

Pathways Taken by One Canadian College to Advance Reconciliation and the Creation of a New Reconciliation Engagement Program with Indigenous Peoples

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Article abstract

Canada-wide efforts are being made to close the gaps that exist in the health and wellness of Indigenous Peoples besieged by a past of cultural genocide, oppression, and exploitation. The purpose of this essay is to provide members of Colleges and Institutes of Canada (CICan) access to a proposed program to engage in reconciliation, with the objective of facilitating Indigenous community engagement through social innovation, training, and applied research. The proposed program is exemplified through the relationship built between Collège Boréal and Dokis First Nation located in northern Ontario. The proposed Reconciliation Engagement Program consists of two streams that encourage CICan members to utilize, among other possible decolonizing methods, the tenets of a Critical Indigenous Methodology to value and foreground local Indigenous voices. The first stream would consist of networking activities to establish relationships, understand Chief and Council's vision, and seek opportunities for capacity building within an Indigenous community. The second stream would be project-based so that capital costs and human resources can be accessed to complete each project. While proposing the new program is important, the present essay can also be used to exemplify how Canadian colleges and polytechnics can adopt a decolonizing approach during their engagement with Indigenous communities.

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Pathways Taken by One Canadian College to Advance Reconciliation and the Creation of a New Reconciliation Engagement Program with Indigenous Peoples

Randy Battochio, Andrea Dokis, Charlene Restoule, Paige Restoule, Natasha Mayer, Mallorie Leduc, Tana Roberts

ABSTRACT Canada-wide efforts are being made to close the gaps that exist in the health and wellness of Indigenous Peoples besieged by a past of cultural genocide, oppression, and exploitation. The purpose of this essay is to provide members of Colleges and Institutes of Canada (CICan) access to a proposed program to engage in reconciliation, with the objective of facilitating Indigenous community engagement through social innovation, training, and applied research. The proposed program is exemplified through the relationship built between Collège Boréal and Dokis First Nation located in northern Ontario. The proposed Reconciliation Engagement Program consists of two streams that encourage CICan members to utilize, among other possible decolonizing methods, the tenets of a Critical Indigenous Methodology to value and foreground local Indigenous voices. The first stream would consist of networking activities to establish relationships, understand Chief and Council's vision, and seek opportunities for capacity building within an Indigenous community. The second stream would be project-based so that capital costs and human resources can be accessed to complete each project. While proposing the new program is important, the present essay can also be used to exemplify how Canadian colleges and polytechnics can adopt a decolonizing approach during their engagement with Indigenous communities.

KEYWORDS reconciliation, college, social innovation, Indigenous Peoples

Terminology and Context

Our intent is to build mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. We hope to use the relationship built between one community college and one First Nation community as an exemplary pilot project to propose a new program designed to mobilize non-Indigenous peoples, through Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan), to engage in the process of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. Our work and the proposed program must adopt an inclusive terminology given that our efforts for reconciliation specifically pertain to Indigenous Peoples. This term is used to collectively refer to all descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada, including First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit peoples (Kesler, 2020). Reconciliation is about restoring and maintaining mutually

respectful relationships and can be further realized by collectively building bonds between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, which can involve innovation to create social benefits and outcomes through community engagement (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2015). Innovation refers to practices that aim to solve societal issues and meet the needs of an evolving society in order to strengthen it and create exceptional outcomes. By building bonds and innovating together, non-Indigenous peoples can build relationships with Indigenous Peoples and establish permanent partnerships rooted in trust and reconciliation. CICan is a network of 136 postsecondary training institutions throughout Canada and their proximity to Indigenous communities across the country indicates that they can make reconciliation efforts (CICan, 2021). The purpose of the present article is to share the tenets of one Critical Indigenous Methodology and how they applied to the social innovation partnership between Collège Boréal, Dokis First Nation, and Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre. When referring to the Dokis First Nation community with whom the Collège Boréal authors have been working alongside, we will refer to this community as a First Nation. While this project was located in northern Ontario, the tenets of our work together can be utilized to move towards reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples throughout Canada. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, reconciliation can be fulfilled through “the awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that was inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviors” (TRC, 2015, p. 6). Once we have reviewed our work together, we will propose the creation of the Reconciliation Engagement Program to facilitate Indigenous community engagement so that other colleges and polytechnics in the CICan network can use social innovation, training, or applied research to engage in reconciliation.

General History of Innovation and Research

In early attempts at building relationships between Indigenous People and postsecondary institutions, such as universities and colleges, Indigenous People were exploited, especially in the realm of innovation and research. Inside Canadian university classrooms, some Indigenous students continue to face colonial violence affecting their healing and everyday living. Few students report having educators who use holistic approaches that acknowledge violence and trauma (Côté-Meek, 2010). In the realm of innovation and, especially in relation to research, there is mistrust of non-Indigenous researchers as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) articulated: “Research is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary. When mentioned in many Indigenous contexts it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful” (p. 1). Mistrust emanates from negative research experiences such as detached researchers, continuously being over-researched, and feeling marginalized (Blodgett et al., 2013). One renowned example took place when community members believed they were participating in a diabetes study designed to improve their health when unbeknownst to them, they were also being examined for medical disorders without consent (Sterling, 2011). Negative experiences occurred and continue to occur within research and outside the realm of innovation. An example of this problem is the Western reaction to the many boil water advisories that have been active for years in Indigenous communities

(Eggertson, 2008). The shocking revelation spurred Western researchers to find water management solutions to solve this problem. Castleden et al., (2017) pointed out that the Western gaze IS the problem, not water management:

viewing First Nations as just one of many stakeholders, rather than the ones with the rights to those lands, is nowhere near the level of understanding or respect that's needed to create a relationship where something could be done in terms of real action. (p. 7)

Researchers, innovators, and, in this case, college representatives are at-risk of compounding these negative experiences by using ineffective strategies, such as a lack of communication from non-Indigenous peoples, jargon, and language creating barriers, insufficient involvement of community members, few benefits, and lack of cultural and community awareness (Blodgett, et al., 2010).

Indigenous leaders, Elders, and scholars have been increasingly vocal about these negative experiences and have provided guidelines for achieving positive experiences in research and innovation. Positive experiences have emanated when Indigenous Peoples are leading their own community-driven work, sharing community knowledge, and co-creating project outcomes. Meanwhile, non-Indigenous practitioners must focus on relationship-building efforts especially taking the time necessary to learn from community members, earn their trust, and respect their rights (Blodgett et al., 2010). Decolonizing practices are encouraged amongst non-Indigenous people to facilitate a sense of ownership for the community members solving the problems within their own environment (Schinke, et al., 2010). The authors favoured Schinke, et al.'s (2013) approach to establishing relationships and creating activities since one of the authors had experience using the approach with the Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve. This experience does not discount the potential of other decolonizing methodologies that also respect the rights of Indigenous People. For example, Marsh et al. (2015) used the Two-Eyed Seeing Indigenous decolonizing methodology, which shares principles that align with reconciliation such as honest communication, inclusion, community connectiveness, involving Elders, an advisory group, and a research committee.

While these principles lead to stronger relationships and important findings, they are founded in co-existence between Indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge. Arguably, decolonization can be a complete transformation where academics, in this case, Collège Boréal representatives are facilitators while Indigenous People are leaders in knowledge and project creation. Another useful decolonizing methodology is Indigenous cultural responsiveness theory and its prioritization of the spiritual realm and guidance from ancestors as research and innovation move towards reconciliation (Sasakamoose et al., 2017). It highlights three moves: (1) restore health and wellness systems; (2) establish a “middle ground” for engagement leading to mutual benefits for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples; and, (3) transform services so they are culturally responsive (Sasakamoose et al., 2017). This transformation is possible under

the forthcoming proposed reconciliation engagement program where colleges are expected to execute innovation, research, or training with Indigenous organizations.

History and Partnership Overview

In 2015, non-Indigenous academics from Collège Boréal wanted to apply to the new Social Innovation Fund (SIF) administered by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). SIF is accessible to members of CIGan so they can be mobilized to complete social innovation projects on behalf of communities and organizations, in this case, Dokis First Nation and Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre.

Dokis First Nation is a rural First Nation community, with a total of 1071 members and a residential population of approximately 200 members, situated 120 kilometres southeast of the large city of Sudbury in northern Ontario. The community is run by a Chief and Council that is responsible for the services rendered to its members, including the delivery of health, wellness, and physical activity programming. Recently, Chief and Council have assembled a community research team that consults with outside organizations, one being Collège Boréal, regarding collaborative and social innovation initiatives.

Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre (SKHC) is an Indigenous Health Access Centre located in Sudbury, Ontario, that strives to create and deliver culturally safe health services to Indigenous Peoples from three nearby First Nations: Wahnapiatae First Nation, Henvey Inlet First Nation, and Magnetawan First Nation. SKHC offers health care and community programs that are rooted in Indigenous culture and traditions to Indigenous Peoples to promote healthy lifestyles within each community. SKHC represents three First Nation communities in northeastern Ontario yet Dokis First Nation is not one of them. However, Dokis First Nation has community members that are employees or clients of SKHC, which means that there is a connection between this Indigenous health organization and the First Nation. Employees at SKHC were recruited because of their expertise in facilitating health promotion programming with Indigenous Peoples and the potential for our new programs to be incorporated and serve similar benefits in other local Indigenous communities.

Collège Boréal, a CIGan member, is a francophone College of Applied Arts and Technology based in the City of Greater Sudbury, Ontario, but it serves many cities across the province through access centres in Hearst, Kapuskasing, Timmins, Toronto, and Windsor. This postsecondary institution aims to promote collaboration through applied research with community businesses and social innovation in partnership with community organizations. Representatives at Collège Boréal sought to collaborate with Dokis First Nation since most registered Indigenous students at Collège Boréal were community members.

Between 2015 and 2018, two applications to the SIF program were rejected, but on the third attempt, Collège Boréal was awarded grant funds. The two unsuccessful applications could have been viewed as failures that did not warrant any more resources from Collège Boréal, Dokis First Nation, or Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre. Representatives from the college, health centre, and First Nation held the opposite view as they believed that they were establishing and developing a relationship. They had reached three years of engagement

together where priorities were established, learnings were had, and resources were readied with the hope that one day they would gain the funds. This engagement occurred through regular meetings that eventually unearthed new innovation projects for the college to complete on behalf of Dokis First Nation. The first request was to build an enclosed facility near the outdoor skating rink so members could stay warm in winter conditions. The facility would have been a teachable moment for community members who wanted to be active, learn about carpentry, and coordinate a construction project. The project did not occur since there was no funding to mobilize the college's resources (i.e., first failed application). The second request was the construction of a community garden to encourage members of the First Nation to get together and eat healthy produce, which can be difficult to access from a remote First Nation. Once again, the project could not be completed by the college as a result of limited funding to mobilize their resources (i.e., second failed application). The common thread across each requested project was that they were spearheaded by the First Nation and the college representatives were expected to facilitate the requests by searching for funding to complete them. Each project could have created teachable moments and ensured that community members would be active even after the project was completed. In 2018, the third application was successful, so funds were available through the college for projects.

Currently, there are three active projects spearheaded by community leaders and facilitated by college representatives. First, the First Nation has access to 10 Fitbits to measure the physical activity levels of traditional activities such as the harvest and preparation of hide (see Battochio et al., 2022). As the college representatives learned, traditional feasts are celebrations of the harvest season and a means for appreciating the spirits of the forest and Creator (Kovach, 2009). The collection of data provided by the use of activity trackers is aimed at promoting and encouraging physical activity in users, in addition to providing a quantified measure of energy dispensed through traditional community activities. Second, the First Nation has received COVID-19 Guidelines. Under these guidelines and with access to appropriate protective material, such as hand sanitizer, disinfectant, and reusable masks for adults and youth, one exercise program in the First Nation was able to continue throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, the First Nation has seen the initiation of the Red Cross Indigenous community swimming program, which occurred in the summer of 2021. Each requested project or active project is an example for other members of CICan seeking to establish and maintain relationships in nearby Indigenous communities.

Critical Indigenous Methodology

A Critical Indigenous Methodology was used to value and foreground local Indigenous voices and epistemologies within the partnership between Collège Boréal, Dokis First Nation, and Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre (Swadener & Mutua, 2008). Emphasizing reconciliation, non-Indigenous people from the college used this approach to Indigenous engagement since it highlights the power of local knowledge for invoking meaningful transformation. Specifically, Indigenous members of Dokis First Nation and Indigenous employees from SKHC led the projects while non-Indigenous people from Collège Boréal took a supportive role that

facilitated capacity building and completed projects in the First Nation community. To enact the Critical Indigenous Methodology, the team followed the guidelines prepared by Schinke et al. (2013) which included seven tenets. The tenets were as follows: (1) community-driven research; (2) localizing research practises; (3) decentralized academics; (4) prolonged engagement, (5) community capacity building; (6) project deliverables; and, (7) sustainability. Each tenet will be described before an example is given as evidence that the guidelines were followed to establish and maintain respectful relationships.

Community driven research

Effective partnerships between Indigenous People and non-Indigenous people must derive from the needs of the former, which can permeate through the objectives set and approach taken. When undertaking a Critical Indigenous Methodology, it is imperative to engage all partners in the community project with each partner individually contributing their expertise and knowledge to identify needs and develop a plan for solutions (Coppola et al., 2019; Schinke, et al., 2019). This approach allows for community capacity building, in which Indigenous People can benefit from social, environmental, and political improvement, thus promoting continuous development. In the current project, the needs of Dokis First Nation community leaders have been expressed over three years of community meetings starting in 2015 and project objectives were conceived to carefully address these needs. Non-Indigenous peoples were careful to decentre themselves and serve as facilitators so that the Indigenous organization could experience the betterment envisioned by its own leaders.

Locating research practices

Each First Nation and Indigenous organization possesses a unique variation of local behaviours, beliefs, traditions, and practices that should be included within the methodologies selected (Schinke et al., 2013). Localizing research practices involves understanding the reason for the project and how it should be undertaken so that Indigenous People are centred throughout. These details were captured in applications submitted to Collège Boréal's Research Ethics Board, the Chief and Council of Dokis First Nation, and the research committee of the SKHC. Once approved, monthly meetings have been held to provide progress updates, exchange data, discuss the interpretation of data, build consensus, update COVID-19 guidelines, and integrate community-relevant programs. Oftentimes, community meetings were held with youths, adults and Elders of the community joining as participants. Youth members were asked to engage in an arts-based method: mandala drawings. Mandala refers to an art form or image that is drawn within a circle to reflect one's experiences, in this case, physical activity reflections from youth living in Dokis First Nation. Adults participated in talking circles to share their views and build consensus amongst one another. All pursuant questions from non-Indigenous people were posed in relation to these stories and their vision. Data derived from these methods consist of the question whether youth programming aligned with the views of the youths (e.g., drawing) and their caregivers (e.g., words). The intent is to ensure that well-informed physical activity programs are developed for youths and adults.

Decentralized academics

The Critical Indigenous Methodology emphasizes the centralization of the community with non-Indigenous peoples taking a facilitator role by providing their skills and resources to support the community leaders in their community projects (Schinke et al., 2013). The goal for the non-Indigenous people in this approach is to support Indigenous community leaders throughout their initiatives, then gradually withdraw their aid in order to eventually leave the community independently responsible for the projects (Schinke et al., 2019). By accepting this focus and responsibility to the community, non-Indigenous people were contributing to an ongoing process of decolonization that promoted inclusivity and trust between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people (Schinke et al., 2019). In the present project, non-Indigenous people have provided skills and resources while community leaders remain in their place as experts on Indigenous knowledge, traditions, and programming in Dokis First Nation. Over the last two harvest seasons, Indigenous People have been using Fitbits to record their activity levels and community leaders have been able to understand the activity levels (e.g., heart rate, steps) needed to harvest enough food for each winter in the First Nation. Non-Indigenous people from Collège Boréal were able to procure, train, and assist with data analysis throughout each harvest season.

Prolonged engagement

Prolonged engagement, such as allotting time and making efforts to forge relationships between Indigenous People and non-Indigenous people is important to allow for the development of projects that are based on authentic community needs and mutual trust (Coppola et al., 2019; Tobias et al., 2013). In the present project undertaken with Dokis First Nation, community leaders and non-Indigenous people from the college held monthly meetings for three years with hopes of garnering trust and learning social practices (e.g., community meetings, arts-based method). Community meetings were held so that members could shape the new physical activity programs at the community's pace as opposed to the timelines set by academics. As each project nears its completion, the expectation is for non-Indigenous people to put systems and structures in place so that community members remain engaged and all programs will be self-sustainable. As the COVID-19 Pandemic was underway, the meetings moved to an virtual platform to restrict the spread of the virus and prevent non-Indigenous people from entering the community. Even with these restrictions, the projects continued with greater engagement from community members.

Community capacity building

In selecting a Critical Indigenous Methodology, the intent is to support community members in a way that promotes and engages their resources to their full potential (Rich & Misener, 2019). When community leaders' voices are heard and their efforts are empowered then participation increases exponentially, leading to more engagement (Blodgett et al., 2013). Non-Indigenous people consistently recognize the community members' knowledge and the community's need for physical activity support. Dokis First Nation's leaders recruited community members to

become participants based on their potential to make well-informed contributions to new physical activity programming. In these exchanges, community members are engaged in capacity building and understanding initiatives that will best serve their community for the present and into the future. One example is the institution of the Red Cross community swimming program that teaches Indigenous youth to swim and helps them train future generations to promote sustainability.

Project deliverables

The goal in completing community projects is to create mutually beneficial outcomes—for both the Indigenous community and Collège Boréal (Tobias et al., 2013). For the community, these outcomes can be practical, such as gaining knowledge on processes and project development, and resourceful, such as sustainable programs, equipment, material, or data to direct further research. There have been tangible benefits for Dokis First Nation, SKHC, and SSHRC through Collège Boréal. Dokis First Nation sought local programming where youths and adults could better utilize the outdoors including constructing and using hiking trails, or swimming in the nearby bay. To achieve sustainable programs, self-governance throughout each community project was encouraged through capacity building. Health promoters at the SKHC developed the research capacity to investigate and develop physical activity programs for partnering First Nation communities: Henvey Inlet First Nation, Magnetawan First Nation, and Wahnapiitae First Nation. For SSHRC, the project constitutes Indigenous engagement aimed at improving the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. SSHRC also enabled non-Indigenous people at Collège Boréal to construct a new model so that other colleges and polytechnics could use community engagement to develop programming grounded entirely in Indigenous Peoples' understandings of physical activity. Thus, providing the framework for mobilizing an entire network of non-Indigenous people in Canada towards reconciliation with Indigenous People.

Project sustainability

Project sustainability answers whether undertaking a Critical Indigenous Methodology led to sustainable physical activity programs within the community (Schinke et al., 2013). Sustainability may also extend to the community leaders and members' willingness to engage in new community projects with not only Collège Boréal partners, but also non-Indigenous peoples hoping to extend other community programs (e.g., education or employment services). These outcomes depend on the community members' engagement and involvement throughout the process of research and the development of programs (Rich & Misener, 2019). When the project becomes personal to community researchers, engagement is more heartfelt and vigorous, which leads to positive outcomes (Blodgett et al., 2013). Project sustainability is determined through continuous evaluation and reflection of the program itself, as well as its outcomes (Coppola et al., 2019). Even though SSHRC funds are limited to two years in this instance, community-centred programs will always be required and, when they are called upon, non-Indigenous people will continue to support their delivery.

Proposed Reconciliation Engagement Program

We propose the Reconciliation Engagement Program to facilitate Indigenous engagement by Canadian colleges and polytechnics to advance reconciliation. The proposed program constitutes an example of Canadians, through CICan, engaged in the national process of reconciliation to improve relationships with Indigenous Peoples and move away from colonization in its present form. It is a program that will encourage college administrators, professors, and students to take action on reconciliation and place Indigenous priorities at the forefront. The importance of the inclusion of students in the program cannot be understated. It is imperative to give Canadian youth exposure to their country's actual history and demystify Indigenous organizations so that Canadian youth continue the movement towards reconciliation. Non-Indigenous people who seek to access the proposed program will be expected to meet at least one training requirement. The requirement is for the applicants to have completed the OCAP principles (i.e., ownership, control, access, and possession), Indigenous Awareness Training, or Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 prior to applying to the program.

With the ultimate goal of advancing reconciliation, we propose two streams deriving from one initial program to facilitate Indigenous community engagement by colleges and polytechnics in Canada. Engagement is designed around fulfilling the seventh signatory of "building relationships and being accountable to Indigenous communities in support of self-determination through education, training, and applied research" (CICan, 2019). The first stream of the new program consists of networking activities to build relationships and promote capacity building within an Indigenous community through a college providing funding to community members. The second stream is project-based so that capital costs and human resources are accessible to complete each project.

Stream 1: Colleges and Institutes of Canada Reconciliation Network

This stream allows for relationship building between Canadian colleges and Indigenous Peoples. It necessitates both parties gathering together in order to communicate directly about needs and to grow their partnerships. The networking initiatives, such as methods of communication, are to be decided by the Indigenous and non-Indigenous members involved as they deem most fitting for the establishment of their relationship. It is important to acknowledge the differences and the diversity of all communities to emphasize the importance of adaptability and responsiveness to the preferences of each Indigenous community that may be involved with the project. Utilizing the Critical Indigenous Methodology introduced within this paper is the first step when assuring respectful interactions and building solid relationships amongst all participants. Through the development of these relationships, Simpkins (2010) emphasizes the importance of listening for non-Indigenous people collaborating with Indigenous communities to ensure that accurate cultural representation is the backbone of the new relationship. The longstanding notion that cultures are learned and not a genetic disposition should be at the forefront of each research participant's mind to set aside predisposed cultural biases and really listen to what they are being told (Rosaldo, 1989). By taking the time to listen and learn throughout the creation of partnerships, they will notice the richness in the different ways of

doing and thinking presented by each community. Honouring and respecting these differences is key to working alongside one another and procuring effective work and relationships for all involved in the project. The initial networking opportunities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples would also allow for a demystification of Indigenous communities created by Treaty segregation. Non-Indigenous peoples would gain a better perspective on Indigenous communities as well as the daily lives of the members. In conjunction, similar effects can occur if members of the Indigenous community have predispositions in regard to non-Indigenous peoples due to past negative experiences and interactions. Hence, this stream allows for positive relationship building amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples which can lead to improvement in community engagement and the overall project success.

In addition to the networking component, this stream assures that both college researchers and community researchers would be compensated for their efforts by a salary. For the Indigenous communities in rural and remote locations, funds from the colleges would include food and travel for all participants to facilitate the proposed networking initiatives between the college and the community members. Funds could also enhance community capacity building by offering research and training opportunities for community members. In the present project, every participating member was compensated with a salary, along with mileage for transportation and food expenses throughout the meetings.

Stream 2: Colleges and Institutes of Canada Reconciliation Project

The second stream is designed to make CICan members and Indigenous communities accountable and provide the resources to advance reconciliation efforts that they agreed on during the networking sessions in the first stream. It will ensure that community projects can be accomplished, and it will remove conflicts and barriers that challenge Indigenous communities. For example, colleges and First Nations looking to initiate a project together could apply for funds to purchase the required materials and equipment. In the present social innovation project, funding was attributed to student salaries, and all materials and equipment. When community leaders of Dokis First Nation wanted to measure physical activity levels during the harvest season, Collège Boréal used the funding to provide Fitbit watches as activity trackers for participating community members. Colleges could also provide educational and manual support to Indigenous communities from teachers and students themselves. This stream would promote sustainable engagement in Indigenous communities, as well as enhance partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Continuous engagement between colleges and Indigenous communities would be facilitated by this stream. With these two proposed streams, we believe that interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples could be strengthened, which will encourage them to advance reconciliation.

Conclusion

In our efforts to achieve social innovation with a First Nation community, we approached the project in the way that the proposed Reconciliation Engagement Program suggests. The approach was founded on decolonization and we had to create a safe and relatable environment

to establish our friendship, which led to trust and new relationships. The efforts we put into building that trust derive from the proposed networking stream (i.e., stream 1). Such efforts consisted of compensating all partners with a salary, as well as allocating budget costs to monthly meetings to encourage communication between Collège Boréal and the First Nation community. We also put the second proposed stream into effect, allocating funding for materials and equipment to facilitate the projects undertaken by partners. These results demonstrate that through the proposed engagement program, non-Indigenous peoples can take steps towards reconciliation. The bonds and opportunities resulting from community projects of this kind strengthen engagement. We hope our work and the proposed program exemplify the following quote: “It will take many heads, hands, and hearts, working together, at all levels of society to maintain momentum in the years ahead. It will also take sustained political will at all levels of government and concerted material resources” (TRC, 2015, p. 8).

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About the Authors

Randy Battochio (*corresponding author*) was the principal investigator and facilitator of the creation and development of the physical activity programs for youth and adults in the Indigenous community. Email: randybattochio@gmail.com

Andrea Dokis is a health promotion director at a local Indigenous health center and a community member in Dokis First Nation. She was a community-appointed researcher that guided the creation and development of physical activity programming.

Mallorie Leduc is a researcher with expertise in rural and northern health and was responsible for knowledge translation.

Natasha Mayer was a researcher with an expertise in health promotion and public health. She had coordinated activities in Dokis First Nation within the restrictions of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Charlene Restoule is the Health Director of Dokis First Nation and the community-appointed researcher that led, created, and coordinated the health promotion activities in the community.

Paige Restoule is a council member in Dokis First Nation and she was responsible for sharing knowledge about Indigenous traditions with community members. She was also a member of the community-appointed research team.

Tana Roberts is a researcher that prepared the literature for the manuscript and regularly engaged with community researchers to begin implementing physical activity programming for youth in 2019.

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