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How can community-university engagement address family violence prevention? One child at a time.

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Abstract: *Family violence in Indigenous communities is one of the most pressing policy challenges of our time. This issue is highly related to stressors caused by the disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances of Indigenous peoples, such as poverty and unemployment, and community trauma attributed to colonization and loss of culture. This article is a case study based on evaluations of four community-university engagement initiatives for Indigenous children, youth, and their families at a small inner-city university. It documents six principles for policy development used to engage students in their education and to encourage them to begin to perceive themselves as high school and post-secondary graduates. These programs are just a few examples of how a small inner-city university took an imaginative community development approach to promoting social change, with each program tantamount to an anti-violence strategy.*

Introduction

Family violence in Indigenous communities is one of the most compelling policy challenges of our time. Although there is no single overarching cause or remedy, this problem is highly related to the stressors caused by the disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances of Indigenous peoples, such as poverty and unemployment, and community trauma resulting from colonization and loss of culture. A growing body of literature suggests that, rather than continuing to treat family violence as a private matter between intimate partners, policymakers should adopt a holistic community development approach to reducing family violence in Indigenous communities. Treating family violence as a private matter is based on a Western liberal ideology that emphasizes gender inequality, social domination, and oppression in the lives of women and girls (Taylor et al. 2004). Although it is a known fact that family violence affects women and girls disproportionately (Aghtaie and Gangoli 2015), it is a problem that is also shaped by a wide range of other issues in Indigenous communities. Indeed, the social dimension of this problem is of critical importance in understanding it; therefore, experiences of violence must be viewed from a family, community, and historical trauma perspective (Taylor et al. 2004; Jaffe, Berman, and MacQuarrie 2011).

Another critically important topic that is directly related contemporary public policy, particularly for Indigenous children and youth, is the integral role of education in reducing family violence in future generations. In fact, an entire section of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report—a turning point in Canadian history—is devoted to education's role in the reconciliation process, and calls for the elimination of educational (and employment) gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians

(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015a, 2015b, 2015c). The TRC's position is supported by a considerable body of evidence showing that an increase in self-protective factors, such as post-secondary education completion rates and greater economic independence among women, has been critical in lowering family violence rates in Canada and the United States over the past number of decades (Dugan, Nagin and Rosenfeld 1999; Farmer and Tiefenthaler 2003; Kaukinen and Powers 2015).

Although this decline in family violence has been policy-driven to some extent (e.g., zero-tolerance policies and access to legal services), it is also closely related to recent generations of socially and economically empowered women. In fact, Rivara et al. (2009) found that recent birth cohorts have a lower risk of family violence in their lifetime compared to women born prior to 1960. Nevertheless, not all women have reaped these gains. A direct link between family violence in Indigenous communities and low educational outcomes has not been given significant attention in the scholarly literature, despite the well-documented fact that Indigenous women still experience disproportionately high rates of violence compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. However, improving educational outcomes for Indigenous youth requires policymakers to conceive of a system capable of creating authentic learning opportunities that can empower youths and generate momentum for processes of social change that will remove violence from their lives. As remarked by Battiste (2009, 16), Indigenous youth "will have to go through a process of unlearning what they have unconsciously internalized."

This article is a case study based on four community-university engagement initiatives for Indigenous children, youths, and their families: the Sacred Seven Healthy Teen Relationships Program; the Model School High School program; the Summer Indigenous Math Leadership Program (Math Camp); and the Family Learning programs (see Appendix A for a description of the programs). These programs are offered by the University of Winnipeg, which is an inner-city university located in Treaty One territory and on the original lands of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and in the heart of the Métis Nation Homeland. The objective of this case study is to detail the key themes emerging from a recent evaluation of these programs and to consider their broader implications for policy and practice. The following sections detail the major strategies that were used both to begin the process of social change in the community and to facilitate greater educational engagement among students as they began to perceive themselves as high school and post-secondary graduates. I contend that governments and other institutions must develop policy capacities capable of addressing family violence at its deepest structural levels if these cycles are to be broken. Fortunately, policymaking does not have to be a complicated matter; at its core, policymaking is ultimately a matter of understanding the essence or core principles that catalyze social change (Lederach 2005).

Over a decade ago, the University of Winnipeg's leadership recognized that improving the educational outcomes of socially disadvantaged Indigenous students would also require policies and programs designed to strengthen families and build resilient communities. Indirectly, however, these policies also aimed to prevent family violence in future generations.

Although the programs that resulted from these policies have positively affected hundreds of students and their families, they are only models that need to be brought to scale to meet the enormity of the task (Axworthy, DeRiviere, and Rattray 2016). The following sections discuss the four aforementioned interventions and how their successes can inform changes in the public school system that will increase engagement among Indigenous youth. Moreover, these successes and their implications for educational engagement will also be discussed in relation to their potential as pathways for ending cycles of destructive intergenerational family violence.

Literature

There is a sizable body of literature that examines the related topics of decolonizing education (Boidin, Cohen and Grosfoguel 2012), revaluing Indigenous knowledges, and understanding the historical context of Indigenous peoples' difficult relationship with the Western education system due to past assimilationist policies (Battiste 2013; Abdi 2012; Andreotti, et al. 2015). Moreover, for decades now, a body of international literature has advocated for culturally responsive schooling as an optimal approach to improving the educational outcomes of Indigenous youth (Castagno and Brayboy 2008; Gunn et al. 2011; Wilcox 2015). These literatures grapple with a number of key questions, such as: Does the education system need to be decolonized in its entirety so that all can benefit from Indigenous world views and ways of knowing (Battiste 2013; Bunda, Zipin and Brennan 2012)? Do change processes involve soft reforms (i.e. inclusion or access but no major shifts), or do they require radical reforms to the educational system (Andreotti et al. 2015; Stonechild 2006)? Advocates of radical reforms have an ideal view of what a decolonized approach to education should look like (Tuck and Yang 2012), but the question is whether or not this ideal picture can be aligned with the practical realities in most education systems, and, if it can, what that would look like (Bunda, Zipin and Brennan 2012). For instance, is it place-based? That is, are education reforms likely to be different for urban Indigenous peoples than for those living in First Nation communities?

Despite considerable attention to the issue, there are too few empirical examples of the ways in which this approach is put into practice, particularly in urban public schools serving primarily Indigenous students (Wilcox 2015). Documenting past successful practices is important because communities need to find strategies to keep Indigenous youth engaged in school, as the mainstream educational system is failing the Indigenous population (MacIver 2012; McIntosh et al. 2014). As is the case in other countries, Indigenous adolescents in Canada find themselves having to adapt to the demands of the dominant Western society while at the same time striving to stay connected to their cultural traditions, languages, and heritage (Gfellner and Armstrong 2013; McIntosh et al. 2014). McIntosh et al. (2014) argue that this incongruence helps to explain their negative outcomes in the education system. Moreover, this duality in values—which often leads to disconnection from school and thus to lifelong poverty—also has important implications for the quality of their adult lives, including the intergenerational perpetuation of family violence.

A rather narrow constellation of studies has focused on these connections—largely as they affect women—and provides evidence that clearly connects low educational outcomes and family violence. However, this literature pays virtually no attention to how these links affect Indigenous males. For example, using longitudinal data from a sample of 498 women, Adams et al. (2013) found a strong correlation between women who had been victimized during adolescence and lower education levels, which affected their earnings in adulthood. In another ethnographic study of twenty-nine Indigenous women who were exposed to family violence in their childhoods, Burnette and Renner (2017) found that most study participants lacked formal education, thus limiting their social mobility and, by extension, their ability to leave unhealthy personal relationships. Not only is there a substantial co-occurrence of childhood victimization and Indigenous women's vulnerability to intimate partner violence (IPV) as adults, but a lack of education has also been shown to prevent women from leaving unhealthy situations, particularly given the underlying context of historical oppression.

Using nationwide data from a weighted sample of 57,318 mothers in the Canadian Maternity Experiences Survey, Daoud et al. (2013) also found that the Indigenous women's low socio-economic status—which is measured based on education and income—was correlated with increased odds of experiencing IPV. Indeed, they found that Indigenous women were twice as likely to experience IPV compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts, which led them to conclude that this elevated risk could be reduced by improving Indigenous women's socio-economic position. Similarly, DeRiviere (2014a) found that Indigenous women who had acquired a university education had incomes that matched their non-Indigenous counterparts (i.e. they had attained economic independence) and were less likely to experience IPV. Inequalities in education and personal income, which are deeply rooted negative consequences of colonialism, explained post-separation abuse, which disproportionately affects Indigenous women.

There is a sparse body of literature that has identified some points of convergence in the relationship between family violence rates and educational outcomes among Indigenous youth. However, the relational context in which Indigenous youth are situated matters very much, as it is in these contexts that patterns of violence can be severed. Furthermore, school engagement or disengagement among Indigenous youth is thought to be a multifactorial problem (Davison 2012). As such, some studies have attempted to outline the key defining principles of increasing educational engagement among youth. Some of the identified key principles include: the use of culturally relevant pedagogies, such as informal and experiential learning; exposing students to strong role models and mentors in teachers; curricular flexibility and individualized learning plans; and partnering with parents/guardians in their children's education (Wilcox 2015; MacIver 2012). Furthermore, the student/teacher relationship is especially critical. As noted by Gunn et al. (2011), students are motivated to do their best when they feel that their teachers believe in them.

Winnipeg's inner city neighbourhoods provide a particularly useful illustration of the issues discussed above. Young people in these neighborhoods face much greater social and economic disadvantages and higher school dropout and pushout rates than those in

more affluent neighbourhoods (Macdonald and Wilson 2013). Likewise, in Winnipeg, a large gap persists in university or college completion rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Statistics Canada 2013a, 2013b, 2010; Hallett 2006). For decades now, the challenge for public policymakers has been to find ways to address feelings of despair among disengaged youth, as these feelings limit their opportunities to transition successfully into higher education, training, and employment (Tomyn, Cummins and Norrish 2015), which consequently lowers their standard of living in adult life. The Canadian employment rate for First Nation people aged fifteen and over with no high school diploma or post-secondary certificate is below 30 percent (Richards 2014). As evidenced by the dismal Indigenous high school completion rate, the entire education system is simply not shifting in a big enough way to meet the needs of Indigenous students. As noted in a recent report, “PSE [post-secondary education] is increasingly considered a key ingredient to economic and social success with a high-school diploma no longer being considered sufficient to equip young people with the advanced training, skills and credentials demanded by the workplace” (Canadian Council on Learning 2009, 46).

Reforms aimed at decolonizing the education system are showing promising results, as social change is already occurring in the lives of many Indigenous children and youth, particularly in urban settings where the playing field is slowly starting to level. Access to post-secondary education is improving, and Indigenous youth are becoming very deliberate agents of change in preventing family violence in their own lives and communities. Furthermore, what has become apparent is that, for Indigenous youth, multi-pronged approaches to learning and education are the “new buffalo” along the road to self-determination and self-government (Stonechild 2012).

At the University of Winnipeg, culturally-based programming has emerged from a series of discussions that took place at a 2004 Aboriginal Education Working Group led by First Nations and Metis faculty, staff, and students. The working group’s mandate was to examine barriers within the university itself. These discussions produced an Indigenous Education Strategy that extended beyond service learning to a community investment model that adopted a holistic approach to addressing the learning needs of Indigenous members of the surrounding community. One of this model’s notable outcomes was the establishment of the Model School at the University of Winnipeg, which is a high school primarily for Indigenous youth who had previously attended public schools in the high-poverty areas of the inner city. A further example of the university’s community investment approach is the informal, culturally based family learning programs, such as Pow Wow clubs and non-credit Indigenous language programs, which were not typically offered at most other universities in 2004 (Axworthy, DeRiviere, and Rattray 2016).

Evaluation Design and Sample

The University of Winnipeg’s Human Research Ethics Board (UHREB) approved this research, and all evaluation work was conducted from 2014 to 2016 in collaboration with staff at the two Centres that administered the four programs, namely, the Sacred Seven Healthy Teen Re-

lationships Program; the Model School High School program; the Summer Indigenous Math Leadership Program (Math Camp); and the Family Learning programs (DeRiviere 2015a, b, c; 2014b). As shown in Table 1 in Appendix B, a total of 461 individuals participated in a wide range of instruments throughout the evaluation process, including surveys, short-answer questionnaires, forced-choice Likert scale statements, and in-person family interviews or telephone interviews, among others. Although we did not capture specific data on family trauma, personal discussions with program developers suggested that a significant proportion of Indigenous child, youth, and adult participants in these programs had experienced the intergenerational trauma of colonization in one form or another.

For younger participants (ages eight to fourteen), the objective was to assess their level of interest in, and enjoyment of, the program, as well as how much they felt the experience had helped them grow in terms of their relationships with themselves, others, and their community. Questions in the qualitative interviews with youth leaders and other program staff addressed general themes related to the program's positive effects, such as what worked well and what did not vis-a-vis engaging youth in education and learning. In addition, these questions also sought to determine how being employed in the program (e.g., Math Camp) had personally benefitted youth leaders and how it had affected their personal, educational, and vocational aspirations, as well as their future plans for both paid and volunteer work. The parent and guardian interviews focussed on the degree to which their children enjoyed attending the program, the benefits derived from their children's and/or family's participation, program accessibility, and suggestions for improvement. Finally, the interviews with teachers and administrators sought feedback on community-university partnerships, the cultural value and social benefits of the program, and youth response.

An evaluation framework based on six principles for policy development.

In his book on understanding violence, peace building, and reconciliation, both locally and globally, Lederach (2005, 31) asks, "How, really, do we get whole societies wrapped in histories of violence that date back generations to move toward a newly defined horizon?" While the programs discussed in this paper offer a context-specific example of community-university learning initiatives, several of the principles that can be drawn from these programs are applicable on a much broader scale. Although each program is different, they all offer real-world strategies that contribute to ending intergenerational cycles of family conflict. The underlying theories and aims of these programs are consistent with Wilcox's (2015) socioecological model for preventing school dropout, and they incorporate the use of culturally-relevant pedagogies, such as informal and experiential learning (Tanaka 2016), exposing students to strong role models and mentors (e.g., in their peers and teachers), curricular flexibility and individualized learning plans (Goulet and Goulet 2014; Hare and Pidgeon 2011), and partnering with parents/guardians in their children's education (Battiste 2009; Castagno and Brayboy 2008). The evaluation findings revealed that the disadvantages faced by many of these youths are rather complex; nevertheless, at the base of this complexity lies a certain simplicity in terms of pathways to social change (Lederach 2005).

Principle #1: A foundational commitment to cultural teachings.

Each of the four programs uses cultural teachings and understandings to support youth in their journeys of personal growth and development. Furthermore, culturally relevant programming also encourages family engagement at every possible opportunity. The parents and guardians in the family learning programs spoke about being on a “cultural journey as a family” and indicated that these programs had provided support for the ways in which they wish to raise their children. These parents also noted that learning about Aboriginal history and cultural teachings had been crucial in helping their children understand the richness of their ancestry and historical family connections. In fact, over 80 percent of participants reported that the family learning programs had helped them feel an increased sense of cultural pride. Likewise, over 85 percent of respondents said that the program had fostered a greater sense of identity and connection with their cultures, and that they had been able to apply the knowledge they obtained in the program to their daily lives.

Parents and guardians were especially pleased with how Pow Wow Club, the Cree and Ojibway language programs, and the Sacred Seven program had helped their children develop a shared sense of identity with others from the same backgrounds. In addition, Elders or spiritual leaders played a crucial role in the programs by passing down cultural teachings to children and youth, and by stressing the importance of lifelong learning about oneself and one’s responsibility to family and community. In Indigenous communities, youth develop their sense of self-identity through social relationships, cultural ceremonies and other traditions, and, perhaps most importantly, language. Some examples of cultural activities engaged in by the participants included: Pow Wow, jingle dress, and fancy shawl dancing; hoop dancing; making bannock; beading and skirt-making; drumming; and learning more about Aboriginal teachings at weekend cultural retreats. The hoop-dancing girls’ group, which was a sub-group in the Sacred Seven program, participated in programming that included a full-moon ceremony workshop with an Elder and learning about the berry fast coming-of-age ritual.

Studies have found that a culturally affirming school environment strongly encourages student engagement (MacIver 2012). As such, the Model School has attempted to create a sense of community and solidarity among its students by teaching them about their cultural identity and encouraging them to be proud of it. The central mechanism in this approach is to help students unlearn all of the negativity that they have internalized about their cultures (Battiste 2009). This notion has been supported by other analysts, who have argued that “identity is the basis for self-confidence and thus for motivation and the ability to learn” (Witt 2005/2006, cited in Gunn et al. 2011, 329).

One important goal of the Summer Indigenous Math Camp was to celebrate First Nations, Inuit, and Metis cultures, as well as their accomplishments and contributions to mathematics. The participants provided many positive comments on the cultural activities and community activism, including a field trip to a sweat lodge at Roseau River First Nation and meetings with Indigenous leaders in the community, such as the First Nation rapper Eekwol, and Brad “Caribou Legs” Firth, who raised awareness of the Missing and Murdered

Indigenous Women crisis through his cross-Canada run. The group also enjoyed learning about and trying a variety of traditional foods. In addition, the youth leaders watched a video called *End the Gap*, which was a video about the historical funding gap in First Nation communities they had produced at Math Camp the previous year. The leaders appreciated hearing stories from *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway* and how the book relates to teaching Indigenous children. The Math Camp participants also produced a music video that connected what they had learned about climate change to Anishinaabe ideas about respect for the Earth.

These activities brought the classroom out into the community in the form of experiential learning, which in turn fostered skill-building and a sense of collectivity among the participants. As Dhillon (2017) has observed, cultural activities and political activism are examples of informal learning that teach Indigenous youth about their common interests, and how colonial institutions, including education systems, have mediated their sociopolitical realities. The value of experiential learning has also been recognized by the Canadian Council of Learning (2009, 42), which notes that “informal learning activities foster the desire to learn and reinforce positive attitudes about learning as a lifelong process.”

Principle #2: Relationship-building, including support networks comprised of strong community partnerships.

An essential component of the mandate of the programs discussed in this paper was the hiring of Indigenous leaders and role models who have authentic relationships with the community and the ability to build on existing collaborative partnerships with public schools, community agencies, and families. In addition, program staff have also worked to cultivate and maintain strong partnerships with public school stakeholders (principals, community outreach workers, school counselors, and teachers), community residents and non-profit agencies, program volunteers, university faculty, and instructors. Indeed, this ongoing consultation with its community partners (via formal and informal gatherings, talking circles, reciprocity through feasts, etc.) has been integral in enabling the University of Winnipeg to develop and sustain its innovative and culturally relevant programs. Moreover, research suggests that education must be nurtured as a family value, and that parents or guardians should set an example by being as eager as their children in pursuing both their own and their children’s educational goals (Gunn et al. 2011). To this end, parents/guardians were invited to participate in the development and delivery of these programs (e.g., parents could accompany their children on a cultural retreat), which served to create a sense of shared responsibility for their own and their children’s learning. For their part, the university’s community partners also helped to facilitate communication and build trust between program staff and a participant’s parents or guardians by fostering a mutually derived sense of common purpose and respect.

Another important aspect of the relational context at both the Model School and the Indigenous Math Leadership Camp is the approach and attitude of teachers. Researchers are increasingly recognizing that teaching staff who exert the greatest influence on school

engagement are those who have the ability to create an enjoyable environment, as well as the ability to bond with students on a personal level (Goulet and Goulet 2014, 12; MacIver 2012). Moreover, the support of a caring adult can have a tremendous impact on a student's educational outcomes—especially for socially disadvantaged students (McIntosh et al. 2014). Both programs aim to improve high school graduation rates by combining a variety of approaches, including positive affirmations, individualized approaches toward learning, and a flexible curriculum that integrates cultural components and experiential learning. However, the Model School's defining feature is its higher staff-to-student ratio and its emphasis on small group settings; this is in contrast to the large classroom settings often found in public high schools, which are not conducive to more intensive one-on-one teacher-student interactions. Furthermore, since the majority of the students at the Model School are Indigenous, they are able to learn and study in the presence of other students who have similar backgrounds and learning needs.

There is a robust body of research that details how the transition to adulthood can be affected by attachment and identity issues, as well as past trauma (Foshee et al. 2005; Semple and Droutman 2017). All of the programs reviewed in this study use a strengths-based approach that focuses on the students' emotional and social needs. As such, teachers and facilitators focus not only on academics, but also on the social context of students' lives—for example, developing their sense of belonging and safety in a school environment (McIntosh et al. 2014). While Model School teachers do follow and implement the provincial curriculum, they also provide students with a supportive environment by working with them to form individualized instruction and education plans; in other words, the teachers adjust their approach based on where students are on their learning journeys (Harwood et al. 2015). The program aims to be flexible enough to nurture student achievement and build on their unique strengths, but also recognizes that students should progress at their own pace. As argued by Wilcox (2015, 338), "Clocks [take] away their culture." Faculty collaborate as a team to support students' needs as they work toward their high school diplomas; for example, student progress is carefully monitored at all grade levels, and issues or obstacles to learning are addressed immediately. Furthermore, teachers are also available to provide intensive one-on-one support and tutoring during and outside of class time.

In the evaluations of the family learning programs, adult participants remarked that the Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre, with its family-oriented setting, was quickly becoming the hub of the neighborhood, stating that it linked Indigenous people and families to one another by giving them an opportunity to participate in activities together, such as crafting, beading, practicing their native language, and traditional dancing, in addition to a number of other cultural activities. In the family interviews, parents said that they felt that they and their children were a part of an important movement toward social changes for local Indigenous peoples, and that their shared world views (e.g., a sense of collectivity and participation in community gatherings) would help shape their children's identities in a positive way.

Principle #3: A commitment to peer mentoring and leadership development in youth, including through civic participation.

These programs also shared the goal of promoting a clear model of civic engagement and positive role modelling and peer mentoring through a strong commitment to leadership development. The most significant aspect of the peer mentoring approach was its role in helping Indigenous youth and children connect with each other to celebrate and participate in their cultures, as well as to see themselves as high school and post-secondary graduates. The evaluations revealed many examples of respondents who had received hands-on learning and mentoring as participants in all four programs before going on to assume mentorship roles as paid program facilitators or leaders themselves. The skills enhancement and transfer model employed by these programs enabled these participants to assume key roles in future program development by positioning them as teachers and mentors to the next generation of participants. In addition to helping young people develop a greater sense of purpose, responsibility helps to build resilience and independence, and it provides the opportunity to make a direct and tangible contribution to strengthening communities. When asked what made their work and experiences at Math Camp meaningful, youth leaders noted that teaching math to younger children had helped them to improve their own math skills and to develop patience, communication, and leadership skills. Moreover, teaching had given them a sense of ownership and pride in giving the campers an enjoyable experience, while also preparing themselves for school in September.

These programs have an added advantage in that they serve a wide age range of students. The younger children and adolescents get a chance to observe the older students and learn what level of commitment is required if they want to achieve their academic and personal goals. The age gap between students (ages eight to twenty-four) creates some advantages in this area, as the older students are approaching graduation from high school, and are preparing to, or are already pursuing, post-secondary studies. This co-mingling generates positive peer influences, as the younger children form relationships with and are influenced by these older role models who take their studies and future aspirations very seriously.

Students also learned about cultural connections in the community through Elders and other role models. Quite notable in the evaluations were the spillover effects in building capacity among Indigenous youth, as students volunteered for and participated in community events and activities, such as Idle No More and protests at the legislature regarding poor water quality in First Nation communities. Many students have become politically knowledgeable and active, as they have begun to understand social justice issues and how Indigenous youth can be involved in grass-roots political movements.

In the Sacred Seven program, Indigenous teens served as role models and demonstrated leadership by conducting presentations at public schools in inner-city neighbourhoods about what they have learned in the program (e.g., hoop dancing). In addition, the Pride basketball team also volunteered as coaches at basketball camps for younger Indigenous children. The Pride program's philosophy was based on mentorship through coaching and promoting a healthy lifestyle through sports and other physical activities. Participation in

sports is another key aspect of Indigenous youths' wellbeing, which also fosters a sense of belonging (Canadian Council on Learning 2009; MacIver 2012). Through this volunteer work, the youth leaders focused on building relationships with younger kids, as well as on using cultural teachings to reinforce positive life messages. Furthermore, as a direct result of participating in volunteer work, many of the participants in all programs improved their economic opportunities through paid summer employment.

Principle #4: A commitment to empowering youth in program decision-making processes helps to nurture their creative capacity.

The developers of each of these programs were fully committed to respecting collective values by empowering the participants to assume a leadership role in designing program activities. This approach builds independence, and develops decision-making and intuitive skills. For example, in the Sacred Seven Healthy Relationships Program, the facilitators encouraged the participants (male and female) to design the program on their own terms, including developing their own code of honour principles for healthy relationships, as well as integrating the seven sacred teachings in their basketball drills and hoop dancing. For example, the teachings emphasize that the bison teaches us about respect for nature, animals and people, and a team player shows respect for his or her teammates by sharing the ball instead of always looking to shoot. This approach is beneficial as it helps youths to generate healthy relationships, prevents and/or reduces victimization, and helps to intervene in existing negative behaviours. Although the facilitators were available to provide participants with support or the resources required to implement the programs, none of the programs was rigidly structured. Similarly, in the Model School and Math Camp evaluations, participants expressed appreciation for the considerable level of input they were given regarding the development of the workshops and speakers series. Specifically, they helped determine which topics would be covered and which guest speakers would be invited. Indeed, as the evaluations for these programs strongly indicate, the approach of respectful empowerment has been a critical component of their effectiveness and success.

Principle #5: Multifaceted educational strategies and learning opportunities.

Multifaceted educational strategies and learning opportunities help generate resilience and capacity in youth who may otherwise be poorly prepared to meet the challenges of the labour market. This approach expands pedagogical methods to include experiential learning, cultural teachings, and co-curricular activities, such as skill-building workshops and employment experiences. Skill-building workshops offered as part of these programs covered topics such as conflict-resolution techniques, positive body image, addressing dating violence, enhancing self-defence and street safety, understanding the traditional roles of Indigenous men and women, and healthy and unhealthy relationships. Programming specifically oriented toward boys explored the topic of the Indigenous man's role in the family and community in terms of responsibilities and accountability, while female-specific programming looked at topics such as women's empowerment, full moon ceremonies, and the coming-of-age berry fasting ritual.

The regular gatherings also incorporated sharing circles wherein the groups discussed healthy relationship building, as well as current issues raised in the popular media, such as racism and murdered and missing Indigenous women. Sharing circles build a strong sense of community by encouraging participants to share their points of view with others and to listen and respect the views of others without interruption or judgment. The foundational idea of sharing circles is to facilitate voice and to connect people with others by valuing everyone's contribution as being equally important.

In terms of family violence prevention, all programs focused on the participants' personal development through cultural teachings, with an emphasis on:

1. The relationship to the self, which is concerned with strength, self-confidence, and personal modeling of healthy relationships.
2. Relationships with peers and others, which focus on conflict mediation, mentoring peers, family engagement, and role modeling.
3. Engagement with and contributions to community, which encouraged participants to demonstrate leadership in the community through presentations, volunteer work, and engagement in cultural activities.

Furthermore, all programs consistently stressed the importance of lifelong learning and education as a positive life choice. For instance, the leaders and facilitators of groups with mostly older children made a special effort to emphasize the empowering effects of education when talking to participants about their occupational aspirations. In their answers to various questionnaires, some youths indicated that they were the first in their families and peer networks to pursue a post-secondary education, and, in many situations, they were the first to earn a high school diploma. The Sacred Seven Program provided an excellent model of curricular support by integrating holistic approaches to working with youth—for instance, by combining physical activity with cultural teachings, or by building leadership and role modeling capacity in youth while simultaneously addressing curricular outcomes in social studies, physical education, and health.

The Summer Indigenous Math Leadership Program was designed to build math capacity and confidence in the participants, many of whom had been marginalized in the public school system with limited academic success. Given the well-established and strong correlation between socioeconomic status and school test scores, this program was particularly important for students from low-income neighborhoods in Winnipeg's core area. However, the camp was also relevant for otherwise academically capable students whose academic lives were destabilized by too many distractions. The facilitators integrated Indigenous content and understandings through experiential learning; for example, land-based activities, such as braiding sweet grass, were used to teach a math concept. Moreover, the program designers recognized that the provincial curriculum is a colonial system of education, particularly with its emphasis on linear thinking (Aikenhead 2017, 99; Dhillon 2017, 91; Sterenberg and Hogue 2011). In response, the facilitators embraced both systems of math education as having complementary strengths; in other words, a Two Eyed Seeing approach was critically important in the local context (Battiste 2009; Cajete 2012; Sterenberg and McDonnell 2010).

The evaluation found that the Math Camp addressed summer learning loss, and in fact improved campers' proficiency in mathematics by providing them with an opportunity to review math concepts that had not been fully understood during the school year. This proved to be a particularly relevant benefit, as the Western model of teaching math—upon which the provincial curriculum is based—uses an incremental approach to teaching mathematical concepts. Therefore, if students fail to grasp a particular step in learning a given math concept, they will likely find it difficult to catch up to their peers. This is significant because students who fall behind are more likely to become frustrated, and subsequently resistant to academic activities. The need to keep pace becomes ever more critical as students begin to enter higher grades, as the disengagement and academic apathy that result from falling too far behind inevitably become significant obstacles to finishing high school. Thus, by helping students master concepts with which they had difficulty during the school year, the Summer Math Camp and its holistic methodology were able to counteract the negative effects of student lag, as well as instilling campers with confidence in academic activities in general. In fact, many parent/guardians reported that their children's math marks improved at school as a result of attending the camp.

The Model School offers wraparound services by providing students with bus passes, healthy food and snacks to ensure that their nutritional needs are met, laptop computer, and other activities or supplies at no cost to the student. Students commonly need help navigating the complex systems at university and other institutions (e.g., government agencies), such as applying for a treaty card or other personal identification, applying for employment insurance, setting up a bank account, obtaining appropriate housing, or attending doctors' appointments. Removing these personal barriers reduces student stressors so that they can focus on learning.

The school also offers a basic life skills course, entitled "Life/Work Transitioning." This for-credit course is approved within the provincial curriculum and covers topics such as career exploration, resume building, fitness, nutrition and health, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training, anti-bullying workshops, and diabetes prevention, which is offered as a 16-session program provided by the Department of Kinesiology. The school has also introduced a series of workshops focused on developing skills related to areas such as communication, conflict resolution, leadership, healthy relationships, making responsible choices, and assertiveness and confidence-building, among others.

Field trips, as well as community, cultural, and other co-curricular activities, are integrated into each of these programs, as these experiential learning opportunities are all important sources of knowledge (Canadian Council on Learning 2009; McIntosh et al. 2014). Aboriginal content is integrated at every possible opportunity. In addition, Model School students have opportunities to attend numerous Aboriginal job fairs and cultural events in the community, such as Pow Wow gatherings organized by Indigenous youth. Because the student body is relatively small, the faculty consults with students for input into their preferred field trip activities. Recent field trips have provided students with an opportunity to explore and gain a cultural understanding of societal inequity, such as water

issues facing First Nation communities (e.g., Shoal Lake's water is diverted to the City of Winnipeg, and the water quality at Shoal Lake itself is poor). Furthermore, some Model School students are involved in the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network, which provides a forum for promoting ideals such as global citizenship, social justice, democracy, human rights, and many other contemporary global issues, while others have gotten involved in the In.Business network, which is a national high school business mentorship program for Indigenous youth (out of Cape Breton University in Nova Scotia).

Principle #6: Fostering a sense of belonging through individual attention given to one child at a time.

As noted by Gunn et al. (2011, 342), "focusing upon creating a sense of belonging and instilling cultural pride is more conducive to learning than focusing upon academics." Some of the program participants had struggled with difficult life situations and personal losses or developmental challenges, while others lacked a strong family connection and/or their lives were immersed in layers of family challenges; for example, alcohol or drug addiction may have been a factor in some of their families. These devastating personal challenges had forced some of the participants to confront abnormally difficult situations at a very young age, which predictably contributed to their struggles at school.

In addition to helping students learn about their culture and connect with their peers, the reviewed programs functioned as preventative measures by providing participants with a safe place off of the streets. The program leaders and facilitators stressed the importance of helping participants recognize their gifts and particular talents, which they frequently did not see in themselves. One Model School teacher commented, "Their connection to sports makes them feel successful. They are able to achieve a feeling of belonging and specialness through sports. It builds on their strengths and helps to keep them engaged in this challenging journey in their lives." By focusing on the social context of students' lives and by building their individual strengths and sense of belonging through team-building activities, students began to develop more positive self-images. This was evident in the comments of one facilitator, who described her role as helping young women gain self-confidence so they can become strong, independent women who are able to take care of their own needs. For example, a workshop series focused on women's empowerment and personal safety, and it taught them how to assert themselves and express their viewpoints in group situations. Coaching, mentoring and role modeling Mino Bimaadiziwin—or the good life, which involves developing positive relationships and team building—and keeping busy with relevant learning activities were some of the various methods used to help participants offset boredom, and thus reduce the likelihood of engaging in high-risk activities (Axworthy, DeRiviere, and Rattray 2016).

By offering access to the university campus, these programs addressed barriers that often prevent children living in high-poverty areas, many of whom are Indigenous, from accessing a post-secondary institution. All programs helped to normalize the university campus for students and helped them to think about how academic activities correspond with their aspirations for the future. Most interviewed adults agreed that any engagement

that increases access to the university community is a good thing and should be encouraged, as it contributes to the achievement of the social goals of improving the educational outcomes of children in the local Indigenous community.

An economic cost analysis

While the most significant accomplishments in all programs were related to the participants' personal growth, social maturity, and contributions to the community, another relevant accomplishment is that the Model School had produced forty-one high school graduates as of 2015 (high school graduation rate of over 95 percent in an area where the graduation rate is usually lower than 50 percent), of whom 78 percent have gone on to pursue post-secondary studies. One former student indicated that none of the friends he grew up with had attended university, noting that most of them were working as general labourers (subject to the perils of economic recession), which is an occupational route that he would have also likely followed had he not attended the Model School high school. Another student indicated that many of her friends from her former public school had not graduated from secondary school. While the counterfactual scenario is unknown, she speculated that she might have experienced a similar outcome. This anecdotal evidence is supported by local statistics, which show that high school completion rates in the poorest urban families are frequently around 55.3 percent, compared to 98.5 percent in the highest-income quintile (Brownell et al. 2012).

Using available data about thirty-two former Model School students who have pursued post-secondary studies, the evaluator calculated the net present value in 2015 CAD of the increase in student earnings over a lifetime compared to two scenarios: (1) no high school diploma; and (2) a high school diploma only.¹ Under the first scenario, the calculations showed that former Model School students with a post-secondary degree or diploma will collectively earn an extra \$15.24 million over a lifetime compared to the earnings of students with no high school diploma. Furthermore, based on the earnings premium only, these same Model School graduates stand to contribute an incremental \$92,902 CAD (NPV) per student to the income tax base over a lifetime. If we assume that the annual cost of educating a student at the school is \$10,500 (\$42,000 over four years),² then these graduates will contribute more than twice as much per person to the tax base throughout their working lives.

1 Net present value (NPV) calculations: Because a dollar amount in the present is worth more than the same amount in the future, a net present value calculation uses a discount rate (eight percent, as recommended by Canada's Treasury Board Secretariat) to estimate all future incremental earnings in 2015 dollars and then to compare this value to the four-year average per student expenditures (\$42,000 in 2015 dollars) at the Model School. We used an inflation rate of two percent, based on Conference Board of Canada estimates, and an average tax rate of 25 percent, based on estimated average full-time full-year earnings of \$65,000 per year (all estimated in Canadian dollars). Average public and private wages (full-time, full-year) by Aboriginal status and education are based on the 2011 National Household Survey conducted by Statistics Canada. Estimated earnings were retrieved from a table prepared in McInturff and Tulloch (2014).

2 The average yearly cost of \$10,500 per student was obtained through personal communications with the Model School's Director; this is a reasonable approximation of the Winnipeg School Division's cost per student of \$11,252 (total 2014–15 budget \$374,041,400 divided by approximately 33,241 students reported in 2016–17).

Under the second scenario, compared to students with a high school diploma only, thirty-two Model School graduates who pursued a post-secondary degree or diploma will collectively earn an additional \$11.27 million CAD (NPV) over a lifetime, thus contributing an incremental \$88,037 per student to the income tax base over a lifetime, which is also more than twice as much as the cost of educating them (DeRiviere 2015a).

This is the tip of the iceberg in terms of students' contributions to society, as not only will they be able to meet the demands of an ever-changing economy; as well, many students also regularly give back in a positive way to their communities through volunteer service and related activities. Thus, these estimates demonstrate that the Model School is an effective preventive investment whose costs are vastly outweighed by the expected long-term social and fiscal benefits for society.

Discussion and concluding remarks

Coming to an understanding of Indigenous family violence is about recognizing principles in policy and practice that positively influence Indigenous children, youth, and their families. The program evaluations discussed in this paper affirm that there are relatively straightforward and inexpensive strategies that can be transformed into policy and preventive practices designed to break negative patterns and cycles. In fact, family violence is the antithesis of the programs described in this article (Lederach 2005). Fisas (2002, 58) has argued that "Violence is the behavior of someone incapable of imagining other solutions to the problem at hand" (Translated and cited in Lederach 2005, 29). When variables like self-confidence, a strong sense of cultural identity, leadership development, and a sense of purpose are put in place, this may break a pattern of drawing out the crises and traumas of the past. Although nothing related to the human condition is perfectly predictable, the evaluations offered evidence that these programs may be an effective tool for permanently reducing these vulnerabilities for many of the Indigenous participants. Proof of this can be observed in the Model School high school's remarkable results, as the majority of its Indigenous students beat insuperable odds and are now engaging in the embodiment of Mino Bimaadiziwin, or the good life. The school's positive messaging is that "Indigenous" becomes synonymous with "success" as students build on their aspirational capital (Harwood et al. 2015, 229).

Despite these achievements, it is important to stress that these programs are not a panacea; rather, they represent a starting point on the path to countering persistent low high school graduation rates. Collectively, this study's findings underscore that the programs have all of the holistic elements needed to contribute to positive academic outcomes for students who are underrepresented in high school and post-secondary graduation rates. Moreover, focusing on students' personal development, such as the development of life skills, self-confidence, and leadership skills, will build the resilience that will allow them to adapt more effectively to challenges and stressors in their daily lives (Harwood et al. 2015). The underlying theory of this approach is that students will improve their chances of academic achievement if they have the opportunity to focus on their studies and personal growth opportunities in a deliberate way. This growth ought to be facilitated by a group of

supportive adults who are committed to helping these students learn to meet their needs and overcome the barriers that are preventing them from succeeding in their studies. The approach taken in these programs is informed by the conviction that Indigenous pedagogies can keep children in school; however, the pervasive challenge is how to integrate the framework of this study into the public school system in support of reconciliation, as this study's empirical analysis demonstrates that it may be a promising strategy that can be adapted to many other contexts.

Although outside the scope of their usual mandates, another question raised is how post-secondary institutions can become instruments of empowerment for Indigenous families. Universities and other post-secondary institutions have an immense ability to use their resources and infrastructure to extend a reach into their communities and, through a variety of partnerships, to have an impact on the learning experiences of many children, youth, and families beyond the conventional structures of university programming (Axworthy, DeRiviere, and Rattray 2016). Here again, we draw from the peace-building literature, particularly Lederach's (2005) suggestion that institutions need to embrace their own capacity for creating alternatives to our deepest-rooted societal grievances. However, this will require some imagination. Our current reactive system for responding to family violence (e.g., women's shelters), while critically necessary, is wholly incapable of overcoming intergenerational cycles of abuse without integrating innovative community-based responses to the roots of violence. These programs, which are each tantamount to an anti-violence strategy, are just a few examples of how a small inner-city university took an imaginative community development approach to promoting social change.

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Appendix A

Innovative Learning Centre

Model School (2008): The Model School is a high school program accommodating approximately 45–50 students in Grades 9–12. It operates in partnership with the University of Winnipeg’s Collegiate High School (a private, tuition-based school), and addresses the needs of students from backgrounds that have traditionally been underrepresented in high school and post-secondary graduation rates—for example, low-income Indigenous students and some new Canadians who may have shown academic promise in their public schools but were not realizing their full potential and were at risk of falling behind and dropping out of high school for a variety of reasons. The school has been developed as part of the university’s community learning mandate to eliminate barriers to education, and in order to realize this goal, the University of Winnipeg provides underrepresented students with an opportunity to attend the university’s Collegiate High School at no financial cost to their families, as well as awarding Opportunity Fund bursaries for their post-secondary studies. The school takes a holistic approach to its programming and uses individualized academic plans that identify and address the unique challenges faced by each student while providing an intensive support structure to help students overcome these challenges in achieving academic success (Axworthy, DeRiviere, and Rattray 2016).

Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre Program Descriptions

The centre was named by a professor and Elder, and the name means “partners” in the Anishinaabe language. While Wii Chiiwaakanak Centre has over 1,000 drop-in visits to its computer lab each month and hundreds more to its other community programming, three of its programs were specifically evaluated:

Sacred Seven Healthy Teen Relationships (2013): The Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre at the University of Winnipeg has offered the Sacred Seven Healthy Teen Relationships Program for students primarily from schools in Winnipeg’s high-poverty areas (its inner-city, North End, and West End neighbourhoods). Divided into two program components, basketball (Pride Group) and hoop dancing (Girls Group), the Sacred Seven Healthy Relationships Program offers resources to Indigenous children and youth between the ages of nine and 19 that allow them to access traditional Aboriginal teachings (Seven Sacred Teachings and a Medicine Wheel tool), help them to feel connected to their ancestry, and help them to establish better relationships with themselves, their families, and their communities. At a cultural retreat, youth are also empowered to develop a pamphlet outlining their own code of honour principles for healthy teen relationships, and they integrate these principles into their hoop dancing and basketball drills. They also collectively create a guide on healthy dating relationships. The teens serve as role models and leaders by conducting presentations on what they have learned in the program at community public schools in the inner-city neighbourhoods noted above (Axworthy, DeRiviere, and Rattray 2016).

Family Learning programs

Let's Speak Ojibway to Our Kids (2012): This weekly multigenerational language program provides families and individuals of all ages a chance to learn about ceremony, the Anishinaabe (Ojibway) language, and traditional beliefs in a social and family environment. This program is for individuals who are not seeking university credit for a language course.

Pow Wow Club (2012): This weekly program provides community members of all ages with an opportunity to learn the art of traditional dancing (jingle dress, fancy shawl, grass and round dance, etc.), along with song and drum teachings. The program is open to families and individuals of all ages, knowledge levels, and abilities (Axworthy, DeRiviere, and Rattray 2016).

Summer Indigenous Math Leadership Camp (Math Camp) (2012): The structure of this program has evolved over time. In 2012, the centre offered a two-week Math Camp for 11 students from urban schools in the high-poverty areas of Winnipeg. The camp ran from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day, and over the two-week period, students were given math lessons, lunches and snacks, and transportation to and from their residences, at no cost to their families. The summer math camp provided students between the ages of 13 and 15 with an opportunity to sharpen their math skills (or get caught up) and learn more about the connection between mathematics and Aboriginal cultures, while also participating in on-campus outings and off-campus field trips, such as a sweat lodge, smudging ceremonies, and sweet-grass picking. The math camp continued over the next four summers (2013–16), with the majority of participants returning each year. In 2015, the camp expanded in terms of number of students as well as the number of weeks offered, and also included a model of youth leadership through a mentoring approach, as past participants were hired to tutor younger children in Grades 3–4. In 2016, the program grew to 24 math campers aged eight to 14 who were coached by 13 youth leaders and three adult teachers/supervisors (Axworthy, DeRiviere, and Rattray 2016).

Appendix B, Table 1: Evaluation Participation

Program stakeholder	Type of instrument	Model School High School	Sacred Seven Healthy Relationships	Family Learning	Indigenous Math Camp
		N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Children and youth program participants, under age 25	Questionnaires and Likert scale instruments	26 (76.9)	36 (100.0)	n/a	n/a
Children and youth program participants, under age 25	Survey instruments and other evaluative exercises: circle the word, friendship bracelet, and fill in the blanks	n/a	222	27 (100.0)	18 (100.0)
Youth, over age 18 (former students)	Qualitative interviews	4 (100.0)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other adult program participants	Likert scale instrument	n/a	n/a	27 (92.6)	n/a
Program staff and faculty, volunteers, instructors, youth leaders, administrators	Qualitative interviews	6	9 (100.0)	10 (100.0)	15
Parents and guardians of participants and youth leaders	Qualitative interviews	18	10 (100.0)	8 (87.5)	8 (100.0)
Community schools: teachers, community outreach workers, counselors, and principals	Qualitative interviews	n/a	6	n/a	n/a
Community schools: teachers and principals	Survey instrument	n/a	11	n/a	n/a
Total participation in the evaluations		54	294	72	41

Total program registrations and participation		42 (1)	222 students; 71 program participants (2)	54 adults and 69 children (3)	11 adults and 37 children/youth (4)
<p>This table was adapted from Axworthy, DeRiviere, and Rattray (2016). Percentage (%) of Indigenous participants in parentheses. The percentage of Indigenous students, school stakeholders, staff, and other family participants is unknown in some categories, because we did not capture this data. However, it is estimated to be a high proportion.</p> <p>(1) 2014–15 student registrations; the Model School high school has graduated 41 students since 2008.</p> <p>(2) From September 2013 to June 2015, 222 students participated in five school presentations, and 71 students participated in the Sacred Seven Healthy Relationships program.</p> <p>(3) Spring session 2014: Pow Wow Club: 15 adults and 36 children from nine families; Let's Speak Ojibway: 39 adults and 33 children from 19 families.</p> <p>(4) Summer of 2016: 24 math campers aged 8 to 14; 13 youth leaders/math coaches aged 14 to 17; three adult supervisors and eight parents.</p>					