

Project Connect

Professional Project Administrator Program

RESEARCH REPORT PHASE II



Funded by the
Government of Canada's
Future Skills Program

Canada



Future Skills
Centre

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Compétences futures



Royal Roads
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Project Connect Professional Project Administrator Program: Research Report Phase II

Program Delivered by:
Royal Roads University
Professional and Continuing Studies

Funded by:
Government of Canada Future Skills Program



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Cortés V., Hill, T. T., Loffler, K. (2024). *Project Connect Professional Project Administrator Program: Research Report Phase II*. Royal Roads University. <https://rruprojectconnect.com>

Land Acknowledgement and Gratitude

Royal Roads University is located on the traditional Lands of the Lekwungen-speaking Peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations. With gratitude, we live, work and learn here where the past, present and future of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, faculty and staff come together.



As we learned from Coast Salish scholar Jo Billows, we can offer *more* than community names in our acknowledgements. We can “narrate Indigenous presence and futures, narrate [our] positionality, narrate [our] responsibilities, narrate [our] commitments, narrate [our] relationality, narrate specificity, narrate complexity” (Billows, 2021, p. 26). As such, the work that is presented in this report shows a part of each one of us who, in our different roles and positionalities, have a deep commitment to Indigenous resurgence. It brings together our dreams for the future; it celebrates our learning journey; it acknowledges how we are woven together in our unique identities, working in relationship, feeling valued, and recognized. Coming together as Indigenous and racialized individuals was a powerful experience of solidarity, camaraderie, and support.

We are grateful to our ancestors, our families, and those who contributed in some way to this project. We express our gratitude to the many people who participated in this work. Your time, your feedback, and your experiences are all contributing to improvements in how Royal Roads University delivers educational programs.

We are grateful to the RRU Professional and Continuing Studies team and, particularly, the Project Connect team for your love and support. The dream catcher that cohort 5 created as part of the arts-based research is a gift to you, to express our gratitude, and to remind you to be accountable to the “Four R’s” of respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility (Pidgeon, 2016).



We also wish to express our gratitude and appreciation to the Future Skills Centre (fsc-ccf.ca). The funding administered by FSC from the Government of Canada’s Future Skills Program enabled RRU to provide valuable, life-changing learning opportunities to students.

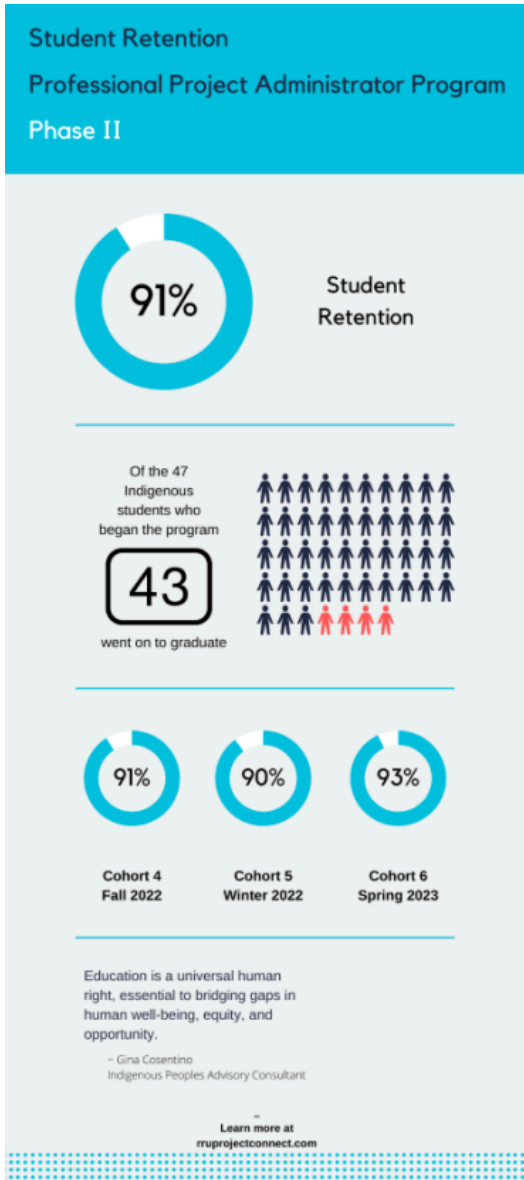
Introduction

The Project Connect Professional Project Administrator Program (PPA) is an employment-focused online training program funded through the Government of Canada’s Future Skills Program and offered through Professional and Continuing Studies at Royal Roads University. The first offering of the PPA was in 2020, in partnership with the Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC). The research undertaken for the first phase of Project Connect shed light on the program design components that contributed to the high graduation rates. The research report can be found on the Project Connect Website <https://rruprojectconnect.com>

Grounded in the principle of bringing the university to the community, the Project Connect team has focused on nurturing the whole learner—culturally, emotionally, and intellectually—wherever they are in their life’s journey. The team strived to incorporate experiential learning by including cultural teachings, engaging learners with local community mentors, and building strong relationships with partner Nations, all with the purpose of offering transferable skills in project administration to prepare learners to reach their professional goals.



For the second offering (PPA-II) of the PPA in 2022-2023, RRU partnered with the Haisla Nation Council in northern British Columbia and with Rupertsland Institute, which supports educational goals for citizens of the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA). A third offering of the program was open to any Indigenous learner in British Columbia.



To learn about the impact of the PPA-II, the Project Connect team took a comprehensive approach, investigating the impact of the program on instructors, staff, and partners. The findings and documentation can be found on the Project Connect Website.

This report presents a glimpse of the experiences of learners from the three cohorts of the PPA-II delivery. The document includes descriptions of the participatory and arts-based research methodology, research findings, discussion, and recommendations.

Nothing for us, about us, without us

As a research team, we embarked on a unique journey of collective inquiry about our experiences, guided by our interest in advancing Indigenous resurgence. We believe that the way in which we conducted the work was emancipatory, a pathway for change, because as a group we shared power, made decisions, and

were actively engaged in reflection and action. We hope to have influenced the way research is currently conducted in these settings, generally with one person or consulting group investigating the experiences of a community that is not their own. Involving participants in research processes can result in many benefits including the opportunity to express how we understand our own experiences and to “inspire multiple transformative outcomes, including individual development and social action” (Morrell, 2010, p. 159).

From student to research assistant

When learners become the researchers of their own experiences, voice their opinions, and shape the research methodology, they are engaging in Indigenous resurgence (Starblanket, 2018). This process is not only about acquiring knowledge and applying their skills, but also challenging power structures and fostering a sense of self-efficacy and confidence to influence the decisions that concern them and their communities.

Conducted through a participatory and arts-based approach, this research study brought together PPA-II graduates from the three cohorts as research assistants (RAs). The more experienced researchers were available as consultants, assisting RAs in conducting research with their own learning communities.

“We came together on a weekly basis during the summer of 2023 to dream, laugh, learn, and put our skills into practice”.

Upon completion of the PPA Program, graduates received an invitation to apply for research assistant positions. Throughout the project, RAs worked in collaboration with various research experts who facilitated a series of online synchronous workshops that focused on the following skills:

- Interviewing techniques
- Clean language interviewing
- Data analysis approaches
- Coding and theming data
- Knowledge sharing and dissemination

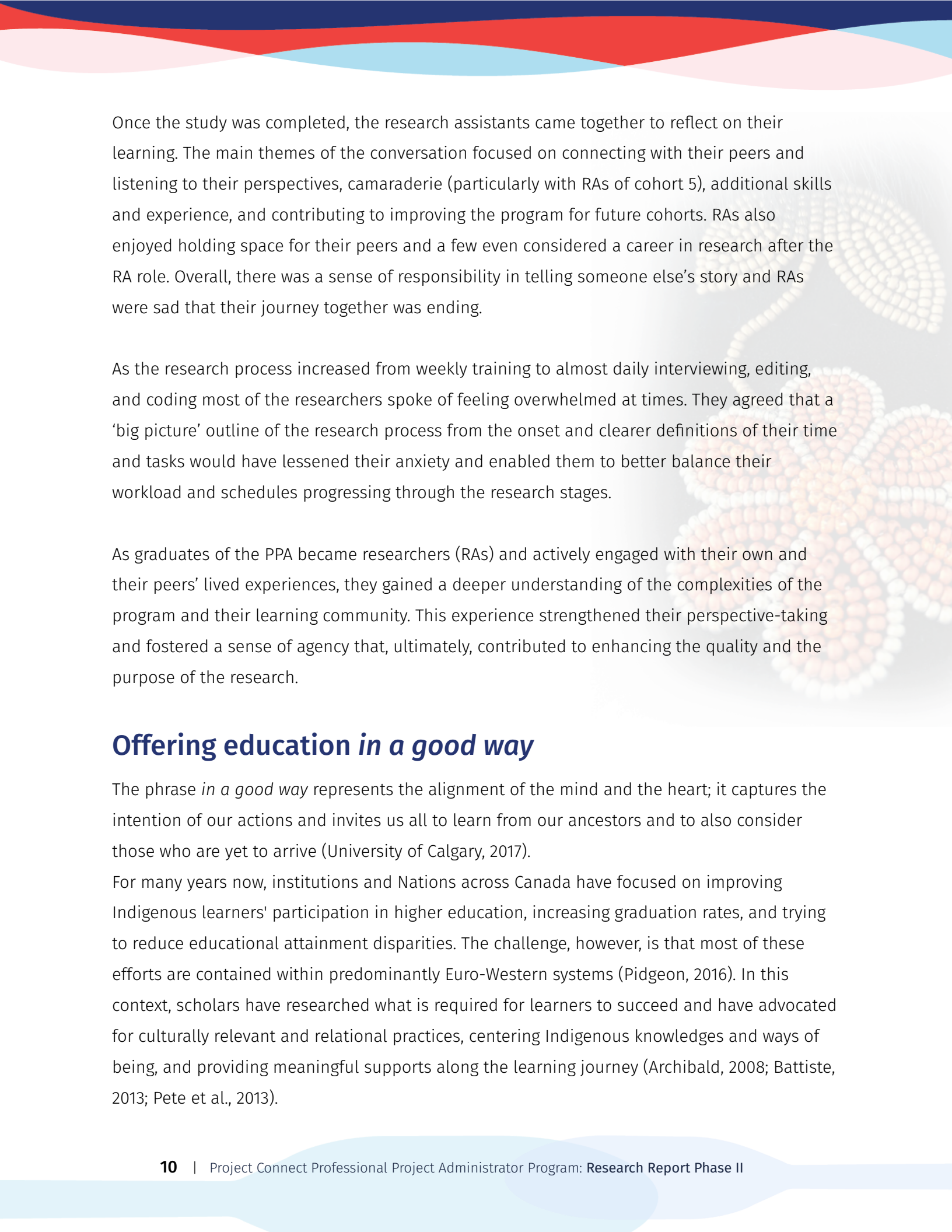
All RAs conducted practice interviews with each other to become familiar with the interview protocol prior to conducting the interviews. Applying Brinkmann and Kvale’s (2015) approach of understanding the lived everyday world, RAs conducted semi-structured interviews with their peers in the program. This approach supported a co-construction of knowledge with peers as opposed to extracting information.

RAs identified areas of the PPA program that could be enhanced to benefit future program participants. Through participant interviews the student researchers reconnected with friends they'd made in their cohort, and it was paramount to them that their fellow graduates felt safe to share their PPA program experience, both the positives and the negatives, in a supportive and unbiased interview environment, where opinions were valued and amplified.

Once all the interviews were conducted, coded, and analyzed the research team gathered in a *Celebration of Findings* where RAs shared the findings. In each gathering, the graphic recorder turned the themes and quotes into images (shown in the *Celebrating our Findings* section).

As part of the participatory arts-based research, the RAs designed and facilitated the activities that the cohorts engaged in as part of their graduation ceremonies. Finally, the RAs worked on individual digital projects around knowledge transfer. Their work can be found on the Project Connect Website.





Once the study was completed, the research assistants came together to reflect on their learning. The main themes of the conversation focused on connecting with their peers and listening to their perspectives, camaraderie (particularly with RAs of cohort 5), additional skills and experience, and contributing to improving the program for future cohorts. RAs also enjoyed holding space for their peers and a few even considered a career in research after the RA role. Overall, there was a sense of responsibility in telling someone else's story and RAs were sad that their journey together was ending.


As the research process increased from weekly training to almost daily interviewing, editing, and coding most of the researchers spoke of feeling overwhelmed at times. They agreed that a 'big picture' outline of the research process from the onset and clearer definitions of their time and tasks would have lessened their anxiety and enabled them to better balance their workload and schedules progressing through the research stages.

As graduates of the PPA became researchers (RAs) and actively engaged with their own and their peers' lived experiences, they gained a deeper understanding of the complexities of the program and their learning community. This experience strengthened their perspective-taking and fostered a sense of agency that, ultimately, contributed to enhancing the quality and the purpose of the research.

Offering education *in a good way*

The phrase *in a good way* represents the alignment of the mind and the heart; it captures the intention of our actions and invites us all to learn from our ancestors and to also consider those who are yet to arrive (University of Calgary, 2017).

For many years now, institutions and Nations across Canada have focused on improving Indigenous learners' participation in higher education, increasing graduation rates, and trying to reduce educational attainment disparities. The challenge, however, is that most of these efforts are contained within predominantly Euro-Western systems (Pidgeon, 2016). In this context, scholars have researched what is required for learners to succeed and have advocated for culturally relevant and relational practices, centering Indigenous knowledges and ways of being, and providing meaningful supports along the learning journey (Archibald, 2008; Battiste, 2013; Pete et al., 2013).



The PPA-I research study shows that at least four elements of program design need to be present to support learners: cultural learning, wrap-around supports, relevant knowledge and a caring community (Cortés et al., 2023a). Within the sphere of relevant knowledge, an aspect of conscientization is essential to understand the complexities of the systems of oppression embedded in both education and society. As Battiste (2013) states,

“in order to effect change, educators must help students understand the Eurocentric assumptions of superiority within the context of history and to recognize the continued dominance of these assumptions in all forms of contemporary knowledge” (p. 186).

The assumption that educators—including staff and administrators— have such sensibilities, knowledge, and capacity to support students needs to be at the forefront of the work, given the low representation of Indigenous educators in higher education and the minimal learning opportunities that our institution offer towards Freire’s (2003) conscientization and critical pedagogy.

Based on the findings and recommendations from PPA-I research regarding cultural safety training and increased representation from Indigenous instructors, the Project Connect team invited all faculty to participate in Indigenous cultural safety and humility training, as well as ongoing training on decolonizing pedagogy. Although there is still a lot of work to do, particularly to increase representation of Indigenous instructors, it was clear from the PPA-II research study that the training enhanced the practice of the instructors who participated.



Relational Accountability

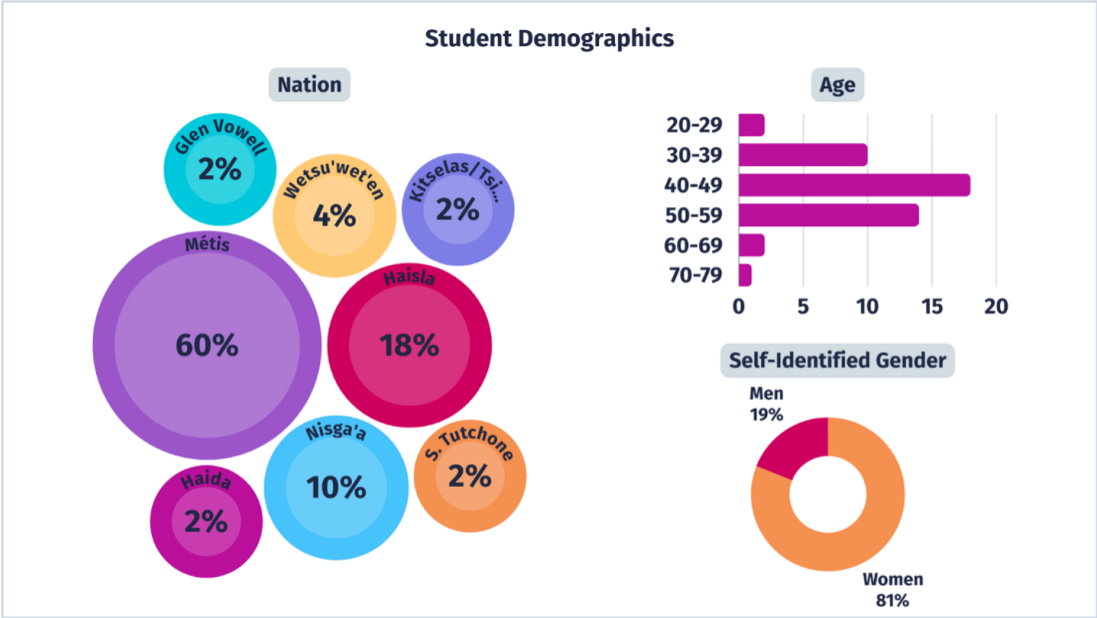
Relational accountability is about cultivating and maintaining respectful and reciprocal relationships between researchers and the communities they work with (Wilson, 2008). From the beginning of the PPA Program, each cohort learned about relational accountability, prior and informed consent, and their role in both research and evaluation. More on relational accountability can be found at <https://rruprojectconnect.com/>

Ethics

All research was conducted in accordance with the Tri-Council's ethical standards for research (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2018). All participants provided informed consent and the data was managed in accordance with ethical standards. An ethical review was prepared and approved by the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Board.



PPA-II Learners



The Invitation

The Project Connect team introduced the research and evaluation initiatives from the very beginning of the program. After discussing relational accountability and informed consent, learners were invited to participate in the research and in the evaluation, which among other things consisted of 1-1 meetings or focus groups with RRU staff. Informed consent clearly explained that the research would be conducted by graduates of the same program who had been trained as researchers.

Cohort	Students in the Program	Experiences Shared
Cohort 4. Fall 2022	11	2 + arts-based research reflections (6)
Cohort 5. Winter 2022	21	17 + arts-based research reflections (15)
Cohort 6. Spring 2023	16	13 + arts-based research reflections (5)

Table 1: Total Number of Participants in PPA Research Project Phase II

Sources of Knowledge

Knowledge takes many forms. Much of the knowledge that was shared, occurred during the research team meetings, with the families and loved ones at the graduation ceremonies, and over food. Considering a more formal approach, the data sources for the research documented in this report include:

- 1-1 interviews with program participants conducted online by research assistants
- Participatory arts-based activities with program participants at graduation

The research team followed a thematic data analysis approach as outlined by Braun and Clark (2006) to analyze the experiences from the interviews. In keeping with this approach, the RAs identified both anticipated and emerging themes. These themes were presented at the Celebration of Findings and summarized into the themes presented in this report.

While grounded in both participatory action and arts-based research, the research team sought to understand the overall impact of the PPA program on the three cohorts of PPA-II learners.

Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a methodology aligned with our team's ethics and values because it enabled us to co-create, which is why it is participatory. We gathered every week to reflect, learn, and adapt. According to Cortés and Sommer (2016), action research is a reflective process of actively engaging with a group with the purpose of addressing real-life issues and effecting change, while conducting research. This methodology allows all involved in the research to have shared accountability and commitment, to learn from the process, and to benefit from it.

Participatory Arts-based Research

Arts-based research is an effort to go beyond the limitations of narrative communication and to express meaning that otherwise would be impossible to describe in words. Instead of endorsing a singular, correct interpretation of reality, arts-based research invites participants to reconsider the world from different directions, encouraging them to look beyond the surface of what is familiar (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Working in conjunction with PAR, we used arts-based methods to explore other ways to better understand the PPA experience. We also engaged in

community arts-based research because participants' experiences were depicted visually and became a vehicle for understanding the learning experience.

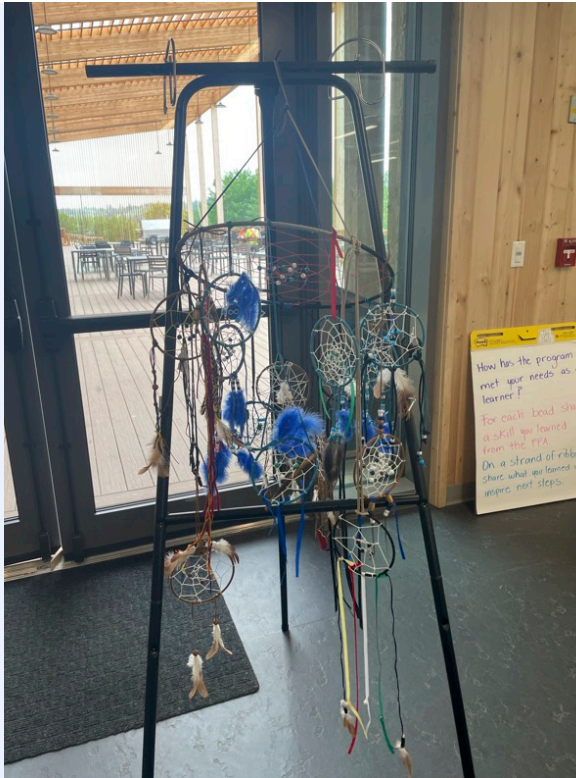
As part of the graduation ceremonies for each cohort, participants worked on a creative activity. For cohort 4, the research assistant suggested the arts-based activity. For the other two cohorts, the RAs collaboratively decided on the design and implementation of the arts-based work, with one RA in each cohort facilitating the activity. After and during the activities, PPA graduates shared what the final creation meant to them and reflected on the learning experience and skills that they acquired. The researchers reviewed the transcripts of these recordings and expanded on the themes already generated through the interviews. The participatory arts-based research provided an avenue for PPA graduates to talk about their learning and experience, to reflect in action, and to demonstrate their learning through visual expression.

Cohort 4. Painting Paddles

The research assistant for cohort 4 described the program as *paddling in a canoe*. The idea for the activity was fully developed with Haisla visual artist Paul Windsor who suggested creating a small paddle for each student. As part of the graduation events in Kitimat, the graduates painted their paddles while reflecting on their different experiences in the PPA.



"I'm reminded of my experience from highschool to postsecondary school and the institutions that I had attended and how it was to go through a program by myself as opposed to being able to attend a class with people that I'm familiar with and those that I work with and see what the change was in welcoming First Nations students in their different learning capacity or ability."



Cohort 5. Dream Catcher

As part of the graduation activities at Métis Crossing, the learning community came together to create dream catchers to represent their learning and their unique gifts. Upon finishing the activity, they hung each dream catcher on a bigger loop. The RA who facilitated this activity shared her experience doing dream catchers with her mother and emphasized that the activity related with dreaming as an act of resurgence, which was a topic during the program.



Cohort 6. Spirit Animals

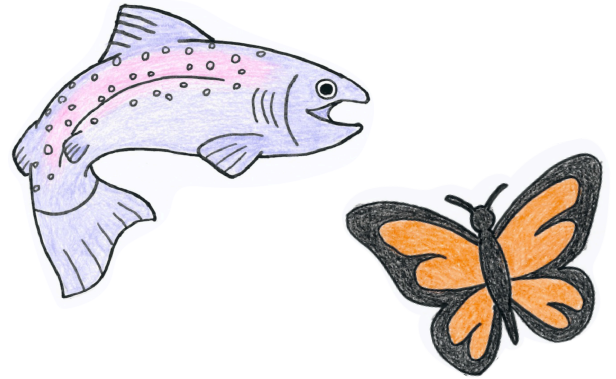
The graduation ceremony for cohort 6 was hosted at Royal Roads University. Participants joined activities which included spirit animals painting facilitated by one of the RAs. She prepared all the materials in advance, facilitated the activity, and gave each participant an apron that she had decorated.

During each of these activities, participants reflected on their experiences. Audio of these moments can be found at the PPA website.

Celebrating our Research Findings

When preparing for the Celebration of Findings, we came together to think about metaphors that represented our experience with the program. Some of the ideas that we generated were:

- Blind and now I can see; eyes opened
- Wild rose: Start like buds then we blossomed
- Butterfly
- Salmon
- A fire in my soul to do new things
- Healing
- Rebirth, regrowth, reawakening



The graphic recordings below represent many of these ideas of transformation, moving from one phase to another. The salmon, for instance, represents struggle and persistence. We see the PPA as a journey where we tested our resilience, developed leadership skills, confidence, and self-efficacy, a journey where we acquired skills and life-long friends. The destination might be the same, but each journey is different. We hope that many learners continue to journey toward Indigenous resurgence and find something more than employment, that they find their unique gifts.



Figure 1.
Celebration of Findings-Cohort 6

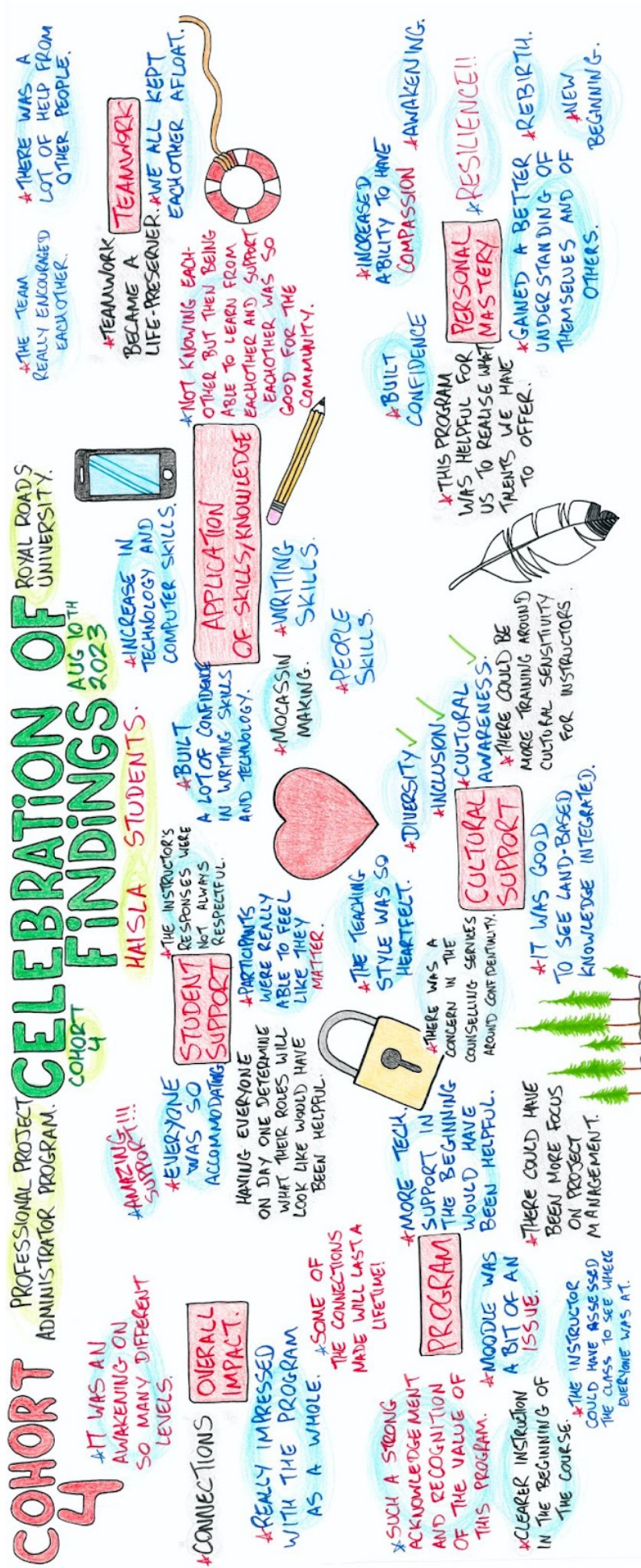


Figure 2.

Celebration of Findings-Cohort 5

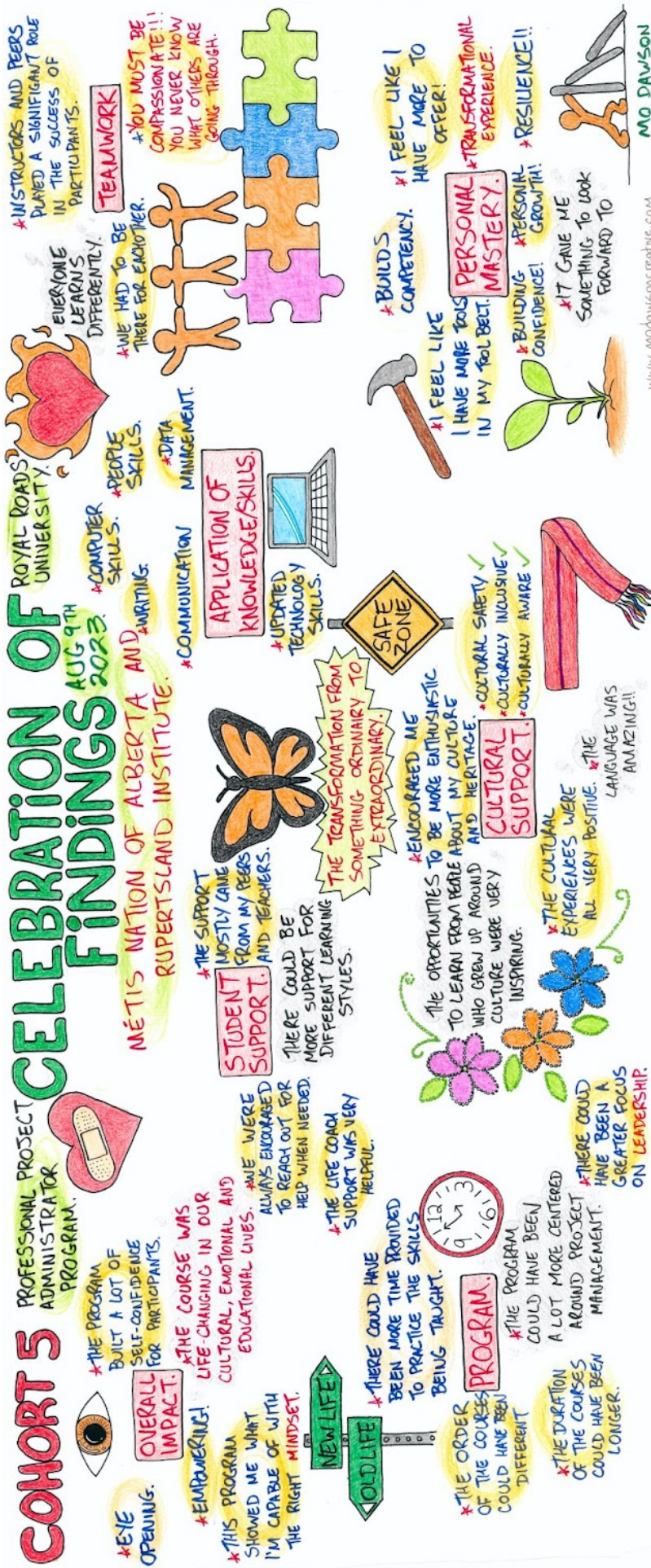
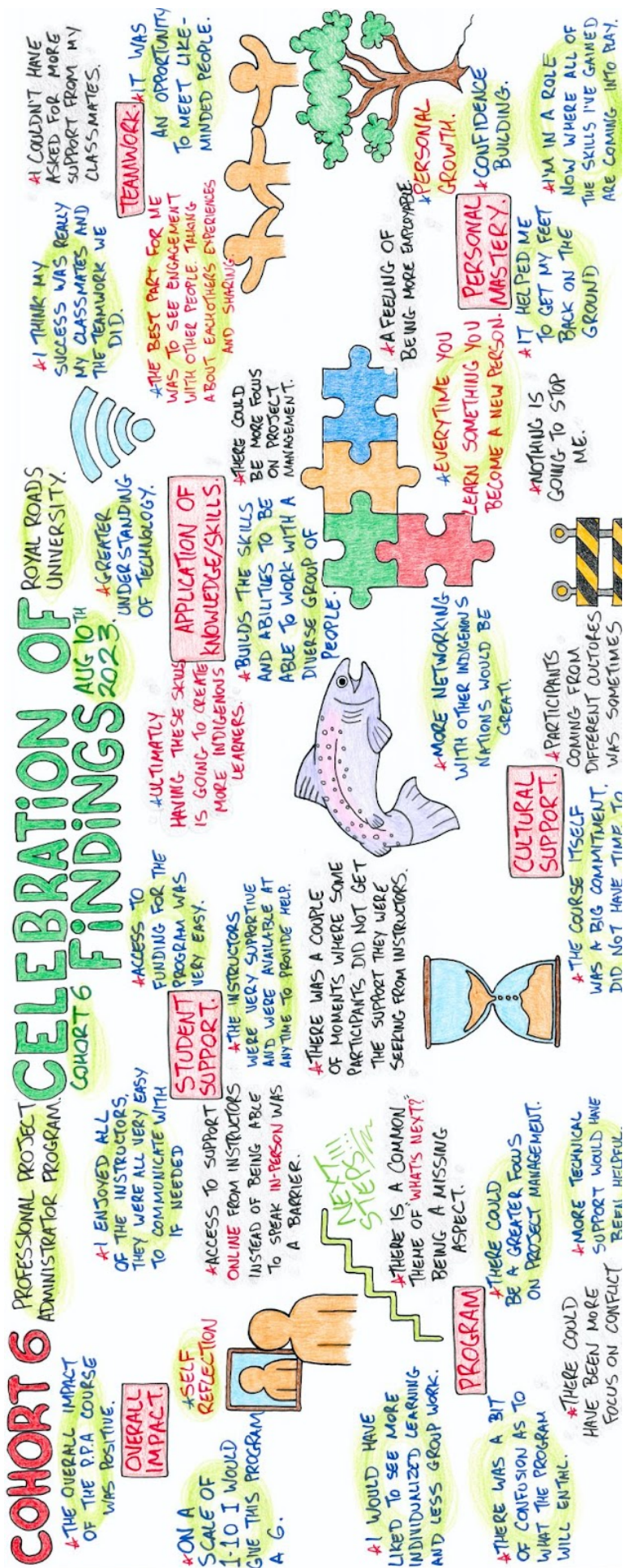


Figure 3.

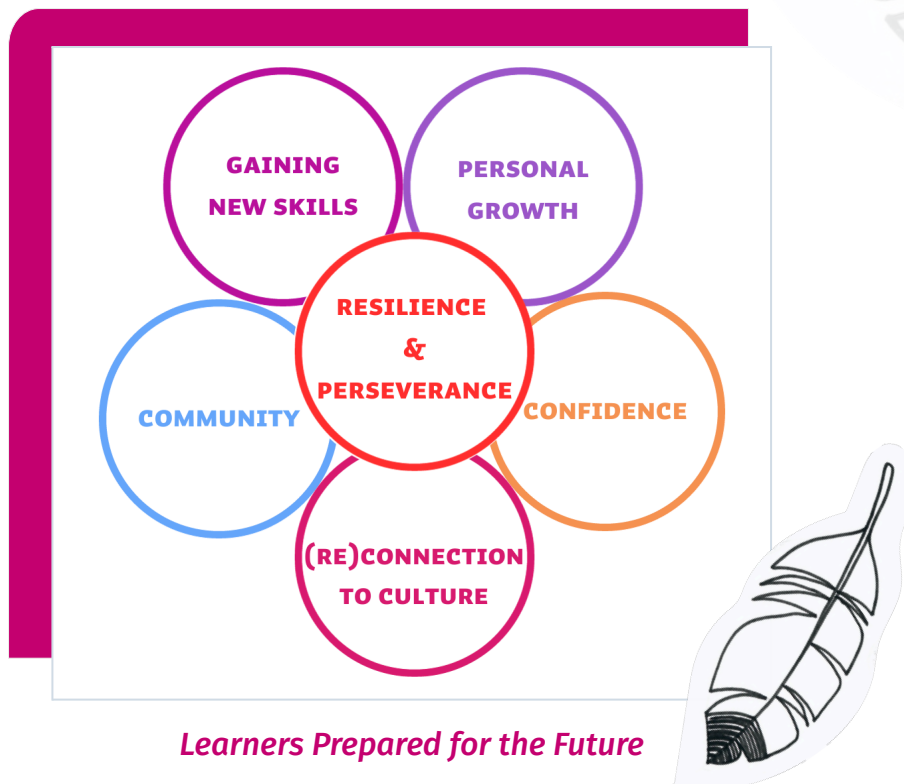
Celebration of Findings-Cohort 6



Impact of the Professional Project Administrator Program

The transformative impact of the PPA Program extends far beyond the acquisition of skills. For the most part, learners were not sure what to expect coming into the program. The themes that emerged from the interviews suggest that the program became a catalyst for learners' personal growth, increase in confidence, community building, and connection to culture. These elements align with previous research findings (Cortés et al., 2023). However, there is one theme that was salient during phase II: **resilience and perseverance**. We believe that this characteristic was essential for learners who successfully finished the program.

The interconnections of these elements helped learners be better prepared for the future. Most learners highlighted how completing the program would or was already supporting their future endeavours and aspirations. Some learners were employed shortly after the program ended, other learners gained confidence to start their own businesses, pursue further education, or sought funding from external sources to bring their hopes and dreams to fruition.



Learners Prepared for the Future

Gaining new skills

All learners, within varying degrees, highlighted gaining new skills as a result of participating and completing the program. The skills they shared spanned wide, everything from technical computer and Microsoft skills, to communication, leadership, and interpersonal skills. Learners felt strongly that these skills would benefit them for their future aspirations and recognized the value of gaining these skills. One student researcher highlighted that learners found data management and Excel skills most beneficial, and another found collective leadership to be most valuable.

- *As for skills, I acquired many skills. I was able to build on my Microsoft skills. I knew a little bit, but I didn't realize the extent that I did not know. So, I was able to build on my writing skills, management skills, operational skills, analytical skills and even just people skills. Being put in an environment with a group of strangers - I found it helped me to grow.*
- *My writing has improved based on analyzing the audience. Writing for work and my development of emails has been calling people to action faster.*

Personal growth and transformation

Learners described that the program offered more than just skills and assets to their professional lives. While unexpected for them, they shared about their personal growth, emphasizing that what they experienced as a result of participating in the program was transformative. Student researchers strongly acknowledged this theme by relating their experience of the program to the transformative nature of a butterfly. “The transformation of something ordinary to extraordinary.”

- *I would say my experience in the program was overall a positive one. I feel like I experienced a lot of growth personally.*
- *I do feel I've grown quite a bit from this [program]. My leadership skills kind of came out. It's not what I was expecting at all. Usually I shy away from things like that. I feel it's given me an edge on getting a better job. So, I am looking forward to that.*

Confidence. Personal and Professional

Learners highlighted that one of the most critical impacts of the program was building their confidence. They described that after graduating from the program they felt they had more to offer, could strive for more, and could engage in big changes. Learners shared that they were more confident professionally, some feeling as though they could apply for positions they wouldn't have otherwise dreamed of doing and others starting their own businesses. They also described how they gained confidence personally, feeling less nervous and more confident in who they are and their abilities and skills. Student researchers echoed this sentiment and leveraged their newfound confidence in the work they did as researchers with the project.

- *It came at the right time in my life. It gave me confidence in my abilities.*
- *I started out a little nervous. But now I feel a lot more confident in every aspect of my life.*
- *I know it's only a 17-week course, but I feel confident enough to apply for positions that before this course, I don't think I would have.*
- *This course gave me the ability to have the courage to say, 'what's important is how we take care of our family'. We want to be present for our kids as much as possible. We have very different personalities, different skills. But we make a really good team. We want to move together in a certain direction where we are taking care of our families. And so, because of this course, we have been able to start our own business.*
- *It made me more confident to throw my hat in the ring. I've had reservations based on my previous experience. But having a chance to look at things a little more analytically, as far as the administrative side makes you feel comfortable with handling this.*

Community and Camaraderie

Most learners discussed their deep connections made with their peers in the program. They often signaled how the relationships were deepened when meeting in person, being in sharing circles together, or working on group assignments. Some learners described their relationships as life rafts, that especially in challenging times, learners would keep each other afloat. Learners highlighted that going through difficulties throughout the program made their bonds stronger. Another cohort where learners all came from the same community, reflected on how their connections in the program strengthened their community at home. Learners highlighted

growing alongside their peers, counting on them, feeling supported by them, and taking away lifelong friendships. Student researchers emphasized the importance of friendship. This was evident within our weekly research team calls where we would often tell stories about our families, share exciting news, or engage in fits of laughter.

- *The biggest thing for me was, I guess, my personal growth throughout the program, and being able to grow alongside some pretty amazing individuals.*
- *Collective Leadership kind of sealed the deal you know, meeting each other in person, having that whole week with the very intense sharing circles that we went through. When you share something emotional with somebody, you make a connection.*
- *In terms of lifestyle and in terms of interpersonal relationships with your fellow coworkers, I think this course gave me the vision of how to have employees that are also community members. But community members in an organization rather than a hierarchy, having it structured as a team.*
- *I think the other thing is, is just learning to work as part of a team in a different way, because this was a totally different way of working with a team where you just went through so much trauma together. So many ups and downs.*
- *Just having [someone]...just be a friend and accept me. And things like that are really big. Something I'll carry with me.*

(Re)connection to culture

Learners shared that the variety of cultural events and activities (beading, weaving, storytelling, bannock making, language speaking) supported them in feeling a stronger (re)connection to their cultures. Some discussed feeling closer to their families and communities, others gained a deeper understanding of their history and heritage. Learners highlighted their interest in learning more about their ancestors and trying new cultural practices. Most learners indicated that the cultural additions and focus throughout the program was an important part of their experience. One learner suggested that the program could look at integrating and connecting Western learning (such as business) to the cultural learning they were already doing in the program.

- *They kind of help me to understand and learn more about my culture and also connect with my fellow students in the cohort. We're all from the same culture. So, it was neat to be able to connect with them, and every one of them on that level. Honestly, it was nice seeing and being taught all the information that we were, because there's so much I didn't know. I had this genuine excitement going into every cultural class that was held.*
- *I'm more open to learning, more excited about learning, about my culture and heritage.*
- *I just feel a lot closer. I'm way more interested in learning about my ancestors.*
- *The beading, the weaving, the stories. I think I missed the language one we had. Yeah, I tried to attend all of them. They're very important to me!*

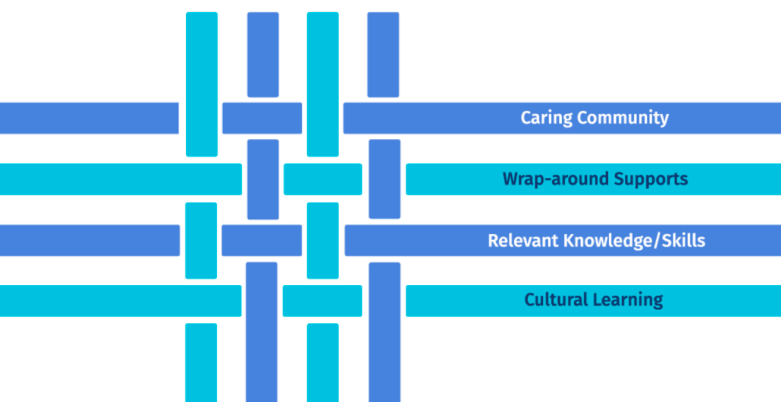
Resilience and perseverance

Learners shared how being in the program supported them in stretching and practicing their resilience and perseverance. Some learners were challenged by unforeseen circumstances such as illness and other responsibilities throughout their time participating in the program. Many of them found it important to persevere and complete the program, reminding themselves of the potential benefits to themselves, their families, and their communities.

- *There were times where family and sickness, and then some group work, and I persevered through because I wanted to be able to say I finished it, and not to be able to not to have to look back and think I failed at something and just to know that I have the certificate and the credits, and something new to put on my resume and not feel like a failure.*
- *I was beyond frustrated a hundred times in that class with the, you know, expectation of homework and endless reading and webinars, and I don't know how many times I wanted to quit, but I wouldn't, because I have a 9 year old and a 17 year old watching me right? So, I couldn't. And that's what pushed me to stay.*
- *This program showed me that I could do it because I completed this program and I graduated. So, it just goes to prove that things can be accomplished if you have the right mindset. And this program gave me the right mindset, that I can do it with the right supports and the right tools.*
- *Trying to balance all of that gave me the opportunity to really create some resilience. It also gave me the opportunity to say, okay, what's important and to prioritize the things that were 100% essential.*

Key successes

Project Connect Phase I research findings suggest that at least four elements need to be interwoven within program design in order to offer education *in a good way* (Ferland et al., 2021).



In Phase II we can see, once again, the importance of cultivating a supportive learning environment, wrap-around supports, and cultural learning. What is more, the support provided to remove barriers to learning was a key factor. Not only in relation to technology, but also regarding mental health and learning support.

Supportive learning environment

Learners stated that the greatest contributor to their success in the program was the support they received from their instructors. Most learners felt supported by their instructors, noting their experiences as mostly positive. They shared that instructors were timely with their responses, proactive and flexible in their approach, readily available, listened carefully to their concerns, gave extensions when needed, and most importantly, were invested in their success. Some learners expressed that the instructors that were ‘less traditional’, were more engaging and impactful, often caring more about students’ personal well-being as well as their progress in the program. Instructors were clearly important to both the learners and the student researchers.

- *The key contributing factors would probably be the teachers. They were kind of like a ray of sunshine, and I could tell that they were 100% rooting for all of our success. And they actually wanted to work with students in ways that would be beneficial to both parties. This, to me, meant taking the traditional education structure, and they kind of shook it up. And I felt like this empowered the students and engaged us more.*

- *Instructors were there for me on more than I guess, honestly, more than an academic level. They're always willing to support and even help when it came to sourcing information, even for my own personal reasons or personal endeavours.*
- *I'd say most of the teachers were incredibly invested in my success, and that was very, very clear!*

Online learning and administrative support

In addition to instructor support, learners felt supported by the PPA Program's administrative staff. Specifically, learners highlighted that having a central person to go to was key to their success. This was particularly important for learners who needed extra support with accessibility.

- *You could ask [them] anything [they] would direct us in the right direction.*
- *Overall, through the whole program. I think having a central person was very important and very key to my success.*
- *Well, I had to access the voice reader on some of the later classes that were at the end because of my eyesight. So, I accessed support from Kelly. She helped me navigate that, So, that was good. I put the reader on when I needed, so I could close my eyes, and I didn't have to read it. So that was very helpful*

Removing barriers to learning

Learners highlighted that a key success for their time in the program was removing barriers to their learning. Learners felt grateful for receiving laptops to participate in the program and discussed how this would benefit them even beyond the program. They shared that their needs related to accessibility were attended to and prioritized. Beyond these more tangible barriers, learners described that the flexibility and adaptability of the instructors made it manageable to complete the program. This was especially true for learners with community and family responsibilities and those challenged with unforeseen circumstances.

- *So, being able to take the course without paying into it while receiving the funding, was amazing. The computers were also just wonderful supports for us.*

Cultural Learning

It is clear that cultural learning correlates to the success of the program and that is the reason we include it in this section. Looking into more detail regarding how culture is interwoven in the program (Cortés et al., 2003b), we can see that it exists in a variety of degrees within most courses, particularly Collective Leadership. More importantly, the strong partnership built with Rupertsland Institute where they designed and delivered the cultural activities, provided the support required for learners to fully engage.

Discussion

The recent commitment of post-secondary institutions to uphold Indigenous Ways of Knowing exists within a larger system where colonial and neoliberal values systematically deter initiatives towards decolonization and Indigenization, and predominantly focus on decolonizing the curriculum, but nothing more (Enslin & Hedge, 2023). Nested within this paradox is our work and our desire to learn how to offer education *in a good way*, being attentive to the responsibilities that come with a declaration of being in relation (Donald, 2012). Despite such complexities, our team continues to amplify the voices of practitioners and scholars who have advocated for change to effectively engage Indigenous learners in higher education (Battiste et al., 2002; Ermine, 2007, Kanji et al., 2020, among many others).

Regarding online learning, Cochrane and Maposa (2019) discuss the need for accessible and interactive programs; meaningful relationships; flexibility in the pedagogical design; ongoing technological support; and culturally relevant learning approaches as contributors to success for Indigenous learners. Similarly, the interwoven elements of program design (Cortés et al., 2023a) identified during the first phase of the research, continue to be relevant.

During the PPA Phase II, the team gained a deeper understanding of the institutional responsibility towards Indigenous students. Pidgeon (2016) calls for institutions to move beyond a checklist and to intentionally consider questions about representation, long-term strategy, and research. She states,

“Indigenous students leave the institution more empowered in who they are as Indigenous peoples when [educators] have better understanding of the complexities, richness, and diversity of Indigenous peoples, histories, cultures, and lived experiences...It is about having relevant curricular and co-curricular programs, policies, and services in place that truly honor who Indigenous students are in their journey” (p. 87).

Many scholars (Pete, 2015; Tunison, 2007) have proposed frameworks that represent Indigenous perspectives on how to bring about cultural change in higher education. The 4R’s framework that Pidgeon (2016) recommends is holistic and includes the following components:

- respecting Indigenous Knowledges
- relevant programs and services
- reciprocal relationships
- responsibility of supporting Indigenous student achievement

These elements must be interwoven with the threads of program design to deepen the understanding of what is required to offer education in a good way.

The cultural and holistic focus of the program, the wrap-around supports, and a caring team of faculty, staff, and partners laid the foundation for students to thrive. In the delivery of the six cohorts of the PPA, a supportive student environment has played a key role in fostering a sense of belonging and nurturing self-esteem. For instance, the in-person week for the 5th cohort created a strong sense of community among members. Similarly, the challenges that the 4th cohort faced during one particular course, served as an avenue for relationship building and mentorship among peers. As a learner stated, *“...I was able to depend on other students and say, show me how to do that because I don’t know how. People were able to reach out to one another...”*

Both the cohort model, as well as the team-based learning, have set the pathways for students to learn about themselves in relation to others and, as a result, develop strong relationships in various ways. West et al. (2013) recommended strategies such as peer mentoring and cultivating safe relationships as a way to foster cultural safety and resilience. Therefore, we recommend that these models continue in future deliveries of the PPA and for the program team to consider other models of peer mentorship.

One of the main themes of this research was resilience and perseverance. We know that community, connection and kinship are essential for Indigenous learners to survive and thrive in higher education. However, peer-support and camaraderie proved essential for learners to persevere. As one of the students said, “I really tried to reach out and then encourage a couple of others like, come back, finish the program... we will help you, you know? And we did that, our team ... really encouraged each other”.

“...And there’s been times where I did want to quit but the teachers were like, you’ve come this far, you don’t need to quit. No, we got you, we want to support you, we’re here for you. That’s what made me, you know, feel like I want to stay and keep going.”

Having the support from peers, instructors, and program staff seemed to enhance resilience and perseverance amid the change and uncertainty of going back to school. In this regard, there are three elements to consider: the culture within the learning community, the actions of the instructors, and the learners’ self-efficacy and motivation.

Challenges & Recommendations

RRU aims to foster equitable access to education by bringing the university to the community through online education and in-community. However, the realization of this dream is not without its challenges. In this section, we focus on the various challenges that participants identified. Learners navigated issues with certain instructors and their teaching approach. Similarly, life balance, teamwork, technology, and time constraints were among the challenging factors. Our objective is not to merely list these challenges, but to advocate for change through realistic actions that can enhance the PPA Program.

Specific instructors and their approach

Learners found a few instructors less approachable or invested in their learning. Some learners specified that teaching from different time zones might have contributed to these less desirable experiences, others felt it might have been the teaching style that did not resonate. It is important to note that students from cohort 4, found the approach of one of the instructors unacceptable and triggering.

- *My view on my instructor was that he kind of viewed the cohort as just something he had to do from 10 am till noon. There seemed to be no real concern for the students' educational wellbeing. Or if the students were even absorbing the content that [the instructor] was teaching.*
- *It felt like [the instructor] would kind of just tell me to watch the video again... And oh, I already did so it was kind of useless*
- *I think it was [the instructor's] teaching style that didn't resonate with me. [The instructor] wasn't rude or anything, it's just sometimes things don't work that's all.*
- *The instructor didn't really help, they didn't do anything. I think the instructor could have assessed our class because I think they could see where people had experience and people had knowledge, and they could have divided those individuals up in the groups...*

Balancing other life commitments

Learners shared how challenging they found balancing completing their assignments and workload in the program with their personal lives and commitments. Some learners looked at this challenge as a positive, linking how it taught them to persevere and practice resilience.

- *I had never done that kind of assignment before, and we were pushed to get that done...And then family stuff right But I wanted to get it done so I could say, I finished and I could be successful. So I guess I persevered.*
- *Trying to balance all of that gave me the opportunity to really create some resilience. It also gave me the opportunity to say, okay, what's important and to prioritize the things that we're 100% essential. You know, for example, the children's stuff was the most important. And then we worked our way down from that on what's not as important.*

Mental health

Learners' overall health and wellness must be a priority for instructors and administrators. By prioritizing and integrating mental health and learning supports, the PPA Program can continue to support students in a way that is holistic and culturally relevant. What is more, a trauma-informed lens and an understanding of the effects of stress and trauma on learning must be present across the program. Trauma-informed pedagogy is an approach that emphasizes emotional, physical, and psychological safety and the ability to help regulate the individual and collective nervous system (Chari & Singh, 2020). This pedagogical approach is not about treating trauma, but understanding the systemic, intergenerational, and long-term effects of trauma and developing the skills to recognize it and address it in order to become a more caring, ethical community (Poole, 2015).

Providing wrap-around support is one of the pillars of the PPA Program. Moving forward, it is essential to have the resources needed to both identify complex mental health issues and to support the learners. Some students mentioned that the program was good for their mental health because it provided something to look forward to. Some learners, however, withdrew from the program due to health reasons (including mental health). There is opportunity to review the intake process, identify needs early on, and provide individualized learning support.

Participating in group work

At the beginning of the program, many learners found it challenging to participate in group work and complete group assignments. Learners described difficulties connecting as a team, managing competing personalities, and navigating disagreements. Once learners were more experienced in working in teams, this challenge shifted to a strength gained for many.

- *There was a couple of the teams that didn't work well together meaning not everyone put in the same amount of effort and that was a challenge for me.*
- *Connecting in a team environment was a little bit of a concern.*
- *One of the main challenges was when there was a disagreement (in group work) and there was not support for [addressing] this.*

Technology

Many learners needed more technical support specific to Moodle (RRU's learning management system), Zoom, and how to set up their new computers. For future iterations of the program, many learners and student researchers suggested more dedicated time and energy to prepare for the technical aspects of the program. Learners also suggested finding ways to acknowledge the different levels of familiarity and skill regarding technology.

Extend the length of the program

- *I just thought we would have more time on each subject and then when we graduated I realized that the program was great for a lot of different things. But I don't feel I learnt as much as I'd hoped to. I would have liked to learn more about Microsoft. I felt like they pushed a lot of stuff in a very short amount of time.*
- *Mostly it was the length. I thought that everything in the program was great. I would have liked to have been able to elaborate more. The Microsoft programs had so much to learn all at one. I would have liked it if we could have practiced in class rather than just have the instructor describe it. Some exercises would have been nice.*
- *After talking to a few of the participants I interviewed it became apparent that the theme of "time" came up recurrently, the pattern was obvious throughout, Some enjoyed their time spent, while others wished they had more time to enhance their experience. Time matters.*
- *So, what I'd like to see added, was at least double our time with Microsoft, because it seemed very rushed, and there was a lot to go over.*

Challenges	Recommendations
Pedagogical approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement strategies to engage Indigenous instructors and guest speakers ● Privilege relational pedagogical approaches and the right fit for teaching ● Continue strategies around both Indigenization and de-colonization of teaching and learning ● Naturalize trauma-informed practice within the curriculum
Balancing life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify ways to cultivate community resiliency among learners ● Build smaller groups to increase self-advocacy and support ● Identify times when ceremonies and other community events might happen ● Consider extending the collective leadership course or similar space for learners to come together
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● During the admission process, identify supports required ● Continue the support from Elders and Indigenous counsellors ● Consider having staff dedicated to supporting learning and wellness
Participating in group work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide teamwork skills at the beginning of the program ● Provide team coaching throughout the program ● Consider creating small peer-mentorship/advocacy groups
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify in advance potential challenges and implement mitigation strategies ● Identify levels of digital literacy and plan course learning outcomes accordingly
Communication and clear expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhance the intake process to identify learning needs and promote student success
Length of the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider extending the length of the program ● Expand the collective leadership course or include ways in which learners can support each other and re-connect

Considering the learning from PPA I and II research projects, we recommend that the next offering of the program integrates a comprehensive intake process that considers the diverse needs, strengths, and support mechanisms required for the learner to thrive. This process includes learners identifying their expectations, goals, and aspirations. Similarly, we recommend that the journey towards such goals becomes the thread that weaves all learning outcomes and course content.

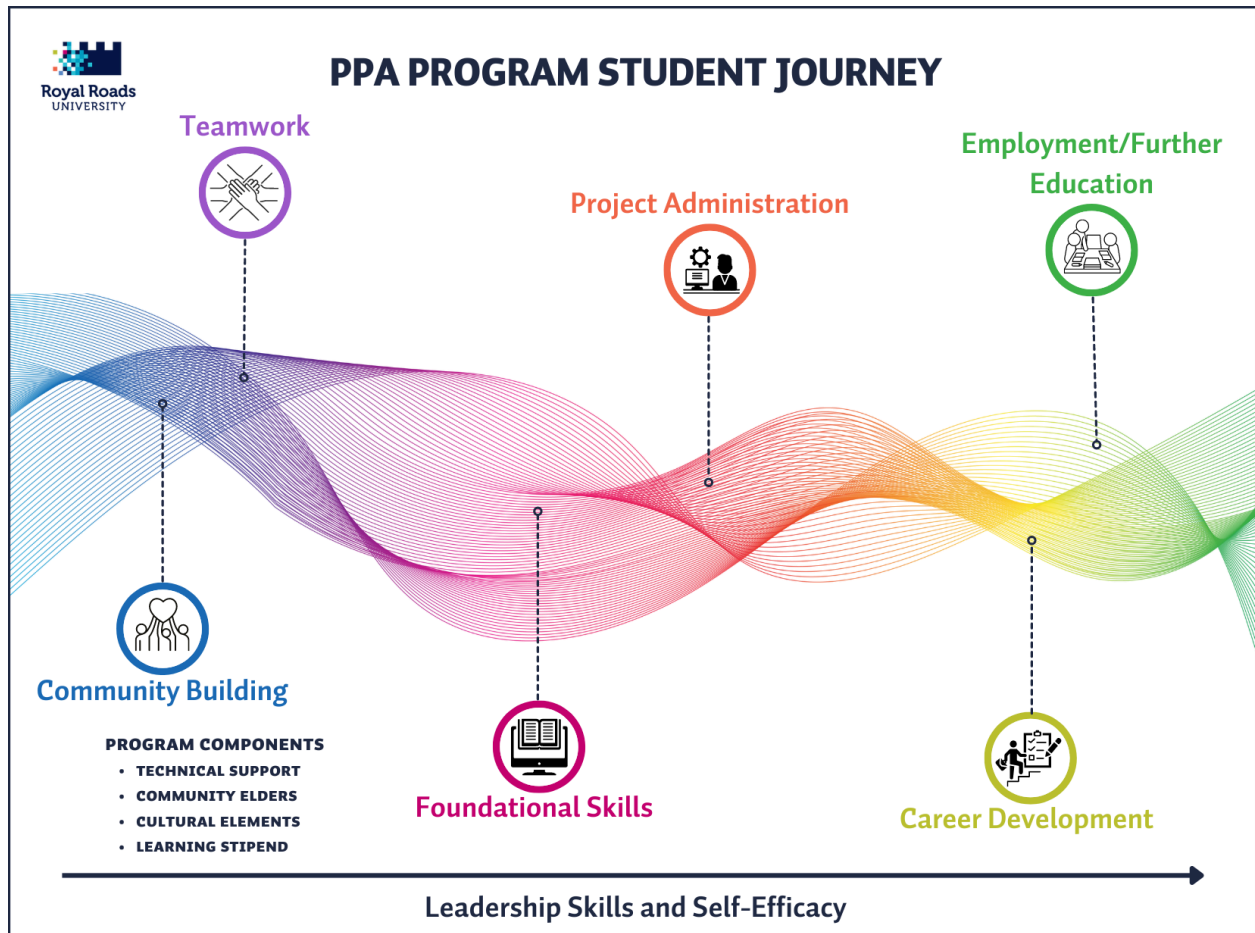
Based on the strong impact that peers have on perseverance, we recommend a peer-mentorship approach where more skilled learners or PPA alumni support a small group of learners. These advocacy groups are an avenue to practice leadership as well as a potential source of employment.

Finally, we recommend that the program staff consider expanding the collective leadership course or integrating an ongoing course with the purpose of developing leadership skills and self-efficacy.. Most importantly, learners want a space where they can gather, share, and listen to each other throughout the program.




Figure 4.

The PPA Program Student Journey



Note. The proposed student journey assumes the different elements (circles) as overlapping and ongoing. Learners acquire teamwork skills and learning strategies at the beginning of the program and have all the learning supports in place before moving onto the project administration courses.



In conclusion, the journey through the experience of the PPA Phase II and the learning that occurred through this research and evaluation has uncovered challenges, opportunities, and complexities that are at the core of advancing equitable opportunities for Indigenous learners.

Most importantly, our findings continue to show the importance of relationality, the integration of culturally relevant content, and wraparound supports. However, we know that this work goes beyond good intentions and a caring community, it is imperative for educational institutions to co-create and to collaborate with Indigenous communities to build a more inclusive and effective landscape for employment-focused programs tailored to the diverse needs of Indigenous students and communities.

Why Does This Work Matter?

“It [the PPA] just opened so many doors for me. Before this program I just felt like I was at a dead end and now it’s opened so many doors for my future. For my employment, my future, just everything, it’s opened my whole life up for me. It’s just like one door opens, and then 10 more, and then another door, and then 20 more, you know, it just keeps going. I could go on and on.”

As our work concludes, we reflect on why this work matters. Although there is a strong focus on supporting Indigenous learners to gain professional skills, we learned that employability is only one small part of what matters. What sets this program apart is that in addition to skill building, learners are supported to attend to their relationships, their communities, and their (re)connection to their culture. Within our research, learners emphasized these facets as essential to think about and to continue to intentionally include in future iterations of the program. This work matters because it holds Indigenous learners at the center of the program, where learning from them is key to success.

It is our hope that Royal Roads University continues to take seriously the responsibility and commitment to approaching the design, development, and implementation of the PPA program with deep care and with all learners in mind. This approach may challenge dominant and Western epistemologies on the expectation of production and assessment, yet we move forward in this work critically asking ourselves, what matters more? How might RRU continue to prioritize Indigenous learners and Peoples at the heart of this work?



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Appendices

Research Questions

1. Focus = Overall impact
 - Describe your overall experience in this program?
 - Describe expectations when you came in. How were they similar/different when you graduated?

2. Focus = Program
 - What are the key contributors to the success of this program from your perspective?
 - What are some particular challenges you had with the program?
 - Were there any particular courses or modules that stood out to you as exceptionally valuable or lacking in value? Can you elaborate on why?
 - What would you have liked to see added or subtracted from the program? Any suggestions?

3. Focus = Student Support
 - What supports were there for you – throughout the program?
 - Can you describe when you accessed the support? What support did you use?
 - What didn't you access, and why? What impact did the supports you accessed have?
 - What was your comfort level approaching your instructors? Did you feel there was approachability?
 - Describe your experiences (Positive/Negative/Neutral) with instructors.

4. Focus = Cultural Support
 - What supports/events were there for you throughout the program? Did you access these supports/events?
 - What impact did the ones you attended have on you personally?
 - How were you changed after attending these cultural events?
 - Did you encounter any challenges or experiences related to cultural differences or diversity within the program? If yes, how were those addressed and how did it make you feel?
 - Were there any initiatives or events within the program that promoted diversity, inclusion, and cultural awareness? If yes, how did you engage with these activities and what impact did they have on you?

5. Focus = Application of knowledge/skills
 - What skills did you acquire in this program and have you been able to apply them?
 - Did you find fulfilling employment following this program?
 - Did you seek promotions or other positions/opportunities as a result of the PPA Program?
 - Did you feel inspired to seek further education or other professional opportunities (in any field)?
 - How did those experiences contribute to your growth?
6. Focus = Personal Mastery/self and leadership efficacy
 - Did this program build your confidence and/or leadership skills and if so, how?
 - How did the program impact your confidence to pursue something you wanted to do in any area of your life?
 - Did you have any experiences within the program that challenged you and helped you develop resilience and perseverance?
7. Can you describe your experiences with working in teams? Can you describe your experiences with growth in working with people?
8. Would you be compelled to recommend this program to others? Yes or no, and please explain that decision.
9. Were there times when you felt you were unable to complete the program? What made you persevere?
10. Anything else that you would like to add or that you feel we should have asked?

Research Schedule

Project Connect	
Research Schedule Phase II	
Date	Activity
June 7	Launch of training
June 14	Introduction to research, methodology, methods, interviews, analysis
June 28	Interviews part 1
July 5	Interviews part 2
July 12	Interviews part 3
July 12-26	Interview learners
July 18	Special interview session with VM
July 19	Interviews part 4
July 26	Analysis part 1
July 27	Analysis part 2
July 27-Aug 2	Code interviews
Aug 1	Analysis part 1
Aug 3	Analysis part 2
Aug 2	Prepare for celebration of findings
Aug 8	Celebration of findings - cohort 1
Aug 9	Celebration of findings - cohort 2
Aug 10	Celebration of findings - cohort 3

Research Team

Shannelle Alexander. I am happily married to my husband Richard - we are raising two children: Jon Douglas and Zarah. The PPA program is my first step at trying to become me again after losing my Mom. I was her caregiver for the last few years and worked full-time as well. I did not return to work after losing her so I hoped the program would keep me focused and help me to move forward just a little bit. After graduating from the PPA program, I became a research assistant for the next cohort of students. I never imagined doing anything like that. The program and the RA role brought me back to my family and opened my mind to what was out there in the world.

Colett Auger. My name is Colett Auger, I live in Grande Prairie Alberta. I am a mother to 6 children; I have 1 Granddaughter. I completed the Professional Project Administration program through Royal Roads University. The program has helped me so much with my new position as the Outreach Worker for the On-Campus Friendship Center. I started working for the Friendship Centre in August 2023. All the skills I learned through the PPA Program have helped me grow into the business professional I am. I find myself utilizing the skills I learned through the PPA in my everyday work. The biggest one I use is being able to successfully navigate through tough situations in a meaningful way. With my position, I am able to plan events in a successful way.

Tim Brigham. Hello everyone! I'm a proud father of four amazing young women and grateful to live on the territory of the Cowichan people. I am also the Project Lead for the PPA program/Project Connect – a program that has exceeded my hopes in its impact on our graduates' lives and career goals. The work I do with the PPA Program and other programs in partnerships with Indigenous communities reflects my values of bringing the university to communities and co-creating learning opportunities for Indigenous students.

De'Anna Chmielewski. A proud Métis woman, epitomizes resilience and determination in her life's journey. As a devoted mother, daughter, sister, cousin, auntie, and friend, she navigates challenges with grace and tenacity. Hailing from Grande Prairie, Alberta, De'Anna's diverse background spans over two decades in sales, administration, and community engagement. Her decision to further her education in 2023 and into 2024 reflects her commitment to securing a brighter future for herself and her family. Inspired by her daughters and motivated by her desire to secure a better future for her loved ones, De'Anna approaches each day with optimism and determination. Beyond her academic pursuits, she finds immense joy in spending quality time with her family, cherishing every moment together. Additionally, she delights in hobbies like reading biographies, crafting with her children, movie nights in, attending live concerts, folding laundry, playing golf, and embarking on spontaneous road trips. De'Anna's journey stands as a testament to her strength, resilience, and unwavering spirit, inspiring those around her to pursue their dreams with courage and determination. *This isn't The End!*

Valeria Cortés. I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to do this work alongside such a wonderful team. I am originally from Mexico and I am a mother to Aurora and Xavier. I absolutely love my work as an educator and researcher because I am committed to cultivating spaces that encourage us all to learn from each other, feel connected, and take action to enhance our communities.

Tammy Douglas. Tanisi Kiya. My name is Tammy Douglas. I am a mother of 7 and a proud Metis Entrepreneur. I have owned my own transportation company for over 20 years. Being a small business owner, I need to be proficient in all aspects of my business. My office skills were for the most part self taught and limited. I was absolutely shocked at the amount that I learnt through the PPA program that I can use everyday in my business as well as my personal life. Life just got a whole lot easier!

The cultural aspect of this program has awakened my ancestors! I have had many dreams with inspirational ideas since learning the Anishinaabe belief of knowledge being transmitted through dreaming. (At times I thought my team members would for sure fire me!) The more I participated in the cultural events, the stronger and clearer the dreams became. The connection was so inspirational and empowering!

As well as being part of Cohort 5 in the PPA program this year, I was involved as a research assistant after the completion of the program. My learning journey continued on in this role; 'clean' interviewing, transcribing, and coding. I am very passionate about the continuation of the PPA program so that it may enrich many other lives as it has my own. My fire has been 'relit' to seek out new knowledge; this program has proven that my old brain is capable of learning new things. My cup is full, and I am thankful. Hiy Hiy

Tiffany T. Hill. Tiffany Hill is a queer of colour scholar, artist, and dreamer. She is the descendant of resistance fighter Agapito Zamora Zialcita, who resisted the occupation of the Philippines from Spanish and American rule and signed the Philippine Declaration of Independence, reclaiming freedom and self-determination after almost 400 years of occupation. Her work is informed by theoretical perspectives of critical *kapwa* pedagogy – a fundamental Indigenous Pilipino value of deep connection with and commitment to community. Her work focuses on the lived experiences of grief, social and racial justice, and health and education systems change.

Tiffany is a researcher and associate faculty at Royal Roads University. She has extensive experience in community engagement, facilitation, and participatory and creative methods in research. Tiffany is also a PhD candidate in the Social Justice Education program and researcher at the Tkaronto Collaborative Indigenous Research Communities Land and Education (CIRCLE) Lab at the University of Toronto. Her dissertation seeks to understand how Black, Indigenous, and youth of colour experience grief and the meaning they make from it. She attends to what they think their theorizing of their grief and of the

experiences of collective grieving mean for their futures, movements, and liberation.

Valerie Kuilboer Taanishi, my name is Valerie Kuilboer, I am a 62-year-old widowed Métis woman from the Red River Valley of Manitoba. I have two adult daughters and five grandchildren. My background was originally in nursing until I had the privilege of working in the field of Addiction and Mental health for over twenty-plus years. I have had the privilege of attending RRU to complete a master's in leadership and recently completed the PPA program. I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to be part of the RRU research team. I am so grateful to be involved in a research study that is working towards enriching the lives of other Métis individuals as it has enriched mine. Being a part of programs that teach people about culture and heritage that, for so many of us, has been a missing piece towards wholeness, has been an amazing opportunity. I am looking forward to continuing this journey.

Shannon Ladouceur. I am Shannon Ladouceur, an individual with a creative interior, a curious exterior and a person who is dedicated to lifelong learning. I look at the world with wonderment. My research assistant experience working with RRU has expanded my horizons, it has broadened my understanding of how others viewed the course of PPA, and this is valuable because not everyone is the same, we are all so different, meaningful perspectives were discovered and I learned a few things. There is always something to find anew, gems of sorts. I discovered that I love order and organization. I love going to second hand stores finding treasures, I love spirituality in various forms, I love BC fruit, coffee at Timmies, the little birdies outside. I love watching the flowers bloom, going for walks in the rain, the smell of rain, solitary nothingness. I'm loving life, in all its flaws and imperfections, it's still a wonderful circus.

Kelly Loffler. I am a daughter, sister, auntie, wife, mother of two, and stepmother of four living in Winnipeg, Manitoba on Treaty 1 Territory, the lands of the Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Ininew (Cree), Oji-Cree, Dene, and Dakota ancestors and families, and the birthplace of the Métis Nation. I am a citizen of the Métis Nation British Columbia and the Manitoba Métis Federation.

As a graduate of the PPA program who went on to become the Online Learning Coordinator supporting students in their own PPA program journey through Professional and Continuing Studies at Royal Roads University, I know first-hand how life-changing and impactful a culturally relevant online learning experience can be for Indigenous students. I am incredibly proud to be part of this *good work!*

Kim McKenna. I am an artist. I paint, mostly on jean jackets with Silkscreen paint but also like to use acrylic paint on canvases, and alcohol ink on a special kind of paper. I've been married to the same great guy for 33 years; we have one daughter and one son and two grown grandchildren. We also have three dogs.

I took the PPA program at Royal Roads University and thoroughly enjoyed it. The instructors were fantastic and very helpful, they made learning very easy for a senior student. I have used my skills and knowledge to gain employment and spruce up my resume. The courses were challenging but rewarding, I would definitely recommend this program to anyone interested in learning more about project management.

Karissa Parrish. Hello, I am Karissa Parrish, a Haida Citizen, and I reside as a visitor with my five children on the unceded territory of the T'Souke nation and the Lekwungen speaking people.


Being a part of the Indigenous PPA class was an incredible experience. It also led to the opportunity for me to be a research assistant as well as grant writing for Indigenous peoples in my communities. Participating in the PPA program has revitalized my love of learning and given me skills to benefit the Haida nation and Indigenous people.

Dionne Polinelli. *Taanishi Dionne dishinikaashoon.* Hello, my name is Dionne. I am a 52 year old, proud Metis mom of two wonderful children. My daughter has just graduated high school and is heading to UofA in the fall. My son has married and is expecting my first grand baby in March of 2024! I was born and raised and currently reside in Edmonton, Alberta. I am proud to live and learn on Treaty Six Territory and within the Metis Nation Of Alberta, Region four.

I am proud to be a part of the first all Metis Professional Project Administrator Program, which consisted of only students from Alberta. I thank Rupertsland Institute and Royal Roads University for this wonderful opportunity. I am just as proud to be a part of the Royal Roads Project Connect Research program. I am so lucky to have been able to connect with my fellow classmates and see through their eyes what the program means to them. Both programs have really changed me. When the PPA was offered, my life was in a bit of a shamble! I made the decision to take a leap of faith and now I am on my way to a brighter future. The knowledge and Culture that Royal Roads/Rupertland have given me, is priceless and will never be forgotten.

Rachel Stavely. My name is Rachel Stavely. I live in Mannville, Alberta, and am a proud mother of two. I am Métis and one of cohort two, a group of Métis Albertan's who took the Professional Project Administrator Program online with Royal Roads University. This course gave me the knowledge and the confidence, not only in Project Management, but also to be proud of my heritage. I am grateful to have been able to learn alongside my fellow Métis Nation of Alberta citizens.

I also had the privilege to be a part of the follow up with my classmates as a Research Assistant, where the program was looked at through the eyes of the students. This was a great opportunity to connect with the cohort and tell a story from their experiences in the program. I am thankful I was chosen to be a part of this process.



Julie Vera. My name is Mary Julie Vera. I am a 42-year-old stay at home mom. I have 3 children and a husband; I have been at home taking care of my family full time since 2012. So, choosing to take this course was a huge step for me. But I am so glad that I did it, the Professional Project Administer Program gave me the confidence and passion to learn more about my Metis Heritage! The PPA Program has been a real eye-opening experience. It showed me that my opinions and thoughts do matter, and if I set my mind on something and I stick to it, anything is possible! I loved this program, having the feeling of community and the support from the teachers and my peers was amazing, it was just what I needed. I am grateful that I was given the chance to have a spot in this life changing opportunity! Now I look forward to having the confidence to further my education even more in the future! Thanks for Igniting the Fire in my Soul for Learning!