



# INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

At Thompson Rivers University

# OVERVIEW

Intercultural learning at TRU has a long legacy of theoretically informed, evidence-based, relational praxis.

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Through this work, the Intercultural Team (ICT) has built deeply relational, grassroots and pan-institutional knowledge of EDI dynamics at TRU.

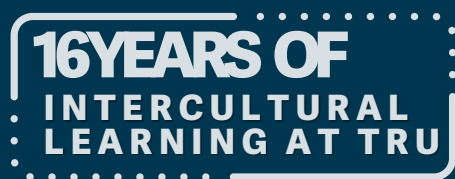
This report summarizes sixteen years of the work with the aim of enhancing institutional memory and situating existing projects within a framework of interdepartmental cooperation. It contextualizes the scope, reach, and impact of intercultural work at TRU as a foundation to current Institutional Priorities and EDI-AR aspirations.

It also provides an opportunity for the ICT to reflect constructively on contemporary challenges and opportunities, with an open invitation for future collaborations.

Intercultural capacities constitute critical indicators of inclusive and educational excellence. Towards realizing this excellence, the ICT provides evidence-based, theoretically grounded instructional support and professional development to faculty and staff, as well as inclusive, experiential programming for students.

The ICT also endeavors to advance intercultural capacities institutionally, as well as through external collaboration with academic and community organizations. While academically informed, intercultural work is praxis oriented. It involves responding to issues of inequity, discrimination, and cultural exclusion, and engaging proactively to address conditions out of which these issues emerge.

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# OVERVIEW

As a Strategic Priority from 2014-2019, Intercultural Understanding became one of four core themes that contributed to TRU's accreditation with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). As a core theme, Intercultural Understanding continues to be assessed annually as part of our Mission Fulfillment. Intercultural understanding is also one of TRU's institutional learning outcomes:



*"TRU graduates have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to engage respectfully and with humility across cultural contexts. They intentionally and reflectively increase their awareness of sociocultural diversities, including their own. They apply their intercultural understanding in ways that demonstrate a valuing of diversity, a recognition of privilege and power, and a commitment to social justice and inclusion".*

Intercultural advancements in curriculum, as well as instructional workshops, seminars, and academic conferences, are all aimed at deconstructing the imagined divides between campus stakeholders, and to move TRU towards the realization of Kw'seltknéws—the principle of universal interrelation amongst all things.

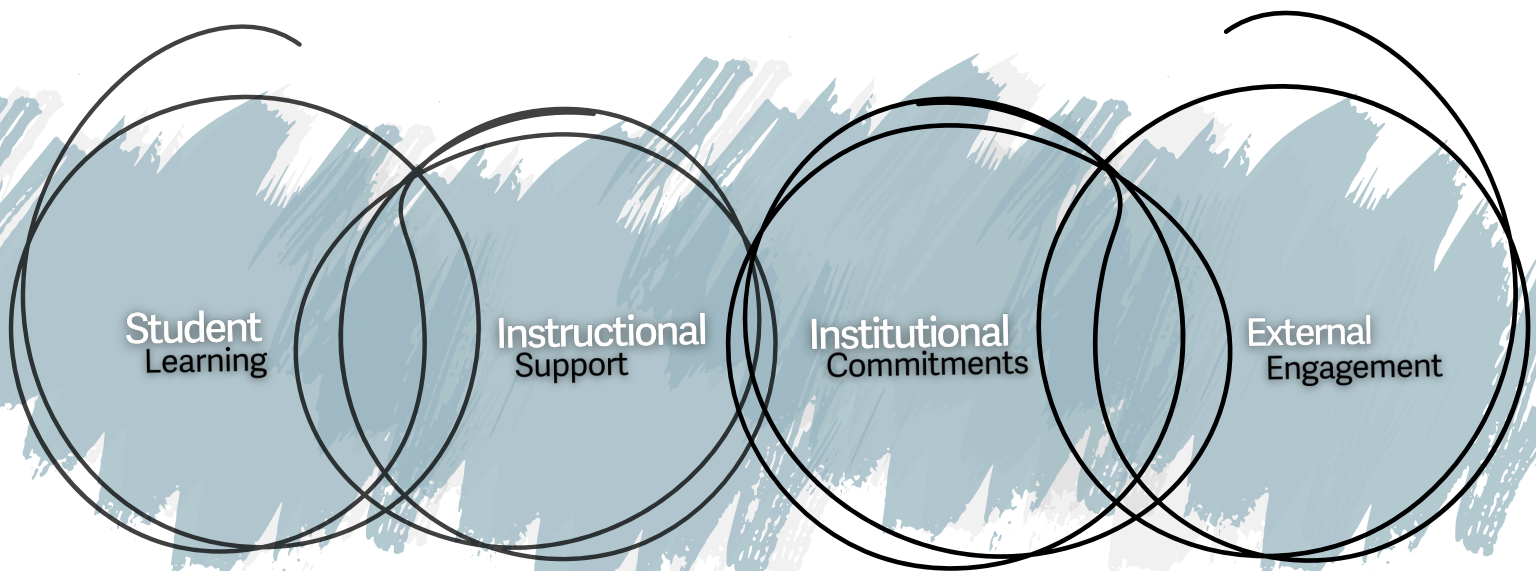
Intercultural Learning is also a core plank in TRU's responsibilities to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC, 2015) Calls to Action for the "provision of skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism" (calls 24, 27, 28, 57, 92 iii); as well as call 63 iii, which calls on educators to build "student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect".



# SCOPE, REACH & IMPACT

The Intercultural Team (ICT) consists of one full time and one half-time faculty members (Coordinators) supported by various research, co-op, and practicum students. Coordinators work to advance intercultural capacities within four interconnected areas: student learning, instructional support, institutional commitments, and external engagement.

## SCOPE



Scope defines the breadth and nature of the ICT's objectives and responsibilities. Intercultural development can occur through a wide range of learning and unlearning opportunities. The ICT actively supports intercultural development that meets the following objectives identified by TRU's Mission Fulfilment:

1. To enhance students' sense of belonging through experiences of diversity and inclusion.
2. For faculty, staff, and students to reflectively increase their awareness of socio-cultural diversities, including their own.
3. To expand intercultural learning through curriculum by promoting the recognition of and respect for Indigenous knowledges and ways and diverse cultures and worldviews.

# SCOPE

Since the mid 2000s, evolving circumstances at TRU have expanded Coordinators' roles and responsibilities, including responding to increased calls for intercultural understanding in the Academic Plan (2011) and the Strategic Plan (2014-2019) and the NWCCU Accreditation Process (2013-2018) and current Mission Fulfilment reporting.

Coordinators have become situated at the core of various institutional committees aimed at recognizing and integrating diversity and inclusion across the institution.

Often the work is highly responsive. It requires consistently showing up for people in order to collectively address issues of inequity, discrimination, and cultural exclusion as they occur. This involves significant – and crucial – engagement in ongoing and unpredictable affective and relational work.

In this sense, the ICT's scope includes an informal/unseen dimension, often acting as a front-line service for TRU community members experiencing marginalization or discrimination.



Coordinators structure intercultural learning around the following foci, outlined in the Interculturalization Coordinator Standards Document:

- Collaboration and support for innovative teaching and learning projects with an intercultural component;
- Pedagogical support as well as support with curriculum development to individual faculty or to departments pursuing interculturalization initiatives;
- Support for TRU staff and service area training pertaining to interculturalization;
- Participation in and involvement with campus committees or initiatives where an intercultural perspective is critical.



# REACH

Reach is measured as the range of relationships and scale of ICT's collaborations across the university and beyond. This section expands on the reach of the four operating areas and describes specific initiatives dedicated to student learning, instructional support, institutional commitments, and external engagement.

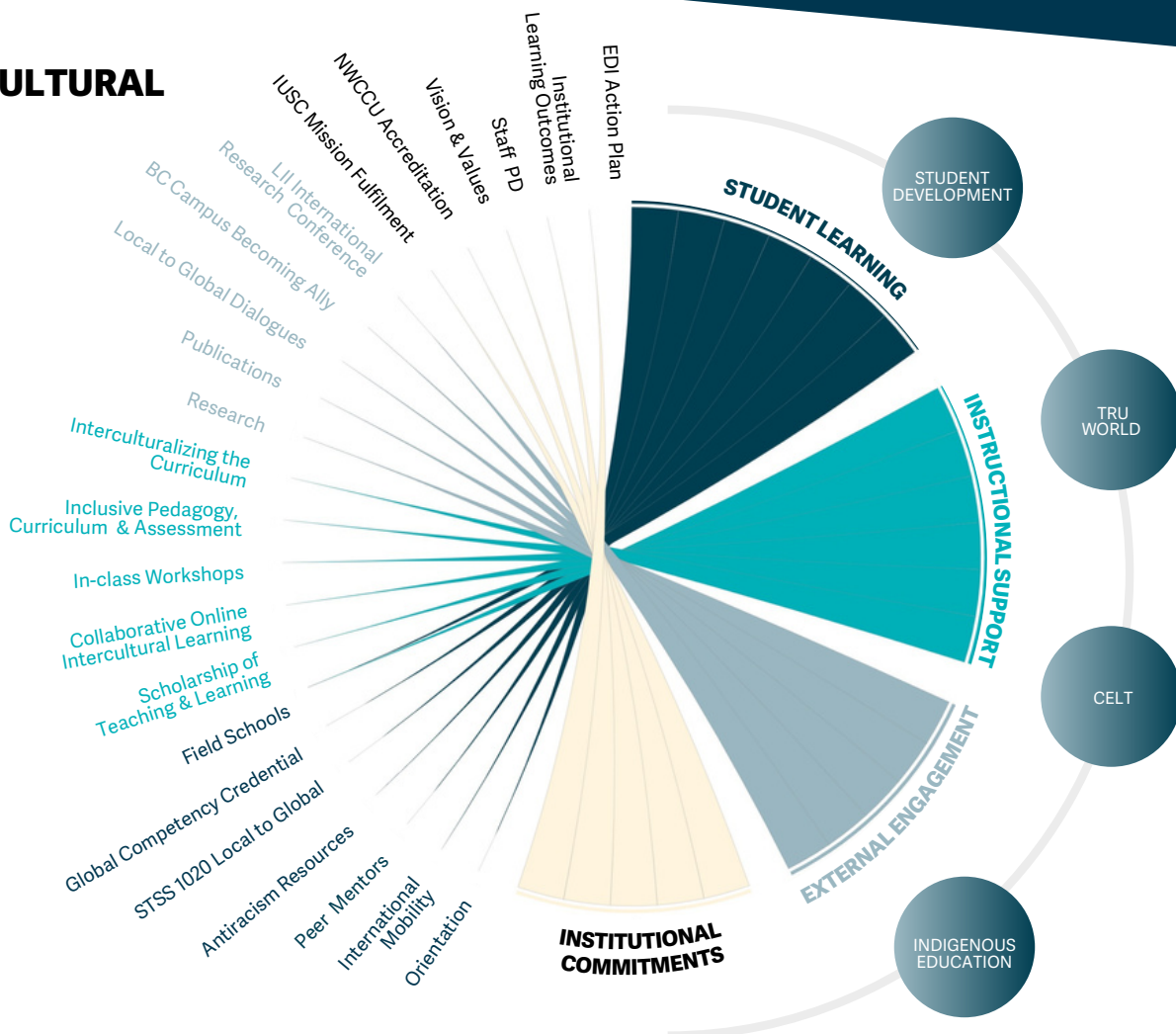
Student Learning is supported by the ICT in a variety of ways, including courses, workshops, guest lecture instruction, research supervision, student employment opportunities, and peer mentor programming.

The ICT supports curricular and co-curricular programs across the institution and provides professional development for staff and faculty.

They work in close collaboration with Student Development, Indigenous Education, the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, , and TRU World.

They also actively support local, provincial, national, and international organizations seeking training and resources to advance intercultural understanding, inclusion, and equity.

## INTERCULTURAL REACH



## STUDENT LEARNING: REACH

The ICT directly supports student learning through curricular and co-curricular programs. Coordinators deliver two accredited courses for advancing and recognizing intercultural competencies for students. Local to Global: Intercultural Interactions ([STSS 1020](#)) develops student capacities for intercultural understanding, encouraging reflection on historical and ongoing colonial contexts that affect cultural interactions. Upon completion of GLBL 1000, students earn TRU's [Global Competency Credential](#), which formally recognizes intercultural or international experiences (including completion of ILO course work, multilingual ability, international mobility experiences, and work or volunteer experiences across cultures).

As faculty, Coordinators regularly supervise and support student research across a variety of disciplines, as well as supervising coop and practicum positions. The [Intercultural Ambassadors Peer Mentorship Program](#) provides students with training opportunities to become advocates for intercultural development, empathy, human rights, and anti-racism. Intercultural Ambassadors work to promote these values and practices at all levels of the university.

Among many other initiatives, student members of the ICT have worked on providing peers with student facing [anti-racism resources](#) and have collaborated with the Student Storytelling Squad on the [Eye on EDI](#) podcast.

## INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT: REACH

The ICT provides professional development opportunities and teaching resources to faculty, promoting intercultural understanding in curriculum design and delivery. Since 2008, TRU has provided one of Canada's only curriculum and pedagogy-specific intercultural training programs for instructors—[Interculturalizing the Curriculum](#). More than 120 TRU instructors from over 20 departments have participated. The program regularly draws participants from other institutions.

Individual instructors regularly rely on the ICT for guest lectures, workshops, and curriculum support. On average, between 1,200 and 1,500 students attend workshops annually. Regular invitations come from Business, Communication, Career and Experiential Learning, Education, Engineering, Nursing, Respiratory Therapy, and Tourism. Field schools are also supported in Arts, Business, Nursing, and Trades. Workshops and resources are also requested by the Writing Centre, Supplemental Learning, residences, study abroad, and various peer mentor programs.

## INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENTS: REACH

Coordinators are entrenched institutionally, serving widely on committees, working groups, and advisory councils. Of particular note is their service chairing the Intercultural Understanding Sub-committee (IUSC) of Senate. As a standing joint sub-committee of the Qelmúcw Affairs and Senate International Affairs Committees, IUSC is responsible for reporting on Mission Fulfillment in relation to the core theme of Intercultural Understanding, advising Senate on interculturalizing performance measurement systems, and administering the Awards for Excellence in Interculturalization.

The ICT often collaborates with People and Culture by offering workshops for staff or serving as panelists during PD days. Many departments and units also request workshops or the administration of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to determine the baseline intercultural capacity as a needs assessment. Units that have participated in the IDI include Open Learning, English as a Second Language department, the Faculty of Student Development, TRU Bookstore, TRU World, Academic Advising, Writing Centre and Supplemental Learning Tutors, and Residence staff and advisors.

The Coordinators also consult, collaborate, and/or serve with TRUFA substantive committees (Equity, Decolonization, Reconciliation, and Indigenization, Gender Equity, and Human Rights) as well as TRUSU Equity to enhance institutional commitments to EDI, Reconciliation, and Decolonization. Coordinators work in service to many intercultural and EDI-related initiatives, including on the Steering Committee for the TRU Food Security Project, IDays Planning Committee, and as co-Chair of the FSD EDI-D Committee.

## EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT: REACH

Coordinators collaborate with numerous external organizations at a local level (City Council, Kamloops Fire and Rescue, Kamloops Immigrant Services, the Food Policy Council, and SD 73) They also engage with a variety academic organizations, and regularly collaborate with external organizations such as the World Council for Intercultural Competence, the Society for Intercultural Training, Education, and Research, the POD Network, BC Campus, the British Columbia Council for International Education, the Canadian Bureau for International Education and others. They have served provincially and nationally on various committees and initiatives, including on the EDI Committee for Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning (WIL), and as Chair of the provincial ACE-WIL EDI committee. Coordinators are regularly invited to provide professional development for school districts, local and national governments, non-profit organizations, and even NASA.

Moreover, the Learning at Intercultural Intersections (LII) conference hosted at TRU (2015, 2017, 2019), brings together leading Indigenous and International scholars for practical and theoretical collaboration.

This work has been disseminated through special-issue publications in international journals that featured the work of numerous interdisciplinary TRU authors and editors, as well as that of colleagues from across the country.



# IMPACT



The impact of the ICT is evidenced across the four dimensions of student learning, instructional support, institutional commitments, and external engagement. It has been documented over the years through surveys, testimonials, institutional initiatives, and formal research.

## STUDENT LEARNING: IMPACT

The Intercultural Understanding Subcommittee (IUSC) collects quantitative and qualitative data to measure the intercultural learning of students. Narratives are compiled to record intercultural experiences associated with participation in curriculum, workshops and events.

Analysis of these narratives captures intercultural development from five themes: curriculum, community diversities, intercultural events, co-curricular programs and peer learning, and engagement outside TRU. It also indicates cognitive, behavioral, and affective progress amongst students as occurring through knowledge, skills, attitudes, and praxis-based learning. Narrative analysis also indicates that while intercultural development is strongly associated with curriculum (knowledge-based) learning, skills and praxis-based learning modules require more development.

Additionally, IUSC tracks the Faculty of Student Development’s social media feed which reveals strong engagement of students with posts related to intercultural learning with views from 600 to almost 7,000. Prominent themes include Intercultural, Indigenous, Multifaith, and EDI (IUSC, Workbook, 2022). IUSC also collects feedback from students following intercultural workshops, the figure below shows the most frequent words used to describe their learning.



## INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT: IMPACT

Interculturalizing the Curriculum (ICC) [participant feedback](#) indicates exceptionally positive experiences, with many TRU Faculty reporting increased intercultural competencies and communication skills.

[Follow-up research](#) revealed that 95% of faculty participants indicated that the program aided them in “addressing real-life intercultural issues,” and 90% reported positive changes in their ability to recognize their own biases. Others reported increased awareness, confidence, and practical skills and that the intercultural-focused training helped them rethink course design “to include global issues that will speak to [all] the students in the classroom” (Garson et al., 2016, pp.465-466).



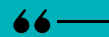
I have spoken about this widely with friends, my partner and colleagues. What makes this program successful and really valuable is that it is led by a person who is a senior researcher in the field

**- 2021 ICC Participant**



This workshop has been extremely useful. It has forced me to consider my own attitudes and cultural competency (or lack thereof!) and I am grateful to have been a part of it

**- 2021 ICC Participant**



This experience does what so few do – provides practical, usable tools and techniques to apply at the course and program level.

**- 2018 ICC Participant**

Coordinators have also collaborated with CELT to provide training and resources for Collaborative Online Intercultural Learning (COIL), which encourages instructors to partner with instructors outside of the institution to create interdisciplinary projects for student collaboration across cultures and countries. They also regularly present on inclusive pedagogies and intercultural learning at TRU’s Teaching Practices Colloquium.

Instructors are also supported by in-class workshops which are tailored to their discipline and range from Active Witnessing, Complexity and Equity, Critical Global Citizenship, Developing Intercultural Capacity, Equity in Human Resources, Intercultural Communication in the Workplace, to Racism in Healthcare.

Coordinators have been directly involved in the creation of new courses: HLTH 2300 Indigenous Health, CMNS 3510 Intercultural and Cross Cultural Communication, and EDUC 5041 Diversity: Constructing Social Realities. They have supported major curriculum review for TGMT 3100 Cultural Issues in Tourism and ORGB 2810 Organizational Behaviour. They have also supported SoTL research and publications of TRU Faculty working to advance intercultural understanding through [group work](#), [online learning](#), [international student health care](#), [place based pedagogy](#) and [reconciliation](#).

## INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENTS: IMPACT

Coordinators have contributed to and advanced many of TRU's Institutional Priorities, including the [Academic Plan](#) (2011), [Strategic Priorities](#) (2014-2019), the [NWCCU Accreditation](#) (2018) and current [Mission Fulfillment](#) agenda (2023).

Coordinators were also active on the General Education Taskforce and in development of TRU's Institutional Learning Outcomes, Envision TRU, and the University Committee on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for Faculty Recruitment that developed the [EDI Action Plan](#). That work was guided in part by the Campos-Garcia EDI Assessment at TRU (2018), which was commissioned by the then Provost at the request of the ICT. They have also served as EDI Fellows and continue to support the work of subsequent Fellows' cohorts.

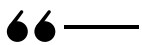
As part of the NWCCU Accreditation, and now Mission Fulfillment, the IUSC Subcommittee has tracked objectives, outcomes, and indicators of advancements in intercultural understanding annually. Year over year data illustrating impact can be found [here](#).

## EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT: IMPACT

TRU has long had a provincial and national reputation for our intercultural work. This is evidenced by ongoing awards, invitations for keynotes, conference panels and external workshops to share the approach.

Coordinators have contributed broadly to the scholarship of the field through research and publications. A highlight was hosting three Learning at Intercultural Intersections (LII) conferences in 2015, 2017, and 2019 that brought together [Indigenous and international scholars and practitioners at TRU](#) and disseminated the work through [special issues in international journals](#). These articles have been highly viewed and cited in the academic literature. [Keynote addresses](#) and [conference presentations](#) remain available online. Participants from across Canada and beyond traveled to TRU for these events and shared exceptionally favorable experiences.

The ICT Team are also active in supporting a range of provincial initiatives, such as BC Campus' webinar [Answering the Call: Being and Becoming an Ally](#) or BCCIE's [Intercultural Series](#) and [Local to Global Professional Development](#) sessions that explore the intersections of international education with EDI and Decolonization, Reconciliation and Indigenization initiatives.

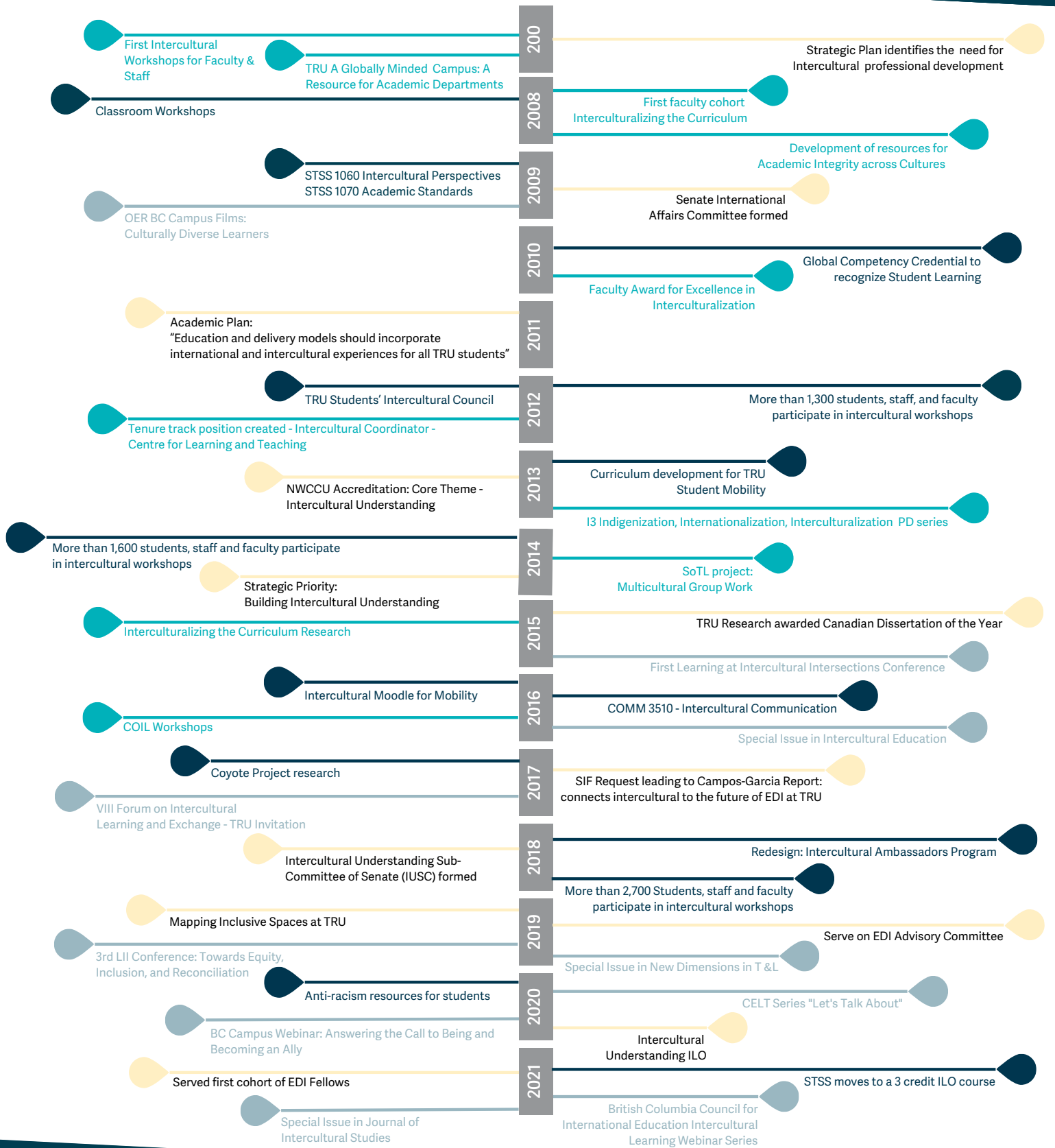


Dr. Kyra Garson has an amazing ability to attract world-renowned invited speakers like Vanessa Andreotti, Graham Smith and others. The diversity of disciplinary approaches, recent research and variety of perspectives makes this conference unique in North America, and probably around the world. No other conference explores the intersection of Indigenous perspectives, de-colonizing higher education and intercultural learning like LII.

- LII 2019 participant



# BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY



By providing a historical overview of the work of the ICT, we hope to support institutional memory, to introduce contemporary practitioners to our work, and to express our support for ongoing and future intercultural and EDI-AR initiatives at TRU.

# CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Despite a proven record of engagement and impact, a range of challenges persist. The ICT faces challenges at the social, institutional, and ground levels. At the same time, there are significant opportunities to nurture the work through a commitment to reciprocal relationships and ongoing dedication to empowering and supporting members of the communities we seek to serve.

## CHALLENGES

Perhaps the most obvious contemporary challenge to this work is the increasing conflicts associated with social and cultural polarization, as well as accompanying aggressive behaviors emanating from racist, supremacist, and other oppressive ideologies.

Many institutions across Canada have witnessed a spike in culture, race, faith, gender, and ableist discrimination and violence. It is increasingly necessary to respond to incidents in the media and to anticipate the need for support and resources for those impacted in our community. It is also important to stay informed about global crises that are impacting regions our students and staff have ties to.

Other issues are conceptual. There exist prevailing notions that intercultural learning simply occurs as a result of diversity and that good intentions are enough.

Unfortunately, structural diversity alone can also lead to the entrenchment of stereotypes and ethnocentric views. Additionally, there can be a perception that intercultural learning is a response to internationalization with a focus on international students.

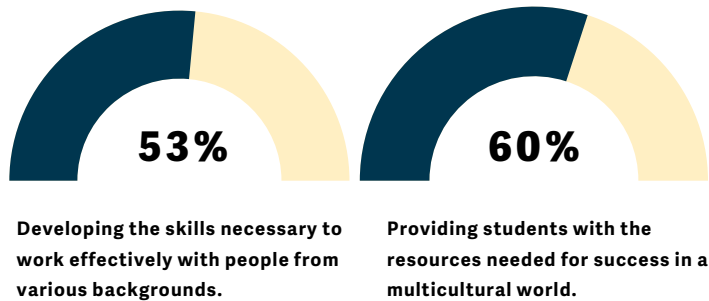
Such oversimplifications limit recognition of the complexities of diversity on our campus (including diversity among domestic student populations and the fact that these categories are not discreet - there are, for example, international students who identify as Indigenous). They also can obscure the fact that intercultural and EDI-AR work is everyone's responsibility.

Addressing these dilemmas requires a pan-institutional shift away from a three-dimensional prism through which students are conceptualized as being either international, Indigenous, or domestic, and moving towards an understanding that recognizes intersecting micro-diversities.

# CHALLENGES



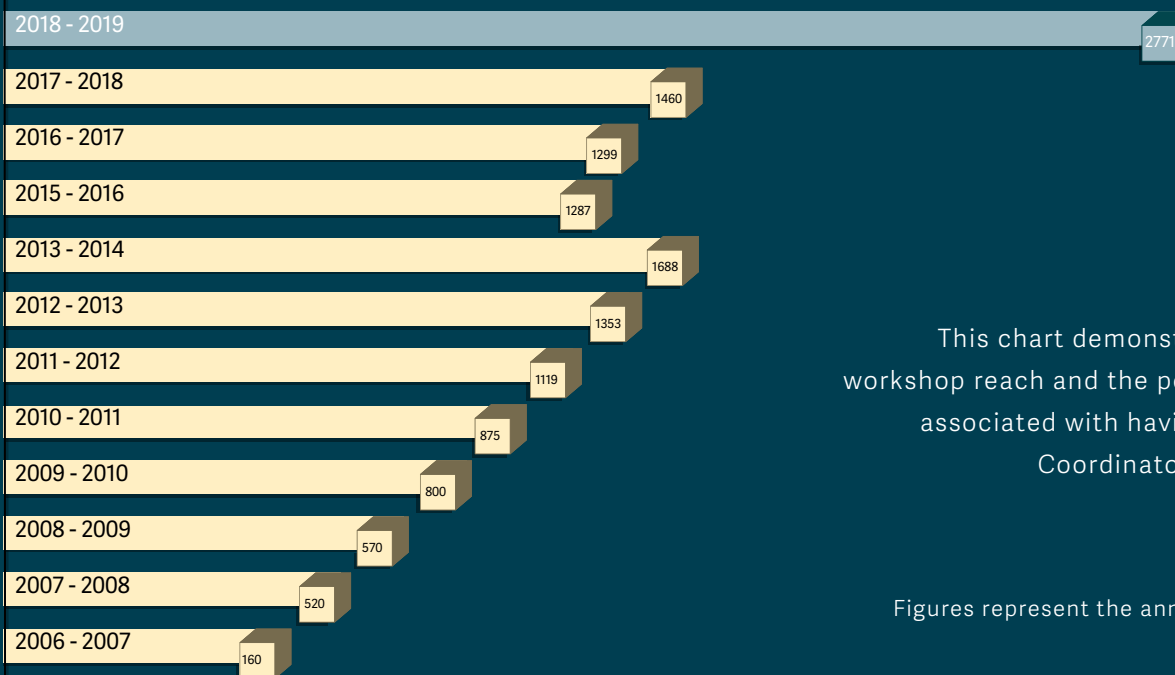
Internal challenges likewise persist. Although IUSC findings indicate strong correlation between curriculum-based learning and intercultural knowledge, skills, praxis, and attitude-based outcomes require further attention. As illustrated by Fall Student Census figures below.



The Census data also indicates that just over half of more than 3400 students reported being exposed to intercultural concepts in their coursework, and only 69% view TRU as demonstrating a commitment to diversity.

Workshops and practical training are instrumental in ensuring these metrics are developed to their fullest capacity. However, as the demands for intercultural support increase, limited and often precarious human resources add layers of complexity to Coordinators' ability to sustain and advance their work.

Historically, the ICT has been staffed with one full-time faculty Coordinator. In 2018, this was extended to two positions for one year, but, currently, there is one continuing Coordinator working at half time, and a full time Coordinator working on a temporary contract.



This chart demonstrates increased workshop reach and the positive potential associated with having two full-time Coordinators in 2018-2019.

■ 1 coordinator  
■ 2 coordinators

Figures represent the annual # of workshop participants



# OPPORTUNITIES



Despite persistent challenges, the future of intercultural learning at TRU is characterized by significant opportunity. Given the history, scope, reach, and impact of intercultural learning at TRU, the ICT is uniquely situated to come alongside future initiatives dedicated to fostering inclusive and equitable approaches at TRU and advancing TRU's priorities.

As a team working pan-institutionally, with established links to students learning, instructional support, institutional commitments, and extensive provincial and national networks, the ITC's work is a significant resource for advancing EDI-AR principles more broadly.

It is likewise a repository of institutional knowledge, providing a distinct historical memory of TRU past experiences that can be referenced moving forward.

Coordinators are trained social scientists, with terminal degrees in education and sociology. Their approach draws on a wide range of interdisciplinary scholarship. Thus, they are well positioned to contribute to anti-oppressive, intersectional, equity minded initiatives within curriculum and pedagogy, policies and processes, and student/faculty engagement.

# MOVING FORWARD

## The Road Ahead

This report is intended to offer context and history around the work of the ICT at TRU, and to serve as an invitation for collaboration and support on intercultural, equity and inclusion initiatives.

The historical trajectory and foundational impact of the ICT at TRU demonstrate the transformative potentials for initiatives where advancing intercultural understanding can be of service to equity and inclusion goals. Increasing partnerships and interdepartmental collaboration – as well as extending the existing resources and support for the ICT – would go a long way towards furthering these goals.

Much work remains to be done, particularly concerning the needs of equity deserving groups. There is a collective enthusiasm amidst the ICT for deepening relationships and building partnerships that are dedicated towards advancing this work.

Within this context, communication and cooperation will be of central importance to developing relational, pan-institutional approaches to advancing TRU's related strategic priorities. It is our sincere hope that this report helps open the door to further dialogue, collaboration, and solidarities.

