



Restorative Indigenous Land-based Practices for Urban Youth

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Abstract

This article examines the development of a land-based program and lessons learned from reconnecting Indigenous² youth in the childcare system in the province of British Columbia to a local Indigenous territory and teachings as a vital restorative practice. The Culturally Relevant Urban Wellness (CRUW) program is an Indigenous land-based program which

demonstrates how a strengths-based Indigenous curriculum can build capacity among urban Indigenous youth transitioning from the Child Welfare system to independent living. The article describes how land-based methodologies developed by the Elders Advisory Circle are used in shaping a responsive and territory-placed land-based pedagogical curriculum. The CRUW program is held at x^wcicəsəm Garden, also known as the Indigenous Health Research and Education Garden (IHREG), at the University of British Columbia Farm (UBC Farm) in Vancouver, British Columbia. The Garden's traditional x^wməθk^wəyəm Musqueam name x^wiūšəm means the place where we grow in the hənqəminəm language. The garden's name provides a reassertion of x^wməθk^wəyəm Musqueam land-based protocols and principles informing regenerative land-based practices. These protocols and principles emphasize wholistic wellness strategies for life-long learning. They direct children, families, and communities towards wholistic wellness, self-determination, Indigenous food sovereignty; and guide leadership development, healthy living competencies, and cultural resurgence.

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² We acknowledge the complexities of navigating terminologies to describe the diversity of Indigenous, Aboriginal, and First Nations peoples who inhabit particular territories with specific genealogies and practices for sustaining those landscapes.

The terms are political and contested but generally describe the original peoples in Canada, and we utilize them here when referencing documents that use those specific terms.

Keywords: Decolonising Indigenous land-based methodologies, Indigenous child welfare, Indigenous land-based education, restorative Indigenous pedagogies, wholistic wellness, food security capacity development, Indigenous food sovereignty, Indigenous resurgence, Indigenous policy & program development for urban youth.

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Introduction

The Culturally Relevant Urban Wellness (CRUW) Program began in 2011 as a land-based program grounded in a local nation's teachings and territory and using decolonised methodologies. The program emerged through reciprocal relationships with the local community, agencies, institutions, and individuals who utilised Indigenous land, culture, and territorial-based teachings. The CRUW program is presented as an example of how elements of community-based participatory processes grounded in Indigenous knowledge and practice can be structured through a relational exchange with a local Indigenous Nation. We provide an overview of a program developed using decolonising Indigenous land-based methodologies, highlight the role and participation of a diversity of Elders residing on x^wməᑦᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃ Musqueam territory, and explore how the development of youth leadership and healthy living skills contributes to restorative education when informed by reflective learning, storying, and access to local Indigenous knowledge. We use the term storying to refer to the Indigenous practice of using oral histories for teaching, learning and knowledge exchange (Basso 1996; Kovach, 2009) and to inform the

development of Indigenous wholistic wellness and regenerating capacities.

In Canada, the separation of Indigenous peoples from their territories was a colonial policy implemented by the residential school and reserve systems. The repercussions of such policy continue impacting younger generations, particularly those growing disconnected from their traditional territories and families, including Indigenous youth under the childcare system living in urban settings. It has been suggested that "if colonisation is fundamentally about dispossessing Indigenous peoples from land, decolonisation must involve forms of education that reconnect Indigenous peoples to land and the social relations, knowledges and languages that arise from the land" (Wildcat et al., 2014, p. 1). Thus, the grounding of program development and research in the territory, language and culture are crucial to advancing Indigenous people's wellness and welfare (Jovel, 2019; Archibald, 2012, Brokenleg, 2012; Simpson, 2004; Goodwill, 2021; Goodwill & McCormick, 2012; Hatala et al., 2015, Turcotte & Schiffer, 2014). Developing programs that can reconnect Indigenous youth to land-based engagement is an act of resilience and resistance that can restore relationships, knowledge, and values fractured through colonisation and persisting in our contemporary society.

Indigenous Youth

The Canadian Aboriginal population, First Nations people, Métis, and Inuit, is the fastest growing and most diverse demographic. Between 2006 and 2016, it increased by 42.5%, approximately 1,673,785—more than four times the growth rate of the non-Aboriginal population over the same period (Statistics Canada, 2017). Thus, developing and delivering land-based programs is critical to support youth access to restorative Indigenous education, cultural capacity, and reconciliation pathways. Also, the Aboriginal population in Canada is almost a decade younger than non-Aboriginals. In 2016, the average age was 32.1 vs. 40.9 years, respectively, with more children and youth and fewer seniors. The total Aboriginal population will likely to exceed 2.5 million people in the next two decades (Statistics Canada, 2017). However, the status of Aboriginal children and youth in Canada remains one of inequity and social

injustice. Indigenous youth are over-represented in several social and health determinants associated with negative impacts on education, health care received, gender, social exclusion, employment, wellness, and housing.

The 2016 Canadian census shows that over half of the Aboriginal population live in metropolitan areas (51.8% or 867,415 people). For example, Vancouver, British Columbia, is home to 61,460 Indigenous people (Statistics Canada, 2017). The intergenerational knowledge systems in the CRUW program provide a theoretical orientation to land-based practices and articulate a process to address colonisation, the intergenerational impacts of residential schooling, and the contemporary challenges faced by the current child welfare system. We acknowledge x^wməθk^wəy^əm Musqueam people and territory as we explore how being connected to the land can be enhanced through land-based methodologies and education when associated with x^wməθk^wəy^əm Musqueam perspectives, teachings, protocols, worldview, and intergenerational knowledge systems.

The Culturally Relevant Urban Wellness (CRUW) Program

The CRUW program uses Indigenous methodologies, qualitative research tools, and some elements of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR; Hills & Mullet, 2000; Strand, 2000; Stoecker, 2001; Fletcher, 2003). The program is rooted in Indigenous knowledge and land-based pedagogies that allow the development of a responsive and territory-placed educational curriculum. The program was founded in 2011 using a community-based engagement process aiming to generate decolonised approaches to the Child Welfare System in Canada. That process was led by the Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (VACFSS), in partnership with the University of British Columbia (UBC) Institute for Aboriginal Health (IAH), x^wməθk^wəy^əm Musqueam First Nation band members, the Indigenous Research Partnerships (IRP) in the Faculty of Land and Food Systems, x^wci^əsəm Garden at UBC Farm, and the Pacific Community Resources Society (PCRS).

The VACFSS serves over 500 families from more than 30 distinct Indigenous cultures and

associated linguistic groups. This complexity provides a rich context for the exploration and innovation of methodologies, ethics, and practices. Today, CRUW offers four programming streams, which include: 1) the core program delivered at x^wci^əsəm Garden at UBC Farm, 2) the Life Skills & Leadership program, 3) the Cottonwood Community Garden program, and 4) the CRUW Youth Mentor Committee (See Figure 1 – Program Calendar).

Together these programming streams offer a multiple-year trajectory of services engaging over 100 Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth annually, of which roughly two-thirds are Indigenous youth in foster care with Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (VACFSS). For example, according to the 2018 VACFSS Annual Report, the organisation supports 414 children in care between the ages of 5 and 18. CRUW is currently impacting some 20% between the ages of 11 and 20. In addition, youth may participate in the youth mentor committee until the age of 24. During the pilot year, CRUW achieved a retention and graduation rate of more than 85%. The program evaluation includes surveys and interviews that demonstrate that youth participants develop a positive identity, emotional and cultural competence, leadership ability, and concrete skills to support the transition out of foster care into independent living. Also, having access to traditional knowledges promote a variety of wholistic wellness strategies.

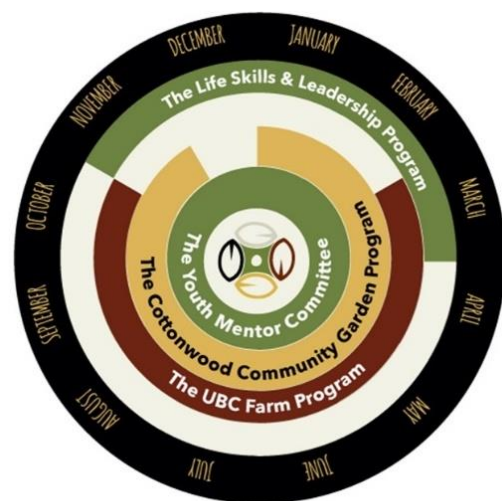


Figure 1 CRUW Program Calendar, 2014. CRUW image reprinted with permission from Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society. (Faculty of Land & Food Systems, 2020a)

The CRUW program engages youth in land-based practice with local Elders and knowledge keepers to support positive identity development, emotional and cultural competence foundations for leadership, and concrete skills to transition from the foster care system to independent living. For instance, over eight months of biweekly meetings at the x^wc̄ic̄əsəm garden, youths engaged in cultural activities (talking circles, ceremony, storytelling, drum making and singing workshops), skills development (communication, writing, video and photography), land-based learning activities (planting, harvesting, traditional medicine preparation), and self-reflection (journaling).

Indigenous Knowledge and Practices for Capacity Building

Indigenous ways of thinking, being, doing, and knowing can positively affect Indigenous outcomes (Kovach, 2010; Macklin et al., 2021), enhance youth capacity building, and possibly impact on policy and programming (Friedel, 2013; Hatala et al., 2015).

Dr Lee Brown (Cherokee/tj̄er̄əki), a VACFSS board member, considered the need of developing a program for Aboriginal youth in foster care to engage with cultural practices for wellness at x^wc̄ic̄əsəm³ garden at UBC Farm, which was established in 2005 by Dr Eduardo Jovel (Pipil-Mayan). x^wc̄ic̄əsəm garden is supported by the Medicine Collective, a group of Indigenous knowledge holders and researchers engaged in the mobilisation of Indigenous land-based knowledge and pedagogies focused on holistic wellness (Jovel, 2019). Brown proposed the inclusion of an emotional education component to address the suppression of Indigenous emotions resulting from colonisation and residential school policies. The emotional educational component was co-designed using a collaborative process to include ecological and land-based teachings and intergenerational perspectives.

Because the program was to be implemented on the ancestral and unceded x^wməθk^wəȳəm Musqueam territory, an Elders Advisory Circle (EAC) was established. The EAC core members included x^wməθk^wəȳəm Musqueam Nation

Elders and knowledge keepers: sᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲ Larry Grant, Sulseemiah Jeri Sparrow, Te'ta-in Shane Pointe, Thelma Stogan, and the late Papet Norma Rose Pointe. We also invited Aboriginal/Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers from other Indigenous Nations, the Medicine Collective, and partner agencies to collaborate with the program. In addition, the EAC invited youth representatives and guests to discuss programming structure and development.

Program Preparation and Research Ethics

The program preparation focused on local teachings, territory, and place. The initial convening process began in 2009 acknowledging the local Indigenous territory and respecting the Nation's peoples and protocols (Gomes et al., 2013; Howell et al., 2016). Once the program was grounded in x^wməθk^wəȳəm Musqueam territory and received the support of Elders and knowledge keepers of the Nation, we invited other collaborators to join the EAC. Elders and knowledge keepers received honorariums and gifts for their participation, and we shared food at all meetings. In addition, The EAC recommended incorporating intergenerational representation in the committee; thus, youth, adults, and seniors were invited to join the EAC.

We combined CBPR theory informed by the ethics of Indigenous methods (Mikesell et al., 2013; Pidgeon & Cox, 2002; Schnarch, 2004) into the mobilization of Indigenous knowledge within the context of local cultural practices, protocol, and territory. Our land-based methodological framework was guided by a theoretical orientation derived from x^wməθk^wəȳəm Musqueam territory-based knowledge and local Elders' advice.

Research Ethics. The research ethics certificate was approved by the UBC's Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB # H17-01698-A005). Original data was secured and stored with the VACFSS as required by Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (Schnarch, 2004). In meeting this ethical standard, our data rely primarily on public domain documents and media produced by CRUW youth, knowledge holders, participants, and partnership organisations—e.g., websites, videos, annual reports, program guides, and advisory meeting notes. Most authors herein are members of the CRUW Elders Advisory Circle and the Medicine Collective, which are composed of Indigenous Elders, knowledge keepers, and interdisciplinary researchers in land-based pedagogies.

Methodology

Our Indigenous land-based methodologies are grounded on Indigenous teachings and theory principles embedded in pedagogies that reflect actions, practices, and values held by Indigenous people. And also reflect the relationality and responsibilities to place and serve to bring together and mobilise intergenerational knowledge and enhance community engagement (Jovel, 2019).

Archibald's (2008) Storywork research methodologies and principles guided our approach to writing, researching and program/curriculum development. These seven principles are respect, relationship, relevance, reciprocity, wholism, interrelatedness and synergy. Archibald's principles helped us understand the characteristics of stories shared by Elders, knowledge holders, and youth participants while engaging in wholistic meaning making. As a result, the seven principles provided a wholistic perspective beginning with the Elders Advisory to develop the CRUW program. For instance, in creating the CRUW program, we started by focusing on sustaining reciprocal relationships with some of the local Indigenous x^wməθk^wəy'əm Musqueam knowledge holders. Through this land-based methodology, the youth started engaging and learning with Elders to learn the local protocols, language, stories, teachings, and ethics.

Together the authors grounded land-based methodology primarily on Musqueam teachings, these teachings provide theoretical and cultural cornerstones for the CRUW program implementation and include: (1) Hands Back and Hands Forward; (2) x^wčičəsəm; (3) All My Relations; and (4) One Heart, One Mind

Hands Back and Hands Forward

A x^wməθk^wəy'əm Musqueam teaching incorporated into the program was Hands Back and Hands Forward (Archibald & Parent, 2019; Archibald, 1999), this teaching was gifted by x^wməθk^wəy'əm Musqueam late Elder čsimlenəx^w (Dr Vince Stogan), who played a significant role in the creation of the UBC First Nations House of Learning. As explained by Q'umQ'umXiēm Archibald (2012):

“[Elder čsimlenəx^w, Dr Vince Stogan] asked us to form a circle and join hands in prayer. When we hold hands, he asked us to extend our left palm upward to symbolize reaching back to receive the teaching of the Ancestors. We learn these teachings and they become a part of us. We then extend our right palm facing downward to symbolize sharing these teaching with others, especially young generations. In this way the teaching of the Ancestors continues, and the circle of human understanding and caring grows stronger.” (p. 1)

Joining hands in a circle connects us with those who went before us, what we are doing, and our responsibilities to those coming behind us. The teaching Hands Back and Hands Forward is a reassertion of x^wməθk^wəy'əm land rationality and responsibility principles, and a pathway for the implementation of youth's regenerative land-based education and practices. The teaching also emphasises the transformative impact on wellness when bringing together youth, Indigenous Elders, knowledge keepers, and other supportive adults in the context of land-based learning.

Hands Back and Hands Forward teaching supports youths to connect to the land to reach back (hands back) to the intergenerational knowledge of their ancestors and immerse in a reflective and experiential land-based learning to restore cultural continuity (hands forward) regardless of whether they are Indigenous people, settlers, or immigrants.

x^wčičəsəm

sᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲ Larry Grant gifted the x^wməθk^wəyəm Musqueam name x^wčičəsəm (pronounced "hw-ts'its'usum" in the hənqəminəm language) to the Indigenous Garden at UBC Farm. The name x^wčičəsəm translates to the place where we grow. Elder sᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲ Larry Grant emphasised that the Garden is as a place for growing food and medicines and a place for human beings to grow (Personal communication, June 12, 2019). "It is meant to be our place of taking care of the land," he explained, "caring for it while growing".

As Elder sᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲ Larry Grant explains, the word x^wčičəsəm is more than a garden concept and represents an ancestral notion of place relationality. It is about growing together, "by growing together, we get to understand each other, partner and depend on each other, learn from each other, and understand our relationship and interdependence". (L. Grant, personal communication, June 12, 2015).

Elder sᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲ Larry Grant, a member of the program's Elder's Advisory Circle, and author herein provided the program and participants with teachings about x^wməθk^wəyəm Musqueam territory, specifically about the UBC Farm location, where the program takes place. x^wməθk^wəyəm Musqueam Elders offered specific guidance on program development, designing, and implementation.

The CRUW logo (Figure 2), the green patch in the centre of the CRUW logo represents x^wčičəsəm Garden, and the white circle in the centre of that patch represents a bird's eye view of youth standing on that territory. Thus, the logo reminds us that both the teachings of the x^wčičəsəm Garden and the youth are central to the CRUW program design, development, implementation, and research.



Figure 2 CRUW logo. The Elders Advisory Circle embedded the core Indigenous teachings into the design. CRUW logo reprinted with permission from Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society. (Faculty of Land & Food Systems, 2020b).

Elder sᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲ Larry Grant (Personal communication, June 12, 2015) explained that it was essential for the youth to understand that by creating a relationship with the land, they would recognise the interdependency between the land and themselves and how the territory nurtures us. Also understand that pulling ourselves away from the Land split us from the interconnectedness to all our relations. Some of the program activities included a forest walk, where youth were shown how the salmon cycles are related to salmonberries, the impact of invasive species on native plants and foods, and how old-growth roots systems support interconnected ecologies of the forest.

One youth shares:

"I like this program because I show responsibility by committing to coming here; it is fun and tasty- we get to meet new people and learn about the land cycles, how to grow plants and foods, and we get to take the awesome [non genetically modified] vegetables home." (Sparbc, 2013, 3:43)

The methodologies used to demonstrate their interconnected relationships included talking/sharing circles, storytelling such as learning about plants and foods as relatives from various Indigenous cultures. It is also introduction to the local languages, animals and creation stories related to the name x^wməθk^wəyəm Musqueam- where the məθk^wəy plant grows -provided additional cultural

competency skills. Another youth shared about their learning experience by stating that the youths “come together to make teas and salves, learn from different nations and about the whole growing season and what keeps us healthy” (Sparcbc, 2013, 2:57).

All My Relations

All My Relations is a central teaching of the x^wməθk^wəyəm Musqueam intergenerational knowledge system and worldview but is also a philosophical and applied principle common to Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island (Young Leon & Nadeau, 2018). It is one of the concepts underpinning Indigenous worldviews, and it is a cornerstone of Indigenous cosmologies (Sinclair, 2004). All My Relations is based on the fundamental cross-cultural and intergenerational Indigenous understanding of the interconnectedness and interdependency between humans, plants, animals, water, air, and land (Cajete, 2005).

Elder sʔəyələq Larry Grant (2015) explains:

“We cannot remove ourselves from the connection to the land and our relationship to each other, regardless of where we come from and the differences we perceive between us, we are also not different”. Grant continued, “each one of us has the same aspirations, from wherever we come from, expressed in slightly different ways ” (Personal communication, June 12, 2015).

He also asserts that “to disconnect ourselves from that ecological and human interdependency makes us not to have respect for the land, animals, plants and each other and promotes an open industrial mindset leading to the destruction of the things that nurture and sustain us”. (L. Grant, personal communication, June 12, 2015).

The CRUW program provided youth participants with experiential learning opportunities to explore the meaning of All My Relation and the interconnectedness and interrelatedness to the land. Guest speakers were invited to share their land-based knowledges about food growing practices, food security, genetically modified foods, health impacts, and food sovereignty perspectives from various cultures. The youth demonstrated their learning from the land relationships such as the Three Sisters, corn beans and squash, and different species and

nations helping one another (Culturally relevant urban wellness (CRUW), 2013; Sparcbc, 2013). x^wməθk^wəyəm Elder Sulseemiah Jeri Sparrow shared that “the program introduces traditional teachings from many Indigenous nations, and they are given the knowledge of the traditional ways of many Indigenous peoples– that part I really like”. (Sparcbc, 2013, 0:57). Additionally, one other youth shared that they “are shown how to demonstrate respect for Indigenous cultures and Elders. Before we might get into mischief, the relationships and skills we learn here are important to learn for our everyday lives and improve lives”. (Sparcbc, 2013, 3:32).

náćáʔmat tə šx^wq^weləwəñ ct - We speak With One Mind, One Heart.

During the Garden growing seasons, March-October, throughout bi-monthly sessions, Elder sʔəyələq Larry Grant provided youth participants with a cultural introduction to the Musqueam teaching of *náćáʔmat tə šx^wq^weləwəñ ct* (we speak with one heart and mind). And he shared how this teaching brings together community, values, customs, traditional ways, and practices. Elder sʔəyələq Larry Grant also conferred instructions about being a respectful listener x^wəyña:mstəm (witness), and *tə slaxən* (medicines - to listen to the medicines). The sessions were complemented by other Aboriginal knowledge keepers and created to foster a healthy life, a sense of identity, cultural belonging, and community experience for the youth participants. Elder sʔəyələq Larry Grant’s expresses:

“The CRUW project is inclusive of children from many cultures worldwide, and they are all learning how to work together. They want to come back to help the next group of youth as mentors. That means to me they are learning something interesting and valuable to pass on to the next group of children.” (Sparcbc, 2013, 0:43)

Joining Hands Back and Hands Forward with All My Relations

Reiterating Elder sʔəyələq Larry Grant’s teachings, Newberry (2012) problematises the notion of the wilderness and the way Western ideas of nature have typically been constructed, often depicting the outdoors as a remote area pursued by travellers for consumption -be it leisurely, for excursions, recreation, or anything

in between (Meierotto, 2020). Historically, Western forms of environmental education have been Eurocentric, ignoring Indigenous ways of being within these remotely constructed spaces (Friedel, 2013; Lawrence, 2010). Newberry states further, "wilderness is neither natural nor neutral, but cultural and hegemonic, written through relations of power" (2012, p. 34). Through this understanding, the wilderness then becomes a colonial construction where space is given a specific meaning; mainly, it is believed to be separate from other areas of which we are a part. xᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ Musqueam has been in their territory for over 9,000 years. Their territory comprises 144,888 hectares, including today's city of Vancouver, stretching North-west up Howe Sound and east up the Fraser Valley (Musqueam First Nation, 2018).

"Our territory, once rich in natural resources, offered our ancestors a life of abundance. In return, our people were and still are the keepers of the lands and waters that sustain us." (Musqueam First Nation, 2011). There was never starvation in this area before colonisation, Grant explained, xᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ Musqueam had seal, shellfish, and many resources that are no longer available.

Through their experience in CRUW, youth are exposed to applied sciences through relationship to the land and develop an understanding of garden ecologies, food security and food sovereignty, cooking and nutrition, value-added foods and medicines, and the economics of small-scale farm to table. They also learned about gifting economies and giveaways in the context of reciprocity, relevance, responsibility, and respect. These actions spur CRUW graduates, new participants, sponsors, and partners into a sustainable engagement so that people continue to take care of the land, practice traditional protocols, and build land-based relationships.

Elder sᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ Larry Grant elaborates that

"A lot of our urban youth are disconnected from the knowledge of this interconnection and interdependency. They think land is off across the water, but it is right here. It is just covered and locked in by paved roadways, sidewalks, and parking lots. The urban landscape works very hard to keep us disconnected from the deeper knowledge of the territory and its Indigenous

inhabitants." (Personal communication, June 12, 2015)

The leadership and planning of the CRUW program support youth through a social learning model that promotes the application of traditional knowledge, wisdom, and land-based practices for others while acquainting and providing youth with knowledge transfers of the restorative aspects of food sovereignty.

One youth participant shared that "before most of us are not very interactive with other peoples but when we are here, we can be ourselves, learn how to be healthy and have fun meeting new people" (Sparcbc, 2013, 2.33).

The CRUW program supports young people to understand their history, shaping their future as they grow into mentors and leaders together on the land and in their communities. Elder sᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ Larry Grant (2015) explains,

"Being in that area [garden], being in the forest, even when they may not come from here [they learn] that somewhere in their history, they come from the land. And if they can connect to the land themselves, quietly, it is a way of making that piece of land where they are in at that moment a facilitator to bring them back to that place of where they came from." (Personal communication, June 12, 2015)

Reconnecting to the land supports developing a culturally grounded positive identity, which emerges alongside confidence, self-esteem, and respecting each other and all our relations. These methods and pedagogical orientations for youth engagement also emphasize skill building in Indigenous practices for wellness. The All My Relations philosophy (Young Leon et al., 2019), anchored in the specific xᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ Musqueam Elder's perspectives of the teachings, xᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ, provides the theoretical orientation guiding our land-based methodology and grounding our methods for program development, youth engagement, and Indigenous lifelong orientations to wellness. Grant believes that this approach supports all involved in respecting each other's humanness, strengthening our individuals, families, communities, and relations. One youth participant shared:

“The elders gave us good information about the past and advice about what to do -I find that interesting and when they tell us a story, it really affects me, and it makes me think about the stuff I should change...and which ways I should try to follow.” (CRUW, 2013, pp. 12–13)

Discussion

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) published a summary report of their findings documenting the widespread spiritual, physical, cultural, and sexual abuse in government-sponsored residential schools. The TRC report calls the government's actions a “conscious policy of cultural genocide” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 59). Unit 1. ii. of the Child Welfare section of the TRC report is a call for the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to “[p]rovide adequate resources to enable Aboriginal communities and child-welfare organizations to keep Aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments, regardless of where they reside” (2015, p. 1).

Kennedy & Turpel-LaFond (2013) and United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations General Assembly, 2007) also frame this provision as part of the rights of Indigenous children is to have access to cultural education and health practices. Recognising that the need for culturally relevant land-based practices is an essential feature of reconciliation, CRUW has been designed to contribute to a restorative approach to wholistic education and life-long wellness for our youth in care.

Our collective reflections from 2014 suggest that CRUW facilitates cultural connections and personal growth can lead to positive identity development. Sharing experiences in a diverse group promotes emotional and cultural competence and honours of human and ecological diversity. The process of Hands Forward also involves the development of concrete skills, leadership competencies, and gaining an understanding and practices of wholistic and sustainable urban life.

Including non-Aboriginal youth in this space also creates a framework for truth and reconciliation

(Jovel, 2019). All youth learn about colonial history, break down stereotypes, and share culturally grounded positive identity development as co-participants in cultural resurgence. As youth participate in CRUW over their multi-year trajectory of engagement with the program, they are supported by a healthy transition from foster care to independent living. It also provides connections to the land, Elders, knowledge keepers and people they come to know with shared territorial values and knowledges.

The Hands Back and Hands Forward teaching provides the CRUW program with a pathway to research and program development, foundations for preparing youth to engage with Indigenous food sovereignty, and a reconnection to traditional food practice and Indigenous movements towards decolonisation and self-determination (Morrison, 2008). Using the principles of respectful relationships, Indigenous wellness, and a focus on resiliencies and leadership development helped us navigate the complexities of urban demands. Such an approach is grounded in traditional territories, and the inclusion of local Indigenous people is key to program development, education, and lifelong wellness (Hampton, 1995). Indigenous theories of transformation rely on teaching pedagogies that address wholism, spiritual ecologies (Kawagley, 1995), and relational laws grounded in landscapes. Furthermore, Indigenous theory, methods, and methodologies can help understand Indigenous worldviews and others for mutual benefit (Ermine, 1995, 1998, 2007; Cajete, 1994, 1999, 2000, 2005). Incorporating Indigenous land-based and storywork methodologies are critical to learning about responsibilities for independent living within a collective of intergenerational relationships (Goodwill, 2021; Brokenleg, 2012).

By supporting youth to experience the interconnectedness and interdependency embedded in the teachings of All My Relations, the CRUW programs educate youth to take action and make self-determined meaningful changes in their lives, families, and communities (Hands Forward). And it promotes responsible and considerate ways for future generations informed by knowledge of the past (Hands Back).

Furthermore, the CRUW program supports Indigenous identity reclamation through culturally relevant gatherings by engaging with Elders, knowledge holders, and other Indigenous people. Also, CRUW contributes to the ability to verbalize experiences as an Indigenous person, including spiritual practices, the influence of grandparents, personal achievement, and events resulting in positive portrayals of Indigenous people.

Youth participants shared the following reflections:

“We learn so much more about how food is grown, harvested and preserved. We are equipped with emotional and everyday independent life skills and introduced to Elders and are given information about how to respectfully engage with Indigenous knowledges, ceremony and peoples” (Sparcbc, 2013, 2:00).

“We learn how to seed plants and take care of and garden plan and how to smoke and prepare salmon and prepare feasts. We learn about tobacco as a ceremonial plant from central plains areas of turtle island [Canada] and learn the differences between substance use and misuse. We learn how to learn from the land to create healthy relationships.” (Sparcbc, 2013, 2:09).

We use Indigenous land-based restorative practices to begin a process of engagement and reconnection of Indigenous youth to the land and their heritage while living in the territory of another nation; and also, to inform and indigenise educational frameworks, curriculum, programming, and policy development.

With regards to respectful relationships and Indigenous values, we made commitments to grounding restorative wellness in teachings and knowledge represented by diverse xᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲ Musqueam Elders. We held our meetings on xᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲ Musqueam territory, beginning and closing with gratitude for All My Relations, as a way to honour the diversity of Indigenous perspectives of those represented in our circle. We also conducted a debrief at the end of each CRUW program year, synthesized the feedback received and presented it to the Elders Advisory Circle at the end of the year.

Concerning Archibald’s storywork methodology principles for relevance, we included land-based

teachings representative of the cultural diversity of youth participating in our program. Regarding responsibility, we hold ourselves accountable for working with Elders and knowledge keepers defined by their communities. Finally, concerning reciprocity, we built mentorship job opportunities into the program so that selected youth graduates can return the following year as youth mentors and share what was gifted to them the previous year.

Last, we included the concept of restorative education to address the history and circumstances of the current child welfare system in British Columbia and Canada.

In 2012, when asked how to navigate Indigenous diversity in community-based research, Archibald’s response was to embrace it as a precious resource rather than a complex problem. Approaching Indigenous diversity with appreciation, rather than perceiving it as a challenge, grounds inquiry and practice in a strength-based attitude and approach that highlights Indigenous persistence, resilience, and adaptation - sometimes in trickster ways (Archibald, 2012). Fostering the diverse perspectives of the people and knowledges and cultural expressions have been pivotal to the success of the CRUW program. Also, creative leadership initiatives in synergy with visual media, information technology, and online environments have allowed youth to highlight Indigenous languages, land-based pedagogies, and adaptive expressions of the storywork continuum (Sparcbc, 2013).

Concluding Reflections

The impact of CRUW is reflected by having more than 100 youth successfully graduating from the program. Most of them continued participating in VACFSS’s additional program streams and joined other activities. For example, four youth mentors presented at the 2012 the Advanced Consortium on Cooperation, Conflict and Complexity (AC4) Sustainable Peace Symposium at Columbia University in New York. Another youth presented at the 2014 National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) conference in Portland. These youth have also presented to events at UBC, Justice Institute of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University in

Vancouver and various CBC television and radio media programs. In addition, a few CRUW participants have gone onto college while maintaining their mentorship and leadership engagements with the program.

The land-based methodologies described in this paper informed the CRUW program and the community partnership process. Some outcomes include tools for addressing social issues, supporting local policy and procedural developments, furthering academic conversations, contributing to service learning, and improving participants' lives in culturally restorative and sustainable ways.

The authors remain committed to expanding the approaches outlined above and developing other actions, including:

- Support restorative Indigenous food sovereignty framework in the context of shrinking urban land bases and current ecological practices in need of transformative education processes.
- Continue exploring how applied Indigenous knowledges provide adaptations for local, sustainable practices in response to global climate change.
- Implement in-depth investigations and the impact of x̣ẉc̣ịc̣ə̣ṣə̣m and similar land-based educational gardens on Indigenous youth identity development and wellness.
- Support Indigenous mentoring and restorative curriculum development, including online environments that support land interconnectedness and cultural teachings to counter intergenerational cycles impacting Indigenous youth.

The authors are devoted to promoting restorative Indigenous child welfare theory and practices, advocating for the development of environments, places, and actions supportive of families in the Child Welfare System, and encouraging changes to systemic poverty, oppression, and neoliberal practices. Finally, the authors suggested that a similar restorative land-based methodology process could be undertaken in other contexts and territories.

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