

From March 10-13 I attended the Learning at Intercultural Intersections Conference at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, BC. At the conference I was able to continue to grow and develop working relationships with colleagues in the intercultural field and participate in a community of practice for internationalization and indigenization where sharing of stories and promising practices was the focus.

Formal sessions and discussion with colleagues confirmed that efforts to continue building intercultural competence and intercultural capital at VIU are not only worthwhile, they are essential if VIU wants to remain current and competitive as a post-secondary education institution. Several of the sessions spoke to finding a “third way”, a culture on campus where the focus is not on who adapts to whom, but is on adapting together.

Promising practices that instructors, staff and administration at other institutions shared which found ways to create bridges and transform difference included:

- Exploring other cultural perspectives on intercultural competence (Darla Deardorff, Duke University).
- Culture Clubs that allowed for a “hybridization of identities” (UBC).
- Using Photovoice to let students lead dialogue on what inclusion looks like to them (Inclusion Fusion, Norquest College).
- Professional Development Certificate Programs for Faculty, Staff and Administration (e.g. Intercultural Practitioners Certificate – Norquest).
- Being explicit in why inclusion and bridging cultural difference is important and engaging leadership at an institution, not allowing rationale for interculturalization to be implicit. When assumed priorities are used it privileges certain parts of the conversation. (HMTV Breda)
- Revising approaches to group work, creating intentional groups and including evaluation of the group process rather than just the finished product in grade assessment. (TRU)
- Explore how indigenous ways of knowing can ground interculturalism. (TRU)
- Demonstrating how values are connected to a geographic place. (UNBC)
- Including International Students to present at New Student Orientation. (TRU)
- Renaming buildings and places on campus from English to local traditional language(s). (University of Hawaii)
- An engineering online discussion board where broken English is accepted (allowing for more social interaction), and assignments are challenging enough that students need to rely on each other to complete them. (SFU)
- Professional development that provides a space for employees to debrief their experiences as well as learn the concepts and vocabulary for Intercultural Competence. (TRU, Hanze University)
- Using the Intercultural Development Inventory as a needs assessment for training and development. (Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands)
- Having learning outcomes for courses driven by employers: employers in the Netherlands were expecting students to come with higher levels of intercultural competence, thus intercultural competence had to become an explicit learning outcome for the institution. (Hanze University of Applied Sciences)

In addition to attending sessions I also discussed research and future conference presentation partnerships with contacts at Camosun College, North Island College. The following questions were raised several times at the conference, possibly indicating a need for further research or an interest in hearing about promising practices that address these topics.

- How can we make intercultural intersections between Aboriginal Students and International Students intentional?
- How can indigenous ways of knowing ground interculturalism?
- What are the benefits to students of having a multicultural classroom (is there “hard” research that can prove the benefits are more than financial)?
- What are other successful models for building an intercultural community of practice on campus?
  - What mechanisms can we use to formalize intercultural education opportunities for employees and students?
- What impact are greater numbers of international students having on the community in which they are studying?
- Where are examples of intercultural learning outcomes being driven by students, or employers?
- How are other institutions tackling the “Academic Integrity Beast”?

Further discussions are planned with North Island College, Camosun College, and TRU. I have also been meeting with faculty here at VIU who have worked on projects that qualify as promising practices and could be presented at future conferences. With regard to research I hope to be able to use the quieter time of the summer to refine a research focus, find partners at VIU and build a plan for a small research project that would answer questions that relate to one of the topics above.

Finally the conference was held at the same time at TRU’s IDAYS events at TRU. I was able to see first-hand what made their week-long event award winning. While there were many aspects that were much better and bigger I was reassured in the realization that World VIU Days here at VIU is also very successful.