including assistance with academic writing, mentoring, emotional or spiritual support
- Improve services on campus that Aboriginal students have reported as not meeting their needs, such as the Writing Centre
- Support students who are homesick or experience culture shock upon arriving at UVic from a small community
 - Provide information about local resources
 - Link students with financial resources to support their travel home, if appropriate
- Improve advertisements for Aboriginal events and support services, including events geared toward students, faculty and staff
- Recognize that Aboriginal students may be intimidated by the formality of some university offices, and make efforts to welcome students with coffee, conversation, informal meetings or less formal attire
- Recognize the diversity within Aboriginal student experiences, and the intersecting identities that they hold (e.g., disability, sexuality, age). At the same time, acknowledge that Aboriginal people are in a unique position in Canadian society as the original inhabitants and stewards of this land.
- Create support structures to meet the unique needs of mature students, including:

"I think for administrators and teachers, just take some time to realize, 'Okay, I am dealing with a real person. What could be going on, how can I come from a different place so that this person may be able to open up in a different way about what's going on so that I can help support them?'"
--Student Participant

"I was suggesting that an instructor might put an invitation out for the Aboriginal students to see them privately. That would offer privacy, confidentiality, and the opportunity to discuss without public forums."
--Student Participant

"If I'm meeting a First Nations [person] for the first time, the most important thing to ask, first of all, where do you come from? How important is your culture to you? What sensitivities do I need to know about? What are your protocols for your area?"
--Student Participant

- Experiences they may have faced in residential school or in government care
- Discomfort with people in positions of power and authority, or institutional power
- Need to be treated differently than students coming to university directly from high school
- Unique needs of students with families
- Students coming from college, particularly within their own communities or a non-urban setting may need additional support and may take more time to get acclimatized to UVic.
- While it is important to include elders and other community representatives in welcoming ceremonies and other cultural aspects of an event, the invitation should be extended for them to participate more deeply. Community members may feel tokenized by being asked to perform a ceremonial duty, without contributing to the entire meeting or event.
- Students who have been admitted through special access programs, or who do not have very strong academic backgrounds, should be provided with targeted support in order for them to succeed.
- Encourage First-Nations only publications/conferences to bring Aboriginal scholars together.
- As acknowledgement of UVic's unique relationship with, and respect for, Aboriginal people, the main page of the UVic website should include an acknowledgement of the local territory.

Many Aboriginal student participants expressed that Aboriginal cultural training should be available to UVic students. Some students said that this type of training should be mandatory for all students, while others felt that it should be a resource for those who are interested in learning more about Aboriginal cultures and history.

"So I went to this one First Nations advisor, and she gave me a real simple, plain story about fishing. ... So I understood what she was explaining, just because she related it to something that I knew. ... So from that point on my grades just skyrocketed."
--Professional in Aboriginal education

"... one of the drawbacks that we find is someone who has worked for years as a social worker... is not recognized or credited for all that experience that they've got. Or even the teacher assistant who decides to become a teacher is not recognized for years and years of teaching."
--Professional in Aboriginal education

"As an Indigenous person growing up, you're told [negative stereotypes] so much that you almost start to believe it, that's what society tells you."
-- Professional in Aboriginal education

"When you're dealing with the issues of money and pressure, and then you have this added stuff, it just makes the educational experience difficult. Especially when they promote that they're there to provide you with all the extras to be able to succeed as an Aboriginal student."
--Student participant

D. Final Words

The SFACT Needs Assessment was initiated in May 2007 and the report was originally set to be completed by the end of that year. The SFACT Committee chair went on maternity leave that fall, so while the research and analysis continued, the written report was delayed by more than a year. Even though the needs assessment report was not yet written, in order to fulfill project commitments, it was necessary to proceed with the development of face-to-face SFACT workshops, and the revision of the online training modules.

In order to gain more input and support from other UVic departments, as well as to find ways to continue the SFACT initiative after the end of the LE,NONET Project, the SFACT Committee was expanded. Representatives of the following groups and departments were invited to join the committee:

- The Department of Human Resources
- The Office of Equity and Human Rights
- The Indigenous Faculty Caucus
- Indigenous instructors
- Academic and Student Affairs
- The UVic Diversity Advisor
- The Office of Indigenous Affairs
- The Native Student Union
- Graduate and Undergraduate Student Representatives
- Representatives from CUPE and PEA labour groups

The SFACT Committee currently consists of 13 members, over half of whom are Aboriginal, and is co-chaired by two Aboriginal faculty members. The Committee has met monthly since March 2009 and has also formed two working groups. One group is focused on the implementation of the face-to-face workshops and the other on revising and expanding the online modules.

To date, curriculum consultants have been contracted to create and pilot SFACT workshops for staff and faculty. The workshops will be piloted between August and October 2009, and participant feedback will be collected for evaluation and revision of the workshop content. Participant feedback will also be analyzed as part of the final LE,NONET Research Report. The first three workshops will be open to all UVic staff and faculty and the last two will be limited to faculty and other instructors. There is room for 40 participants in each workshop and participants are encouraged to attend as many sessions as they can.

The five workshops are as follows:

1. Taking Your Place in the Circle: Protocols of land and place, acknowledgement of ancestors, introduction to Indigenous knowledge frameworks

2. Taking Responsibility for History and the Present: History of colonialism, diversity of cultural perspectives, contemporary realities
3. White Privilege, Social Location, and Aboriginal Presence in Universities
4. Medicines, the Land and Seeking Balance (Instructors only): Research ethics, protection of Indigenous knowledge, facilitating as an ally
5. Aboriginal Issues in the Classroom (Instructors only): Strategies for dealing with incidents in the classroom, Indigenous tokenism, Issues when teaching Aboriginal content

The core competencies to be developed through these workshops are:

- Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge
- Aboriginal History and the History of Colonialism in Canada
- Awareness of Social Location
- Skills to intervene in classroom situations
- Understanding and responding to Aboriginal student needs

All materials developed for the SFACT workshops will be left with the SFACT Committee after the LE,NONET Project ends. In order to continue offering these workshops after the over the long-term, the Committee members have submitted an application for funding to train UVic staff as facilitators who will continue to offer the workshops in the future. The Academic and Cultural Support Program Director in the Faculty of Law is the principal applicant on the workshop grant application.

A second grant application has been submitted in order to update the online modules. The updates would include revisions of the current content, the creation of a moderated discussion forum and the ability for people to post articles. The online material and the discussion forum would be accessible to anyone with an UVic netlink ID.

The Indigenous Studies Department Chair is the principal applicant on the online module grant application, and if approved, the SFACT modules would be housed within Indigenous Studies. Members of the Department of Distance Education have agreed to do the technical work required to update the site, and a graduate student would be hired to moderate the online discussion and assist with content updates.

Should the SFACT Committee be successful in accessing funding to train current UVic staff to continue offering the workshops, and to update and expand the online modules, UVic leaders can add their support by:

- allowing trained SFACT facilitators to incorporate organization and facilitation of the SFACT workshops into their job descriptions, and making time for them to offer the workshops at least twice each year
- allocate funds (possibly as little as \$20,000 year) for honorariums for Elders to participate in the workshops, as well as to pay for food, space and gifts
- work with department managers to enable them to provide release time for staff who want to take workshops

- allow faculty to count the workshop time towards service hours
- hire an Aboriginal Human Resources consultant, who will have facilitation of cultural training as part of their role
- setting an example by attending the SFACT workshops, reading the online material and participating in the online discussion forum
- providing recognition to UVic staff participating in the SFACT Committee, and those who have volunteered their time (e.g. to create the online modules, to add content to the workshops and online units)
- promote the online units on the main page of the UVic website

If grant applications are not successful, direct funding for SFACT-style initiatives would be the most practical means of supporting the ongoing work, in addition to those listed above.

LE,NONET Project staff have done a significant amount of work to create opportunities for UVic staff and faculty to learn about Aboriginal culture and related issues. The hope is that as UVic staff and faculty attend SFACT workshops and access online materials, the information will support them in contributing to the creation of a more supportive environment for Aboriginal learners at UVic.

Many of the ideas and experiences summarized in this report have been heard before, including the expressed need for cultural sensitivity and awareness workshops that are reflective of the teachings and protocols of local Aboriginal people. This idea is not new, nor is this the first report which attempts to echo the voices of Aboriginal students, staff and community members to those at UVic with the power to implement the recommendations of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants.

If these voices are heard, the work of the LE,NONET Project staff and SFACT Committee members can serve as a foundation upon which UVic can continue to build. With the support of senior administration at UVic, including the President, Provost, Deans, and department managers, it is possible to deliver awareness workshops and other learning opportunities to any UVic staff, faculty or student with a desire to learn, and to do so in a way that is respectful both of the learners and of Aboriginal people.

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Appendix A: Proposed SFACT Module Content from Proposal (2005)

The revised LE,NONET Project proposal (John and Lalonde, 2005) outlined the possible development of a series of training modules. The three proposed modules were designed to respond to the needs identified by key stakeholders, and in recognition of the University of Victoria's strategic plan as previously described. This training was identified as important to the success of the LE,NONET Project as a way to promote a shift in the overall environment at UVic, to reduce the possibility that negative experiences at UVic would undermine the positive impacts of students' participation in LE,NONET. The proposed outline for three modules of training appeared in the 2005 revised proposal as quoted below:

Facilitating Aboriginal Student Success Guidance Program Workshop Modules

Module 1: What you should know about Aboriginal Peoples

- *Historical and contemporary Aboriginal contexts (national, provincial, local)*
- *Overview of local communities, languages, and culture*
- *The relationship between the University of Victoria and local First Nations*
- *The historical development of Aboriginal Student Services at the University of Victoria*
- *Aboriginal student experiences at the University of Victoria*
- *Introduction to Modules 2 and 3*

Module 2: Understanding Aboriginal Diversity

- *Reflecting on participants' personal cultural background, values and perspectives*
- *Reflection on Euro-western values and perspectives as they affect the university environment and Aboriginal students*
- *The connection between historical circumstances and current contemporary issues facing Aboriginal students*
- *An in-depth exploration of the diversity of language, culture, and tradition of the First Nations of Southern Vancouver Island*
- *An exploration of current First Nations, Métis, and Inuit diversity*
- *Developing strategies which participants can implement in their department/classroom to create a positive environment for student diversity*
- *Consideration of "on the land" and urban realities for Aboriginal people*

Module 3: Racism in Multiple Contexts

- *What racism can look like*
- *Stereotypes and Overt Racism*
- *Popular Media Representations*
- *Racism, power and privilege*
- *Systemic racism in the university context*

- *Identifying and accessing accurate information*
- *What purposes racism serves*
- *Judgments, assumptions, and worldview*
- *Choosing materials for your classroom, and how to present sensitive topics to your class*
- *How to effectively and sensitively respond to racism in the classroom or office*
- *The short and long term effects of racism*
- *Decolonization and racism*

The outline of the proposed training modules was developed from discussions with campus and community-based experts, and incorporated information from a review of Aboriginal awareness programs at other universities in Canada and internationally. Programs created at the University of Regina, the University of Winnipeg, and by the Assembly of Alaska Native Educators, for example, were investigated for their relevance as North American programs. Longer-running programs at Australian and New Zealand institutions (University of Technology Sydney, Massey University, University of Auckland) provided a more general context for the development of this initiative.

Appendix B: LE,NONET SFACT Module 1 (Online)

SFACT development began in January 2006 with the design of an online module accessible to faculty members and instructors taking part in the Research Apprenticeship (RA) Program. During initial program development, participants raised their perception that many staff and faculty are not aware of the historical and contemporary realities facing many Aboriginal students. As a result of this knowledge gap, Aboriginal students at UVic have encountered racism during their studies, which is detrimental to their success in post-secondary education. Because students work closely with faculty members for the Research Apprenticeship Program, the SFACT module was introduced as a first step to ensure that students in the RA Program would have positive research experiences, as it could provide instructors with a basic level of cultural knowledge. The online SFACT module was designed to provide an overview of historical and contemporary information, along with specific information for faculty about current discourses surrounding ethical research in Aboriginal communities. The target audience is non-Aboriginal faculty members, instructors, and graduate students.

The SFACT online module was launched in May 2006. Currently the module requires approximately 10-20 hours to complete, and incorporates various media and reflective questions.

The eight units of the current SFACT online module are:

Unit 1: An Introduction to Indigenous Worldviews and Value Systems

Unit 2: Impacts of Colonization

Unit 3: An Introduction to BC First Nations: People, Places and Local Knowledge

Unit 4: Inuit Unit "Nunavut Sanginivut"

Unit 5: Métis Unit "Otipsmisowak"

Unit 6: Urban Aboriginal Peoples

Unit 7: Exploring Concepts of Racism

Unit 8: Introduction to Indigenous Research Ethics and Methodologies

Responses to the reflective questions in each unit are submitted directly to the Research Apprenticeship Coordinator who assesses them, in combination with face-to-face meetings and ongoing communications, to confirm that the research environment is appropriate for the RA student.

Appendix C: Native Students Union Letter of Support



University of Victoria Native Students' Union

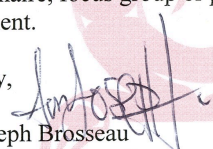
SFACT Committee,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Council of the Native Students' Union of the University of Victoria (NSU) to express the full support of the NSU Council for the LE,NONET Project's Staff and Faculty Aboriginal Cultural Training (SFACT) Initiative upcoming Needs Assessment Study. The NSU Council fully endorses SFACT's mandate to create a network of support and training measures that will be offered to UVic staff & faculty members to increase the ability of campus members and departments to support Aboriginal students.

Though the NSU Council cannot speak for every First Nation, Status or Non-Status, Metis or Inuit student at this University, we feel that the SFACT Needs Assessment may serve to positively impact the lives of all students. Through asking some important questions that have never been considered before, the Needs assessment stands to create a channel through which the experiences, struggles and desires of Indigenous students at UVic can be considered directly in the formulation of University policy.

Consequently, the NSU Council has granted the SFACT Committee full permission to utilize the NSU email contact list service to invite the NSU membership to participate in questionnaire, focus group or personal interview studies for the purpose of the Needs Assessment.

Sincerely,


Ami Joseph Brosseau
Administrative Coordinator
Native Student Union

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