

# Summary Report

Atlantic Indigenous Mentorship Network Kausattumi Grants Program, 2020-2021  
NEIL FORBES, PHD IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

*Community based participatory research as Indigenous program development and evaluation****Description of Research***

As of my renewal application, the focus of my Ph.D. has shifted. My original PhD work aimed to examine the process of Indigenizing Early Childhood Education for urban Aboriginal Peoples through Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. However, throughout the past two years of my studies, a significant focus has been on the role of community-based participatory research in all research involving Aboriginal communities. From this experience and my existing relationships with the urban Aboriginal population on Prince Edward Island (PEI), I was invited to support the Mi'kmaq Family Resource Centre (MFRC) in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island in relation to a pilot project titled Llika' Wksitqumuk (Walk the Earth), an outdoor experiential education program aimed at urban Aboriginal students with special needs. As such, I could not ignore this opportunity and have taken this up as my Ph.D. work. In working with my supervisor, Dr. Jason Hickey, we have developed an approach to my Ph.D. that allows me to strategically complete my Ph.D. requirements while also completing the MFRC's pilot project goals and objectives.

The purpose of my project will be to complete my Ph.D. so that all my work is in service of my urban Aboriginal community and their work. The rationale for this research comes from my personal experience and relationship with the community of the MFRC. From listening while working with this community, I have witnessed the gaps in services that are direct from a lack of sustainable and predictable funding. This research aims to demonstrate that this urban Aboriginal community can empower itself from within and show that they are the best source for knowing what they need to decolonize and thrive as a community. I want my thesis to promote better health and educational outcomes for urban Aboriginal individuals by combining traditional ways of knowing and teaching with relevant and compelling research to create a model to empower and enrich the lives of urban Aboriginal Peoples. The objectives are based on the MFRC's pilot project: Better understand the needs of First Nation, Inuit and Métis families across Prince Edward Island, with regard to high-quality Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework (IELCC), with a focus on families with special needs.

1. Develop an Indigenous Governance Model by creating an island wide Indigenous Parental Advisory Committee and an Indigenous Steering Committee.

2. Broaden existing partnerships to include a more diverse range of potential collaborators from other resource centers, post-secondary institutions, and Indigenous organizations across PEI.
3. Develop a Two-Eyed Seeing evaluation framework using a rigorous approach to data collection and analysis that honours and respects Indigenous worldviews. The evaluation will assess outcomes across all objectives and be developed with support from one or more university academics.
4. Adapt under one sky's take it outside program for our local context on PEI. This land-based learning experience for our children and families, with a focus on those with special needs.
5. Deliver special-needs training and develop a special-needs resource guide for our IELCC staff.

### ***Research Outcomes***

As we have just made the decision to change my thesis, I do not have concrete research outcomes at this time. I anticipate co-developing these research outcomes in partnership with MFRC once I begin the proposal stage of my research.

### ***Knowledge Sharing***

- Forbes, N. & Hickey, J. (2021) Indigenous Research Key Considerations. Maritime SPOR Support Unit (online)

### ***Completed Project Deliverables***

- Prepare comprehensive exam process to facilitate writing of paper 1 and paper 2 in Fall, 2021

### ***Forthcoming Project Deliverables***

- Development of draft for a community research agreement
- Creation of surveys and focus group questions for my PhD project. The results of these engagements will be used in the development of an evaluation framework (which is required by the funder but also wanted by the community to ensure their work is of the highest quality).

- Participate in a week-long “Take it Outside” training, deliver by Under One Sky Friendship Centre, with the rest of the staff, key stakeholders, and members from new partner organization.
- Creating a special needs training resource tool, designed on a the results of an environmental scan, so current best practices can be used that best suit the needs of the community.
- Comprehensive examinations for paper 1 (October/November 2021) and paper 2 (December 2021/January 2022). The defense of my comprehensive examinations is anticipated to take place in March, 2022.
- PhD research proposal (full draft due June, 2022 for feedback with an anticipated defense date of September, 2022).

### ***Activities Outside of Your Research***

#### Publications:

- Forbes, N., McKinney, E. P., & O’Brien, S. (2021). Communities first: Reflections on engaging with Aboriginal communities as a foundation for Ph.D. studies. *Turtle Island Journal of Indigenous Health*, 6(2),

### ***Future Plans***

I plan to complete my field work and data collection in 2023, my doctoral thesis writing from January to June of 2024, and submit for the thesis for examination to SGS and Oral Defence in January 2025.

### References

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- Truth and Reconciliation Canada. (2015). *Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.