'Crafting' Curricula and Pedagogies:
Examining Efforts to De-center Sheridan College's Furniture Studio Through Indigenous Community Engagement

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By Simon Ford

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Cover page image Migizi (Eagle) soars high over Thunder Bay community engagement project participants (2023) snowshoeing on Animikii-waajiw (courtesy of Peter Fleming)

Declaration

I declare that I am the sole author of this report, however, would like to acknowledge that this Major Research Project (**MRP**) reflects the contributions, knowledge, collective work, insights and ideas of several participants. This is a true copy of the **MRP** report, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my advisor, Howard Munroe.

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Abstract

This Major Research Project (MRP) investigates the efforts to de-center the curricula and pedagogies of Sheridan College's Furniture Studio by meaningfully engaging with Indigenous communities. The research focuses on two community engagement projects where third-year Furniture students engaged with members of Thunder Bay's Indigenous community to co-create furniture for the Indigenous Knowledge Centres of two branches of the Thunder Bay Public Library. Using qualitative ethnographic research methods, including questionnaires, a semi-structured interview, and focus groups, this study examines how these projects impacted both Indigenous participants and student participants involved in the two projects. The outcome of the study finds significant benefits which include an increased awareness and appreciation of Indigenous culture and knowledge among students, and a strong sense of ownership and pride among Indigenous participants. Challenges identified include the need for preparatory intercultural competency training for students, greater management of power imbalances, extended project timelines to facilitate deeper relationship building, and the need for further benefits to the Indigenous community. This research aims to contribute to the discourse on decolonizing craft and design education and promote an inclusive design framework by showcasing practical applications of these principles. It underscores the transformative potential of integrating Indigenous knowledge into educational practices and offers recommendations for future projects to further these efforts towards equity and inclusion.

Keywords: de-centering curriculum and pedagogy, decolonizing education, Indigenous community engagement, Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous-led research, Indigenous-led design, craft and design education, participant-led research, participant-led design, co-design, inclusive design, furniture design, decolonization

Land Acknowledgment

I am a second-generation settler on these lands. My parents, Pam and Graham, settled here from the England in the 1970s. I was born and raised on Treaty 19 land and spent many years living in Tkaronto (Toronto). I currently live and work on land known today as Hamilton and Oakville, which is covered by the Dish with One Spoon and Two Row Wampum Belt Covenants. These covenants emphasize the importance of joint stewardship, peace, and respectful relationships, and serve as guiding principles with which I have approached this project. My presence and settlement on these unceded and stolen lands is discomforting to me and complicated by the fact that the land is also life-giving, life-affirming and restorative to me.

I acknowledge and am grateful to several Indigenous nations and peoples across the areas of Turtle Island upon whose lands this project has taken place; they have occupied and cared for these lands for thousands of years prior to my arrival; they have been in and continue to demonstrate respectful relationship with Land[1]. These peoples and nations include the Anishinabek (specifically the Ojibwe of Fort William First Nation), the Erie, the Neutral, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Huron-Wendat, the Ininiwak, the Dakota Oyate, the Métis, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

As I reflect on this, I hope that the work that has been undertaken collectively in this research project helps to move us towards reconciliation, and further relationship building.

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[1] Sandra D. Styres (2017) distinguishes between land (denoted by a lower case l) the physical geographic space and everything that is included in that space, and Land (denoted by a capital L) expressing "a duality which refers to place as a physical geographic space but also to the underlying conceptual principles, philosophies, and ontologies of that space" (p. 49). This duality affirms the significant role Land has to the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island.

Acknowledgements

Positionality

Opaskwayak Cree researcher, Shawn Wilson (2008) writes, "Indigenous people in Canada recognize that it is important for storytellers to impart their own life and experience into the telling ... When listeners know where the storyteller is coming from and how the story fits into the storyteller's life, it makes the absorption of the knowledge that much easier" (p. 32). This is a practice that Cree and Métis researcher, Keeta Gladue (2020) refers to as 'self-location', which simply put, allows us to contextualize ourselves by our relationships and experiences. Following this principle, I feel it fitting to begin this report with a little about my own story, to orient the reader to my positionality and approach to this research.

I am a father, husband, son and brother, a furniture designer and maker, and a learner and teacher. For the past seven years, I have taught in Sheridan College's Bachelor of Craft & Design (BCD) program and have been its Acting Furniture Studio Head for the past two of those years.

I acknowledge that intersectional factors such as my gender, race, ethnicity, and social class affect my lived experience and influence my perspective. Namely, my identity as a White, middle class, second-generation settler, who is also a cis-gendered, and heterosexual man has allowed me to comfortably navigate systems and institutions which have centered and favoured these characteristics, putting me in a position of considerable privilege. This privilege narrows my perspective and conceals the reality of the many people who do not share my characteristics. It obscures the many barriers that are in place today to knowledge acquisition. This is problematic as an educator whose responsibilities include developing policy, common practices, and curricula. I acknowledge and am grateful to the Indigenous people, Black people and People of Colour whose anti-racist, decolonial, and feminist theory and work this research is informed by and built upon. Their diverse perspectives help me to critically question and unlearn my assumptions and address my biases.

This research is participant-led in an attempt to broaden my perspective, reveal and help remove oppressive barriers, amplify racialized voices, and shift power dynamics within the decision and policy making practices of post-secondary education.

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Introduction and Background

"More than ever before … educators are compelled to confront the biases that have shaped teaching practices in our society and to create new ways of knowing, different strategies for the sharing of knowledge. We cannot address this crisis if progressive critical thinkers and social critics act as though teaching is not a subject worthy of our regard. The classroom remains the most radical space for possibility in the academy." (hooks, 1994, p. 12)

Thirty years since acclaimed anti-racist theorist and educator, bell hooks wrote these words of concern and hope for educational transformation, our schools and classrooms are still very much confronted with issues of systemic racism and oppression (Tunstall, 2023; Rodríguez, 2018; Styres, 2017).

According to UNESCO (n.d.), "Education is one of the most powerful tools in lifting excluded children and adults out of poverty and is a stepping stone [*sic*] to other fundamental human rights. It is the most sustainable investment." (para. 1). However, the United Nations' "*State of the World's Indigenous Peoples*" report (2017) warns that Indigenous Peoples in Canada experience many disparities and challenges when it comes to education including unresponsive curricula, high dropout rates, and limited access to educational opportunities. On a more hopeful note, the report also indicates that initiatives such as culturally appropriate education and partnerships between First Nations communities and post-secondary institutions are associated with decreasing dropout rates, and supporting a sense of identity and self-esteem among Indigenous students.

In her foreword to Sandra D. Styres' book "*Pathways for Remembering and Recognizing Indigenous Thought in Education*", Dawn Zinga (2017) states,

> "There have been various ways of conceptualizing and framing Indigenous education as a "problem", but most of those conceptualizations are based on the use of a pathologizing lens that positions Indigenous peoples as the problem and fails to take into account the complex histories that have brought us collectively to this point in education." (p. ix)

For decades, schools have put forth mission statements and policy that claim to value diversity, equity, and inclusion, but until relatively recently have often failed to question the foundational elements that underpin the content and curricula being taught and pedagogical approaches being practiced. These elements are often centered in European and settler colonial North American (i.e., Western) content and ways of knowing (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002; Shahjahan, Estera, Surla, & Edwards, 2022; Styres, 2017). Within design education, the general focus of this MRP, this often results in canonizing the Bauhaus[1] and European Modernism (Tunstall, 2023; Noel, 2022), and the failure to recognize the vast contributions of Indigenous Peoples, Black people, and People of Colour as well as the devaluing of their knowledge

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[1] The Bauhaus was a German art school that existed between 1919 and 1933 that had a major influence on European Modernism and is often credited as being the birthplace of the "International Style" (Droste, 2006).

and practices. Not only does this exclusion negatively impact everyone within educational systems by limiting the scope of thought and ways of knowing the world, but it creates barriers for IBPOC[2] individuals navigating these systems. This is keenly encapsulated in Abdulla, et al.'s (2016) *"Decolonizing Design Manifesto"*:

> "This narrowness of horizons and deficiency in criticality is a reflection of the limitations of the institutions within which design is studied and practiced, as well as of the larger socio-political systems that design is institutionally integrated into." (p. 129)

Decolonization

Today, efforts to combat these issues and barriers are commonly characterized as decolonizing work. On school campuses across Turtle Island (North America) and other colonized lands across the globe, "decolonization" has become a commonly uttered buzzword that Stein & de Oliveira Andreotti (2017) define as,

> "… an umbrella term for diverse efforts to resist the distinct but intertwined processes of colonization and racialization, to enact transformation and redress in reference to the historical and ongoing effects of these processes and to create and keep alive modes of knowing, being, and relating that these processes seek to eradicate." (p. 370)

Tuck & Yang (2012) point to a troubling trend within educational institutions to use "decolonization as a metaphor". They argue that many people within these institutions superficially attempt to reconcile the guilt and complicity they feel given the pivotal role these institutions played within settler-colonial projects, while avoiding the real hard, unsettling work of decolonizing. They emphasize the need for this work to be centered on the ideas and critique of Indigenous thinkers.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada outlines a number of steps in its "Calls to Action" (2015) that would catalyze decolonization within post-secondary education in Canada. Of these, two in particular pertain to focus of this MRP. The first of these calls upon the federal government to commit to "developing culturally appropriate curricula" (Call 10.iii.) with the participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The second of these calls upon "the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to … provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms" (Call 62.ii.).

Craft History

'Studio craft', a term used to describe the work of artists and makers who work independently or in small groups, first appeared during the Arts and Crafts period of the late nineteenth century (Fariello, 2011), a movement with ties to socialism which emerged as a resistance to industrialization, mechanization, and capitalism (Obniski, 2008). This countercultural undertone can still be found within craft today, where "locally made" initiatives confront the oppressive culture of late capitalism and

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[2] IBPOC is an acronym meaning Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour. It is used in place of the commonly used acronym BIPOC (which originated in the U.S. around 2010). This alternate acronym acknowledges that Indigenous Peoples were the first people on these lands, and aims to recognize the context of the colonization, displacement, and cultural genocide that these people have had to endure on Turtle Island since European contact (The University of British Columbia, 2023).

globalization (Baumstark, 2018), and the craftivism movement addresses issues of feminism, activism, and environmentalism (Alford, 2011).

Despite this progressive narrative, craft has numerous blights that tarnish its history. The world of craft can at times be exclusionary and inclusion is often contingent on one's culture. Many non-European cultures incorporate craft in some form or another, yet these practices are not commonly referred to as craft, or included within craft discourse and education (Baumstark, 2018). The term 'craft' has its origins in Western culture, often failing to recognize its presence in many of the world's Indigenous cultures (A. Goto, personal communication, April 22, 2022). The word derives from the German word 'kraft' meaning power or strength (Fariello, 2011). It may be of little surprise then, that it has historically been associated with people, typically White men, who have held certain power and privilege, and used it to help them distinguish menial, manual labour from their more "superior", creative pursuits (Lo, 2020). Even the colloquial language that we still use today within the discipline is rife with terms like "mastery" of a skill or craft, which are not only contentious, but much more aligned with Western notions of domination than Indigenous ways of knowing (J. Mitchell, personal communication, October 3, 2022).

Contemporaneous to the American Arts and Crafts period which aspired to liberate craftspeople and artisans from factory work, Black and Indigenous people were being subjected to the industrial education movement. This movement was built upon the promises of Arts and Crafts ideals, however, sought to "civilize" and "cultivate a work

ethic" among Black and Indigenous people, driven by the objectives of racial capitalism – to help resolve issues of labour during the Reconstruction era of America (Lo, 2020).

Racist undertones and a need for progressive change still afflict craft today. Even the craftivist movement has been condemned for its lack of diversity and critical anti-racial discourse. Amidst the aftermath of the Women's March on Washington[3] and the Pussyhat Project[4], Julia Feliz (2017) criticized the movement in an open letter stating that it "takes pride in some of the most nonsensical White feminist privileged stances that actually work to silence people of color [sic]... instead of actually doing the work to create real change" (para. 3).

Defining Craft

The definition of craft is commonly and constantly debated (Adamson, 2007; Baumstark, 2018; Fariello, 2011; Lovelace, 2018). Much of this discourse concerns distinguishing it from art and design, two similar and often intersecting disciplines. Others dispute inclusion and exclusion criteria of certain fields, works, and artifacts, often arguing about the use of manual and digital fabrication techniques (Adamson, 2007; Baumstark, 2018; Fariello, 2011). Mary Callahan Baumstark (2018) notes:

> "By not defining craft, the field becomes more interesting, nebulous, and broad, challenging our assumptions and widening our impact as a group. As North American makers and scholars, we can consider the

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[3] The Women's March on Washington took place on January 21, 2017, in protest of the inauguration of U.S. president Donald Trump. It was the largest single day protest in American history with five million people marching in over 600 cities across the globe (Women's March, n.d.).

[4] The Pussyhat Project which coincided with the Women's March on Washington, was a nationwide DIY effort initiated by Jayna Zweiman and Krista Suh where people crafted hand-made knitted and crocheted pink hats to wear during the protests, aimed at making the march a 'sea of pink' (Victoria and Albert Museum, n.d.). The hat's 'pussycat ear' design was a response to "vulgar comments Donald Trump made about the freedom he felt to grab women's genitals" (Pussyhat Project, n.d., para. 8).

craft and production in the global South to be as relevant as our own, removed from the excuse of "cultural specificity" and the "art versus craft" debate. By not defining craft, we can make it bigger, and wider; we can include more, and divide less." (p. 55)

Craft's ambiguity may stem from the fact that it has several meanings. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.) lists 'craft' as both a noun (with five variations) and a verb. While most of these definitions are related, the noun "an occupation, trade, or activity requiring manual dexterity or artistic skill" (para. 2) is relevant in describing the educational program this project examines. However, the transitive verb "to make or produce with care" (para. 7) can be more broadly interpreted, aligning with Baumstark's more inclusive viewpoint.

Inspired by Trinidadian design educator, Lesley-Ann Noel's (2022) impulse to sketch out her ideas for decolonial design curricula, I suggest the verb, 'crafting' encapsulates the careful consideration with which we approach and hone our curricula design and teaching practices. 'Crafting' also implies a need to be adaptive, responding to the material and context of a given situation.

Bachelor of Craft and Design (BCD) Program

This research focused on efforts to de-center the curricula and pedagogies within Sheridan College's Bachelor of Craft and Design (BCD) program's Furniture Studio from its Western colonial roots.

While shifting to be more interdisciplinary in nature, the BCD program invites students to specialize in one of five studios or disciplines offered: Ceramics, Furniture, Glass, Industrial Design and Textiles. This immersive approach to material-based study follows that of the Bauhaus, the very foundation upon which many design schools are modeled and centered (Droste, 2006). These disciplines all fall within, what

has historically been considered 'studio craft', prioritizing the skilled execution or making of work, objects and artifacts (Fariello, 2011).

The BCD program exists within Sheridan's Faculty of Animation, Arts & Design (FAAD), which is Canada's largest art school. As FAAD's *"Charter of Values"* states, its "programs are committed to artistic pursuit and academic excellence while encouraging multiple perspectives, philosophies, and ways of knowing" (Faculty of Animation, Arts and Design, 2021, p. 1).

As the school's land acknowledgement states, Sheridan College occupies lands which are "the traditional territory of several Indigenous nations, including the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat, the Métis, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation" (Herrera, 2020, p. 3). This acknowledgement also emphasizes the importance of building and maintaining respectful relationships and a collective responsibility to "honour and respect those who have gone before us, those who are here, and those who have yet to come" (p. 3). I argue that a critical aspect of these commitments includes curricula and pedagogical approaches employed by the college's programs that are respectful and inclusive of Indigenous content and ways of knowing, doing and being, and which work to (re)build trust and (re)engage relationships with Indigenous communities.

Furniture Studio Community Engagement Projects

For the past 14 years, the Furniture Studio has sought out partnerships with a number of agencies and organizations to collaborate on, what are referred to within the studio as, "community engagement projects". It is noteworthy to disclose that I have been involved with these projects in two capacities: first as a student in 2013 for a project with Emily's House Children's Hospice in Toronto; and more recently as the course faculty lead in the Winter 2023 and Winter 2024 school terms.

This annual project has recently taken place in the third year of the program and has been incorporated within two studio courses, *Furniture Design 6: Client Proposals*, and *Furniture Fabrication 6: Professional Methods*. These projects and courses invite students to co-design and fabricate furniture that will populate spaces for communities that have historically been underserved by design. This MRP investigated two recent community engagement projects – in the Winter 2020 and Winter 2023 school terms – where Furniture students collaborated with members of Thunder Bay's Indigenous community, and the Thunder Bay Public Library (TBPL). These two projects aimed to provide a revitalization of two of TBPL's Indigenous Knowledge Centres, one at their Brodie branch (in 2021), and another at their Waverley branch (in 2023).

Thunder Bay

Thunder Bay is a city situated on the northern shores of Lake Superior. It is isolated geographically, being a 6- to 8-hour drive from other comparable-sized cities, with Winnipeg to the west, Minneapolis to the south, and Sault Ste. Marie to the southeast. To the north are a number of small, remote First Nations communities stretching all the way to James Bay. To these communities, Thunder Bay is a service hub and is often the closest place to receive a high school education (McMahon, 2018).

The area of where Thunder Bay now exists was settled by Europeans and established as a trading post for the fur trade, then became a weigh station for the lumber and mining industries. To these settlers, it was never meant to be a permanent settlement, just a transitional place where resources could be extracted from the land and taken elsewhere (McMahon, 2018). This is colonization in its *most explicit* form.

The city today is an amalgamation made up of Fort William, a settlement that has historically had a large Indigenous population, and Port Arthur, a settlement that is predominantly made up of White settlers of Finnish descent. While this amalgamation in 1970

brought the city of Thunder Bay into existence, in many ways it is a city that remains divided. This division is starkly brought to light in the podcast "*Thunder Bay*", co-created and hosted by Ryan McMahon (2018). McMahon is from a small Anishinabek community outside of Thunder Bay, and his podcast paints a staggering picture of what it is like to be an Indigenous person in Thunder Bay. He provides numerous examples of the overtly racist views that exist within the city and its leadership, and how these are often trivialized and perpetuated by local media. As McMahon points out,

> "Thunder Bay has repeatedly had the highest homicide and hate crime rates in the country – it might be the most dangerous city for Indigenous kids in the world – they keep turning up dead." (5:08)

This is a city where Indigenous teenagers are frequently found dead in its rivers, but where its police department rarely investigate for foul play. It is also a city where unprovoked hate crimes against Indigenous Peoples are regularly publicly defended (McMahon, 2018).

These racist community values and attitudes are not new. Like many parts of Canada, Thunder Bay was once home to a residential school. St. Joseph's School opened in what is now Fort William First Nation in the 1870s as a Roman Catholic orphanage and boarding school, and officially operated as a residential school from 1936 to 1964. The TBPL is increasing awareness to the truth, history, and legacy of this school through its "*Stories of Anishinaabe Resilience (SOAR) Project*".

The SOAR project includes a research report, artwork, a high school education curriculum, and a podcast with the school's survivors, hosted by Robyn Medicine, TBPL's Community Hub Librarian and Indigenous Relationships Supervisor (Thunder Bay Public Library, n.d.). Robyn was also involved with both Furniture Studio community engagement projects and has generously contributed her time and

knowledge to this MRP research. In a CBC story (Banning & Turner, 2022), Robyn describes the SOAR project as,

> "…a part of the history of Thunder Bay that's missing … If you Google St. Joseph's Residential School, there are very limited resources out there. Even at the Thunder Bay Public Library, we have very limited resources. And we need to recognize and acknowledge the fact that Thunder Bay had a residential school." (para. 7-9)

Robyn is also one of the library staff who noted Anishinabek author and journalist, Tanya Talaga praises in a Toronto Star article (2019) for the progressive work that they are doing. The article contrasts this with the ways Thunder Bay's leaders and police are ineptly handling the city's many problems. Talaga asserts that the TBPL,

> "… has emerged as an unlikely hero in a city in crisis ... It has become a leader in a city whose racial struggles are openly displayed for the world to see. Libraries have long been community hubs, places of collective learning and knowledge sharing. And this has been especially true – and especially important – in Thunder Bay in recent years." (para. 3-5)

Reading through the TBPL's Strategic Plan (Thunder Bay Public Library, 2018), it is evident that this work is aligned with their vision, values, and objectives. These objectives include challenging institutional and systemic racism, cultivating diversity and inclusion, mitigating the impact of housing insecurity and poverty, and encouraging and supporting youth (Thunder Bay Public Library, 2018).

While stating these objectives in a strategic plan is a small step towards equity, diversity, and inclusion that many organizations struggle to move beyond, it is

apparent that the TBPL has been acting upon them as well. As Talaga points out in her article, "They have done this not only by providing a safe space for readers, but by broadly interpreting their mandate" (para. 9). On a weekly basis, their Brodie branch bring in street outreach nurses who provide free and confidential, non-emergency support, and social workers who connect community members with services such as housing, mental health, and addiction support.

A library that offers their community these kinds of services is a far cry from the one that was first built in Thunder Bay (formerly named Fort William) in 1912. While a library in the area pre-dates this year, it marks when it moved into its own building and became free to the community (prior to then, annual fees were charged). Like many libraries in North America dating from this time, the building in which the Brodie branch currently resides, was initially built primarily with money received from the Carnegie Foundation – a fortune amassed by steel magnate, Andrew Carnegie (Spare, 2019). While Carnegie advocated for the need for philanthropy within society, it is hard to overlook that his fortune was built on the resources he, as a colonial settler, extracted from the stolen lands of Turtle Island's Indigenous Peoples. Through his philanthropic work and true to colonial form, Carnegie put himself in a position of power, allowing him to make decisions about how he would dole out this stolen wealth. In an article on the history of the Brodie branch, local author Brian G. Spare (2019) writes,

> "To receive the grant, certain requirements had to be met. The building had to conform to an architectural style … All the libraries had stairs leading up into them to symbolize elevating one's self [*sic*] through the acquisition of knowledge." (para. 2)

Figure 1 'Common Grounds' Table at Brodie branch below stained-glass (courtesy of Furniture Studio)

Figure 2 Fort William Elder, Sheila De Corte teaching on Animikii-waajiw (courtesy of Furniture Studio)

While Carnegie's philanthropic acts were well-intentioned, it is staggering to think how many barriers, such as these stairs, he created with his needless requirements in the 2,500+ libraries his foundation funded. In the Neoclassical style, the arched windows of the Brodie branch are topped with what, to many, would be seen as beautiful, stained glasswork. One of these features Carnegie himself, but the others depict, what many at the time the building was erected, considered to be the canon of literature. All these people are White men of European descent. During the co-design sessions for the first community engagement project in Thunder Bay (in 2020), one Indigenous community member rightfully suggested throwing stones through all of the White men's faces depicted in these windows.

Thunder Bay Public Library (TBPL) Projects

The two Thunder Bay community engagement projects this MRP examined followed a similar process and timeline over the course of 14-week school terms, with the design phase taking place in the first half of the terms and fabrication phase taking place in the latter half of the terms. At the outset of each project, students, faculty, a professional mentor, and the project's coordinator, Connie Chisholm, travelled 1,400 kilometers north from Sheridan College's Trafalgar campus to spend an extended weekend in Thunder Bay with Indigenous community members, sharing meals and conversations, and aiming to build relationships and trust among these design partners. Project participants connected and partook in smudgings[6], land-based activities on Animikii-waajiw[7] (Mt. McKay) on Fort William First Nation, and teachings led by local Knowledge Keepers and Elders (as

shown in Figure 2). These weekends also involved co-design activities where students listened to their design partners and brainstormed ideas together (as shown in Figure 3) with the goal of co-creating welcoming spaces that reflected the vision and values of the community. The information gathered during these activities provided the foundation for the concepts that students continued to develop in subsequent weeks back at the college.

During this conceptual development stage of the second project, students were also asked to use a self-reflexive practice to consider their relationships to Indigenous Peoples and the land, and to write a "personalized land acknowledgement". These acknowledgements were shared among the class and formed the foundation of a collective land acknowledgement which students prepared and later presented to community members ahead of their concept presentations.

In both projects, students and faculty travelled back to Thunder Bay mid-term to present refined concepts back to the project partners as scale models and digital presentations. These presentations also served as an opportunity for Indigenous community members and library staff to provide valuable design feedback that students had to incorporate before the pieces were fabricated.

The designs were fabricated during the second half of the term. During the first project in the Winter 2020 term, restrictions were placed on in-person learning at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and fabrication came to a halt, impacting the delivery and installation of the furniture in Thunder Bay. However, when pandemic restrictions were lifted, the students involved completed the pieces even though they had already satisfied their academic requirements and received course credit.

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[6] A smudging is a sacred purifying ceremony for many Indigenous Peoples, involving the burning of sacred medicines (for Anishinabek people typically sweetgrass, sage, cedar and tobacco) (Asikinack, n.d.).

[7] Animikii-waajiw is the Ojibwe name given to the sacred mountain of Fort William First Nation. The name translates to 'Thunder Mountain' or place where the thunderbird once landed (De Corte, 2023).

Figure 3 Community members and students working together during co-design session (courtesy of Furniture Studio)

Figure 4 Bookshelves for Waverley branch project
Note: similarity to sketch in Figure 3 (courtesy of Furniture Studio)

One of the students, David Lewis, is quoted in a CBC article (Leveque, 2021) as saying,

> "Over the span of the last year and a half, it's been really, a little trying at times, to sort of hold strong and continue creating the project on a long timeline … But also, we were dedicated to kind of getting the job done and staying true to what we had promised to the community" (para. 17).

In both projects the furniture was installed after the school term by a small group of students and faculty who flew back to Thunder Bay (see Figures 1 and 4 for examples of the work fabricated). After the installation of furniture in the 2023 project at the Waverley branch, the library held an opening and press conference with many of the community members in attendance and featuring talks by the project's Elder and organizers.

With every community engagement project, the intended learning outcomes are to provide students with real-world experience, along with applied research, collaborative design, and empathic skill building opportunities. With these Thunder Bay projects, the goal was also to provide opportunities to learn about Indigenous culture and ways of knowing, doing, and being, while empowering and giving agency to an underserved and marginalized community.

Research Questions

Having investigated these two Thunder Bay community engagement projects as case studies throughout this MRP, this research aims to answer the following questions:

- What impact did these projects have on their participants (both Indigenous community and students)?
- What learning outcomes and values did students achieve and demonstrate through their participation in these projects?
- Could these projects be seen as effective efforts in de-centering the curricula and pedagogies of a Western-centered program?
    - If so, how can the Furniture Studio continue and improve these efforts?
    - If not, how can the Furniture Studio change its approach to more effectively achieve this?

Literature Review

Efforts to De-center Curricula and Pedagogies

In a comparative review of over 200 published articles and book chapters on decolonizing curricula and pedagogies in post-secondary education globally by Shahjahan et al. (2022), the authors suggest four ways in which decolonizing is actualized:

1. Regularly critiquing and probing the positionality of knowledge in educational spaces

2. Constructing an inclusive curriculum beyond dominant knowledge systems

3. Fostering relational teaching and learning

4. Connecting educational institutions, community and sociopolitical movements

This review indicated that, within the North American context, these efforts are often referred to as "Indigenizing", although as Gladue (2020) states these terms are not synonymous; she distinguishes *Indigenization* as work that can only be done by Indigenous people, while *decolonization* is the collective work of all people. Shahjahan et al. (2022) indicated that these efforts often involved inward-facing actions, rather than forming outside relationships with community, and focused on "aligning curricular goals and pedagogy with existing institutional aims ... [and] advocated reinstating Indigenous content and perspectives across programs and curriculum wherein their epistemologies are centered or treated equally to Western paradigms" (p. 88). The review also noted that self-reflexive practices are common among Canadian and Australian researchers and suggested that among non-Indigenous researchers, this work involved "not only knowing about Indigenous history and people but also

critically examining [one's] relationships to Indigenous Peoples and their lands" (p. 90).

Decolonization Efforts in Art and Design Education

Within this research project, a review of the existing literature was conducted which focused on decolonizing work in post-secondary education. This review revealed a concerning absence of efforts to de-center curricula and teaching practices specifically within craft education. This tracks with what Marie Lo (2020) describes as, a "curious disengagement" and isolation within contemporary craft from current racial politics and discourse. This review did, however, uncover several exemplary studies from colonized lands across the globe within the broader field of art and design education which discuss similar topics and discourse to this research project. While these are limited to English-speaking programs, these studies examine efforts being made in Australia (Crouch, 2000), Aotearoa (New Zealand) (Feast & Vogels, 2021), South Africa (Perold-Bull, 2020), and Turtle Island (North America) (Gayed & Angus, 2018; Munroe & Payne, 2020).

Fostering Cultural Literacy in Australia

Crouch (2000) describes an effort in which the Western Australian School of Visual Arts at Edith Cowan University attempted to restructure its core visual art theory course from one which had a "Euro-American cultural emphasis". The objective of this effort was to realign the cultural mindsets and identities of students with that of the rich multicultural makeup of Australia's people, rather than that of the displaced Euro-American narrative which is prevalent within Australia.

The school considered two options for this restructure. One rooted in the European tradition of Enlightenment and "Modernity, with its search for commonality and 'universality' in the human experience" (p. 298). This option provided a single fixed vantage point. A second option took a post-colonial approach, which encouraged plurality and invited students to position themselves within Australia's diverse cultural construct.

In the end, the school opted for a hybrid of the two approaches, asking students to critically engage with and "confront the uneasy dialogue between the accepted and the unaccepted in cultural exchange, between the dominant and marginal voices that are evident in Australian culture" (p. 301). Crouch observed that this approach fostered *cultural literacy* within students. This literacy he argued, guards against the worst of postmodern appropriation, a "dumbing down" of the complexities of cultural value, and a *cultural essentialism* which breeds resistance to cultural change and development. Meanwhile, it creates an awareness of the value of cross-cultural negotiation and exchange in contemporary Australian art and design practice.

Incorporating Mātauranga Māori in Aotearoa (New Zealand)

While several institutions in Aotearoa (New Zealand) have now established dedicated Māori Studies departments, Feast & Vogels (2021), highlight a "concerning absence of decolonizing pedagogies across arts education" (p. 67). They examined a core first-year undergraduate course called "Mahitahi | Collaborative Practices" introduced within Auckland University of Technology's Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies aimed at addressing this absence.

Similar to Canada's ongoing and inadequate efforts to respect treaties with Indigenous Peoples and move towards truth and reconciliation, Feast & Vogels highlighted struggles within New Zealand's government and educational system to live up to the responsibilities and values laid out in Te Tirito o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) of partnership, protection, and participation. In 2002, the country's Ministry of Education put forth principles in its "Tertiary Education[1] Strategy" to partner with Māori communities to develop education that is "more supportive of te ao Māori (the Māori world) and which is inclusive of tikanga[2] Māori" (Jennings, 2004, p. 5).

"Mahitahi | Collaborative Practices" includes concepts of Mātauranga Māori[3] and tikanga Māori within a collaborative project-based course which is team taught by Māori and Pākehā (non-Māori) instructors. The course is "dedicated to teaching students how to *mahitahi* (meaning in Māori to work together as one, or to practice collaboration) through a Māori worldview" (p. 68). Feast & Vogels conducted a focus group with six instructors teaching the course and use grounded theory and constant comparative methods to draw out key concepts and findings from the data. They also recognize the importance of reflexively considering their respective positions to this research given that they are both Pākehā.

Through their analysis, the authors concluded that the course successfully contributes to a culturally sustaining curriculum and engages with the Treaty principles of partnership, protection, and participation. However, they point to criticism that Tuhiwai Smith et al. (2019) make around this approach to decolonizing and discuss its *mainstreaming* effect on Indigenous content within

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[1] Tertiary education in Aotearoa (New Zealand), like post-secondary or higher education elsewhere, includes universities, colleges, institutes of technology and polytechnic schools (Te Kawanatanga o Aotearoa | New Zealand Government, 2024).

[2] Tikanga are customary lore, practices, and traditions that have emerged from the accumulated knowledge of generations of Māori people. It describes behavioral guidelines for living and interacting with others (Feast & Vogels, 2021).

[3] Mātauranga Māori translates as "Māori knowledge of the Māori world" (Feast & Vogels, 2021, p. 68).

education which perpetuates White privilege and domination, rather than supporting Māori self-determination.

Rethinking the Canons Established within the Survey Course

Gayed & Angus (2018) noted that while upper-level undergraduate and graduate courses may center on more complex topics of power, postcolonial theory, critical race theory, and anti-racist critique, they argue that more significant change can come from rethinking introductory courses, stating:

> "Rethinking the survey course acknowledges the expanded notions of what constitutes "important" art while accepting responsibility for the histories we create as educators. Canons of art are actively established and reinforced through the questions or themes instructors choose to focus on, the sites or artists they study, and the methods of teaching they employ." (p. 229)

The authors described their efforts to develop a history of photography course at York University. Using data from the Open Syllabus Project, and a survey they conducted of history of photography courses within Ontario universities and a random sample of universities across the United States, they found many of these courses used textbooks within their curricula that were Eurocentric. The authors proposed restructuring these courses to center "voices that have been left out of the discussion" (p. 235) and point to a curriculum shift within OCAD University's introductory undergraduate courses as inspiration for their approach. The course that they subsequently develop discusses themes of power, resistance, and decolonization, while covering the photographic histories of Africa, East Asia, South Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, all before covering the more prevalent histories of Europe and North America.

While the Gayed & Angus study predominantly focused on curricular restructuring, the authors state "...it is important that theoretical advancement and decolonial praxis take place within the classroom as much as within the textbook" (p. 237).

Thinking and Living Decolonization

In a study which outlined her doctoral research, Karolien Perold-Bull (2020) critically examined three curricular projects aimed at *thinking* and *living* decolonization within the Visual Communication Design program at South Africa's Stellenbosch University.

She employed the theoretical framework of new materialism, a field of inquiry which explores the intra-relationship between concepts that are thought to be in opposition to one another and "grounded in the active process of relating" (p. 132). From this perspective, the author argued for the need to conduct research from within one's field of study as opposed to theorizing about it from an outside position, and by using embodied practices to think through doing. She highlighted the challenge of "working with the institutional structures provided all while establishing adequate space and the necessary impetus to challenge, renew and transform those very structures through their use" (p. 135).

Of the three curricular projects, the first of these was most relevant to this MRP. It involved a small group of students who engaged with local craftspeople to design a digital brochure for a non-profit organization. The organization's mandate was to support local craftspeople with skills which enabled them to make a sustainable living. Perold-Bull noted the risk this project posed to perpetuating the inequalities it set out to remove, and the dynamics at play during the project, given that the students were "predominantly White, middle class, young, and had access to Western higher education while the [craftspeople] were Black, lower class, older and had access to rich Indigenous knowledge" (p. 135).

The study found a new materialist practice presented opportunities for becoming attuned to recognizing

transformation and emancipation as they emerge in the moment. Additionally, the author indicated benefits of being transparent with students about her own reflexive practice:

> "It became easier for me as an educator to respond dynamically to the students' unique processes of subjectification by making select aspects of how I was trying to resist my own preconceived ideas explicit. I found the strength needed to lay bare my own insecurities in response to the students' experiences and, in tandem, they similarly seemed to find space to become vulnerable and risk themselves." (p. 140)

This insight provides a suggestion for a teaching practice that subverts the traditional Western teacher/student hierarchical dynamic and encourages more meaningful learning outcomes.

Centering Story-telling
In a study which recounted an effort undertaken by Howard Munroe, an assistant professor and member of the Métis Indigenous Nation, and Daniel Payne, a librarian from the Canadian settler population (2020), the authors described curriculum incorporated into OCAD University's History of Métis course within the school's Indigenous Visual Culture program. Central to this curriculum is,

> "… the understanding that story-telling forms the foundation not only of social relationships and human perception, but shapes 'material reality' … Yet in many Indigenous epistemologies, stories move beyond metaphor to become a conceptual 'prefix' to all understanding of the world,

demonstrating principles necessary for life." (p. 129)

Munroe, the course instructor, expressed concern to Payne at the depth of focus of the research materials students were sourcing within the course ahead of an assignment where they were to select an Indigenous object, belief, or personage, compile an annotated bibliography, write an essay, and create an artwork which told the story of their discovery process. Students were challenged to "find their own creative voices through the lens of Indigenous cultural knowledge systems beginning from literal meanings, through to fundamental, philosophical, and spiritual understandings" (p. 135). To prepare students for this assignment Payne employed an adapted approach to the library's standard research models which incorporated Indigenous visual culture methodologies.

To evaluate and critique student work, Munroe developed an Indigenous rubric aimed at being respectfully supportive but critically engaging. For this, Munroe drew upon the Seven Grandfather Teachings[4]:

> "… a set of characteristics that, in a literal interpretation, guide people in aspiring to live a good life, or *milo pimatisiwin*. On a fundamental level, the seven principles can serve as a rubric for evaluation that – through enacting the critique – offers philosophical, even spiritual guidance." (p. 135)

The authors noted that "the works that students produced does offer us tangible evidence that the goal of finding common pathways in creative research was successful" (p. 142). Additionally, this study illustrates the significant role that both collaborative endeavours and institutional supports such as libraries can play in

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[4] While they vary regionally and culturally, the Seven Grandfather Teachings are the most commonly shared set of teachings among the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island (Munroe & Hernandez Ibinarriaga, 2022).

aiding decolonizing education, emphasizing the holistic and adaptive approach required to truly affect change.

Indigenous Research Paradigms

In her talk "*Indigenous Paradigms in Practice: Relationships, Story and Academic Integrity*", Keeta Gladue (2020) lays out three principles of Indigenous paradigms in research: relationality, reciprocity, and respect. These are informed by Wilson (2001; 2008) and form the structure for the following section. Gladue suggests ways that using these principles could look in practice and points out considerations which allow research to more closely align with Indigenous ways of being (ontology), knowing (epistemology), and connecting (methodology). She underscores that Indigenous Peoples are made up of distinct sovereign nations and communities, and while "there is no single Indigenous culture, language, belief system, or way of knowing" (13:03) these paradigms represent the themes which have emerged from the diverse ways Indigenous Peoples express academic integrity in research. Additionally, Gladue notes the significant role interconnectedness plays, and the complex relationship to land which are fundamental within these paradigms.

Relationality

As Wilson (2008) states, "the shared aspect of an Indigenous ontology and epistemology is relationality (relationships do not merely shape reality, they *are* reality)" (p. 7). In considering relationality, Gladue emphasizes the significance of 'self-location' and 'teaching tracing', practices that allow one to provide context of one's experiences and position to the research, while recognizing from whom and where knowledge comes. She also stresses the importance of receiving permission from the community and participants involved regarding whether and how that knowledge can and should be used. In considering one's orientation to research methodology, Wilson (2001) suggests that,

"… rather than asking about validity or reliability, you are asking how am I fulfilling my role in this relationship? What are my obligations in this relationship? The axiology or morals need to be an integral part of the methodology so that when I am gaining knowledge, I am not just gaining in some abstract pursuit; I am gaining knowledge in order to fulfill my end of the research relationship." (p. 177)

Reciprocity

According to Gladue (2020), reciprocity is foundational to the interconnected chain of knowledge that is passed from generation to generation and helps to describe the weight of responsibility one has in keeping and passing forward that knowledge which reaches back 16,000 years. She states,

"The survival of our communities is predicated on the knowledge of this interconnected knowledge cycle, and reciprocity is how we acknowledge, value, and honour the work of sharing knowledge as well as those who strive to share that knowledge with us." (21:28)

Gladue suggests ways in which to practice this principle in research. These include acknowledging the individuals and the land who inform one's research, providing honoraria to those who contribute knowledge, deeply considering the role that one plays as a link in the chain of knowledge between past and future generations, and accepting the accountability one has to the greater community. The ethics of accountability is where, Wilson (2008) explains, Indigenous research paradigms differ substantially from dominant research practices, where common practice is to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. He suggests that appropriate acknowledgement of knowledge requires naming one's co-researchers and

participants, arguing, "How can I be held accountable to the relationships I have with these people if I don't name them? How can they be held accountable to their own teachers if their words and relationships are deprived of names?" (p. 63).

Respect

From an Indigenous perspective, Gladue (2020) describes respect as the way that,

> "... we bring together different communities, ways of knowing, doing, learning, and connecting to create new knowledge. It is through respect that we are able to connect and create new designs in the weave of relationality. Without respect or through disrespect we break the ties that bind us, leaving holes in the blanket of the universe." (27:45)

She differentiates between how individuals are identified within a dominant Western worldview and an Indigenous worldview. From a Western worldview, individuals are often defined by what one is or does, often putting undue emphasis on one's profession. Based on these characteristics, one is subsequently categorized to determine to which community one belongs. Conversely, an Indigenous worldview recognizes that there are multiple and layered dimensions to an individual, emphasizing a holistic view of an individual, and an individual's relation to community. From this perspective, "every member of the community is necessary; every member of the community serves the purposes of the survival and well-being of the whole, which means *absolutely* everyone is necessary and belongs" (29:27).

Recognizing issues with how Indigenous knowledge was being handled within research, the Assembly of First Nations (2009) published the *"First Nations Ethics Guide on Research and Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge"*. This guide lists the following principles which aim to support the respectful handling of First Nations knowledge:

- Communities will retain ownership, control, full access and possession of First Nations knowledge
- Communities will be fully informed of the frameworks and methodologies used to collect and interpret knowledge, and may grant or withhold its consent for its knowledge to be accessed, disseminated, or otherwise used
- Researchers, managers and communities will work together in full partnership in research that involves First Nations knowledge
- Researchers will respect First Nations knowledge and not claim it as their own work
- Researchers will acknowledge and disclose the origin of any First Nations knowledge used or referred to within research, and must disclose when an invention, result or finding is based on First Nations knowledge
- The benefit of any research, invention, or finding based on First Nations knowledge should be equitably shared with the community that provided the knowledge
- First Nations knowledge should be accessed and used in ways that empower the community; researchers should not seek to qualify First Nations knowledge or devalue its worth or the worth of its holders (pp. 5-6)

Indigenous Design Methodologies

The "*International Indigenous Design Charter*" (Kennedy et al., 2018) is a resource that has been developed to provide guidance for Indigenous and non-Indigenous designers, educators and students on how to respectfully represent Indigenous culture. It outlines the following 10 steps:

1. Indigenous led – Ensure Indigenous stakeholders oversee creative development and the design process.

2. Self-determined – Respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples to determine the application of traditional knowledge and representation of their culture in design practice.

3. Community specific – Ensure respect for the diversity of Indigenous culture by acknowledging and following regional cultural understandings.

4. Deep listening – Ensure respectful, culturally specific, personal engagement behaviours for effective communication and courteous interaction. Make sure to be inclusive and ensure that recognized custodians are actively involved and consulted.

5. Indigenous knowledge – Acknowledge and respect the rich cultural history of Indigenous knowledge, including designs, stories, sustainability and land management, with the understanding that ownership of knowledge must remain with the Indigenous custodians.

6. Shared knowledge – Cultivate respectful, culturally specific, personal engagement behaviours for effective communication. This involves courteous interaction to encourage the transmission of shared knowledge by developing a cultural competency framework to remain aware of Indigenous cultural realities.

7. Shared benefits – Ensure Indigenous people share in the benefits from the use of their cultural knowledge, especially where it is being commercially applied.

8. Impact of design – Consider the reception and implication of all designs so that they protect the environment, are sustainable, and remain respectful of Indigenous cultures over deep time: past, present and future.

9. Legal and moral – Demonstrate respect and honour cultural ownership and intellectual property rights, including moral rights, by obtaining appropriate permissions where required.

10. Charter implementation – Ask the question if there is an aspect to the project, in relation to any design brief, that may be improved with Indigenous knowledge. Use the Charter to safeguard Indigenous design integrity and to help build the cultural awareness of your clients and associated stakeholders. (pp. 10-28)

Methods

The participatory research conducted in this project used qualitative ethnographic methods which included a questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and focus groups to collect information on participants' experiences of the Furniture Studio's two Thunder Bay community engagement projects (in 2020 and 2023). It also used grounded theory in part for aspects of its data analysis based on the framework described by Chun Tie et al. (2019).

This research drew from, and aims to build upon similar studies within post-secondary art and design education, particularly Feast & Vogels (2021), Munroe & Payne (2020), Perold-Bull (2020), and Gayed & Angus (2018) which examined efforts to transform and de-center curricula and teaching practices. It diverges from these studies in its intentional grounding in an inclusive design framework.

Inclusive Design Framework

An inclusive design approach was employed that was participant-led, adhering to a power-sharing model of research (Nicoll, 2021). This approach was informed by the framework developed by Jutta Treviranus (2018) and the team at the Inclusive Design Research Centre which lays out three dimensions of inclusive design:

1. Recognize, respect, and design with human uniqueness and variability.

2. Use inclusive, open and transparent processes, and co-design with people who have a diversity of perspectives, including people that can't use or have difficulty using the current designs.

3. Realize that you are designing in a complex adaptive system. (para. 3)

Using this approach for this research project allowed for the collection of constructive information on a diversity of unique personal experiences and perspectives of the two community engagement projects, and an open analysis and interpretation of this information which was led by the participants themselves. Recognizing that even the most successful projects can be refined, and 'crafted', participants then used this information to ideate potential outcomes and improvements that will be used to inform how to adapt our approaches to future community engagement projects in the Furniture Studio.

Ethical Considerations

While this project was considered minimal risk research, given the involvement of human participants, it required and received approval from OCAD University's Research Ethics Board (REB # 2024-06). The ethical standards employed throughout the research adhered to and were guided by the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2022).

To comply with these standards the following ethical considerations and risk reductions were taken:

- Given my role as a teaching faculty member in the BCD program, recruitment excluded any students who were taking courses which I taught in the Winter 2024 school term to avoid risks associated with power dynamics, misconstrued obligations, and coercion, and to maintain high validity in the data collected.

- All participants provided informed consent. Information outlining the study's purpose,

research activities, potential benefits and risks, steps to ensure confidentiality, and incentives were documented in a consent form (see Appendix B) which each participant read and signed prior to participating. Participation was completely voluntary, and participants were reminded before each research activity of their free and ongoing option to participate or withdraw at any time during the project without influencing (either positively or negatively) their academic status and grades at Sheridan College, their access to the Thunder Bay Public Library and its services, or their relationship with OCAD University and the researchers involved with this project.

- Data collected from recruitment correspondence, questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups such as signed consent forms, questionnaire responses, audio and video recordings, and conversation transcripts have been password-protected, and securely stored on a local server and OCAD's OneDrive for the duration of the project. These data will be destroyed one year after the completion of this project.

Researcher Reflexivity

In addition to the institutional ethical standards discussed above, there are personal ethical considerations which have guided how I have conducted myself while facilitating this project.

Feast & Vogels (2021), Mott & Cockayne (2017), Nilson (2017), and Demi (2016) reflect on their positionalities within their research. In doing so, they disclose to the reader the biases that they face and the impacts that these have on their respective approaches to research. In a way these also serve as disclaimers, not to excuse themselves, but possibly to acknowledge the uncertainty, subjectivity, and unfixed nature of knowledge itself. This aligns with the ontological and epistemological views with which I

approach this research, one I would categorize as relativist and subjectivist according to Moon & Blackman's (2017) definitions.

Recognizing my own positionality (see Positionality) to this research project, there are issues at play around the power and privilege that come with my identity as a White, middle class, settler, who is also a heteronormative, cis-gendered man. I realize that people who share this intersectional identity (Crenshaw, 1989) have disproportionately and unfairly occupied positions within education, which allow them to determine policy, common practices, curricula and what has been deemed "relevant history". This research is an attempt to subvert this.

A framework (see Figure 5) was developed to critically question my own ethics, and motives, and help guide my approach to the research and its methods. In addition to the three dimensions of inclusive design described earlier, this was largely built on the Indigenous principles and research paradigms discussed in Keeta Gladue's talk for the Taylor Institute of Teaching and Learning (2020), Shawn Wilson's book, *"Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods"* (2008), and the Assembly of First Nations' *"First Nations Ethics Guide on Research and Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge"* (2009) (covered in more detail in the Literature Review). Accordingly, the overall intention of this framework was to help conduct research that builds positive relationship and relational accountability, that was collaborative and created reciprocal benefits for the participants, community and researchers alike, and was respectful of culture, differing perspectives, and the immense responsibility within Indigenous cultures of linking knowledge from past generations to future generations. While progressing from research proposal to dissemination of findings, the framework is intentionally non-linear, affording opportunities for iteration and circling back. It also forms a closed loop, recognizing that decolonizing work is ongoing, requiring adaptivity, and constant reexamining of one's efforts.
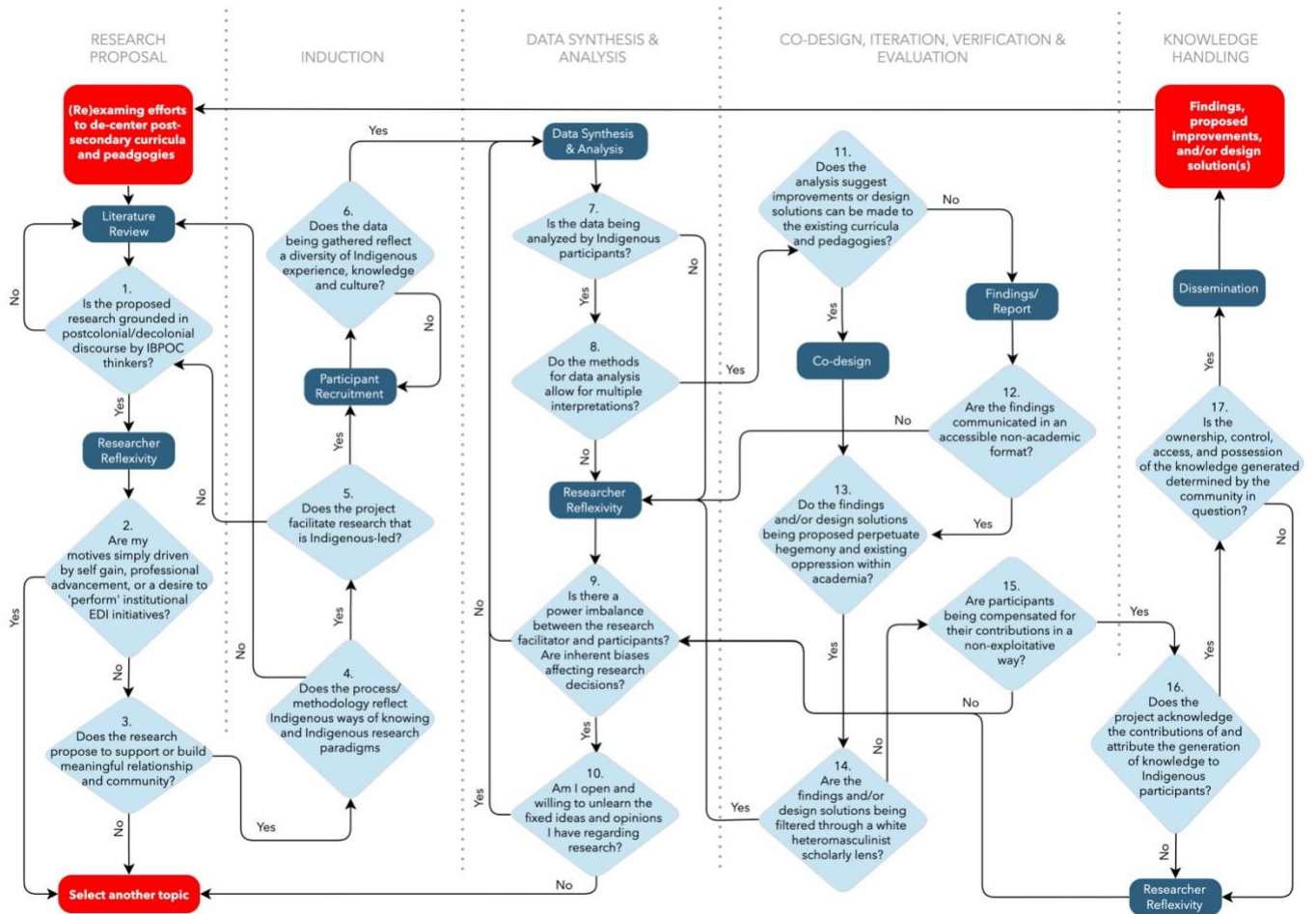
Figure 5 Personal framework to research
(Ford, 2023)

An important component of this framework was the practice of researcher reflexivity which occurred alongside my facilitation of the research activities. This practice closely resembled the approach that Caroline Nilson (2017) undertook to reflect on the ways that her own assumptions and cultural biases as a non-Indigenous, settler researcher working with Indigenous communities in Western Australia affected her study. This practice was cyclical and included the following steps:

1. Research Facilitation – Facilitation of questionnaire, interview, and focus groups, involving interactions and information gathering with participants.

2. Journalling – Audio recording of personal journal noting personal mindset and feelings, beliefs, values, thoughts, observations, actions and interactions regarding the research activities, participant/facilitator dynamics, and information gathered.

3. Reflexivity and Reflection – Listening to personal journal recordings and using reflexivity to question my biases and assumptions.

4. (Re)framing Perspective – Determining how to (re)frame my perspective and approach to the research.

Recruitment

Participants for this research were recruited from a list of Indigenous community members and students involved with the two community engagement projects being examined. Of this pool of prospective participants: 19 were Indigenous community members (9 from the 2020 project at the Brodie branch, and 10 from the 2023 project at the Waverley branch); and 17 were former students (9 from the 2020 project, and 8 from the 2023 project).

Prospective participants were contacted individually by email (see recruitment email template in Appendix A). This email informed them of the nature of the research and the associated research activities (an online questionnaire and three remotely conducted focus groups) and invited them to partake in as many or as few of these activities as they were interested and able to.

In-kind gift cards were offered to incentivize participation and compensate people for their time and contribution of knowledge to the focus groups. Electronic gift cards were used to avoid conflicts and logistical issues with having to mail and track whether physical gift cards were received. This also avoided having to collect and securely store unnecessary identifiable information such as mailing addresses. Gift cards were issued at the end of each focus group, allowing participants to partake in as many or as few of the research activities as they were interested in, and to withdraw from the project at any time while still being compensated commensurately for the time they had provided to the project. An automated notification when each participant claimed their gift card was issued by the website from which the cards were purchased.

Questionnaire

Of the 36 people contacted, 14 people expressed interest in the online questionnaire and were sent a link to access it prior to conducting any of the focus groups. Eight people submitted questionnaire responses: two from the 2020 project; and six from the 2023 project; three were Indigenous community members; and five were former students.

The questionnaire was built and managed using Microsoft Forms (see Appendix C). Responses were anonymously submitted but were also screened for identifiable information before being synthesized and analyzed. Access to the questionnaire closed just before the second focus group, so that information from its responses could be synthesized using open coding to identify key themes. These data were later verified and analyzed in the second and third focus groups as described in greater detail below.

Focus Groups

Of the 36 people contacted, 13 people expressed interest in the focus groups. To coordinate and schedule focus group dates and times, information on participants' availability was gathered and stored in a password-protected spreadsheet on a local server. Three focus groups took place over the span of a month. In the end, a total of 9 people participated in the focus groups, representing 25% of the prospective participant pool. Five of these participants were Indigenous community members: one from both projects (2020 and 2023); and four from the 2023 project. Four participants were former students: two from the 2020 project; and two from the 2023 project.

All three focus groups were conducted remotely as Microsoft Teams meetings and took approximately two hours per session. Online whiteboard software (Miro) was utilized and set up with collaborative multimodal activities generally following those described in Atomic Object's "*Design Thinking Toolkit*" (Crawford, 2024).

Semi-structured Interview

One Indigenous community member expressed that while they were not interested in participating in the focus groups, they would like to have a one-on-one interview to share insights about their experience of the 2020 project.

This was set up as a semi-structured interview, was conducted remotely over Microsoft Teams, and took approximately one hour. A list of open-ended questions (see Appendix D) was shared with this participant beforehand and formed the structure of the conversation. Video and audio from this interview were recorded, and later transcribed for open thematic coding. This participant was compensated with a gift card for their time and contribution of knowledge in the same manner as were the focus group participants.
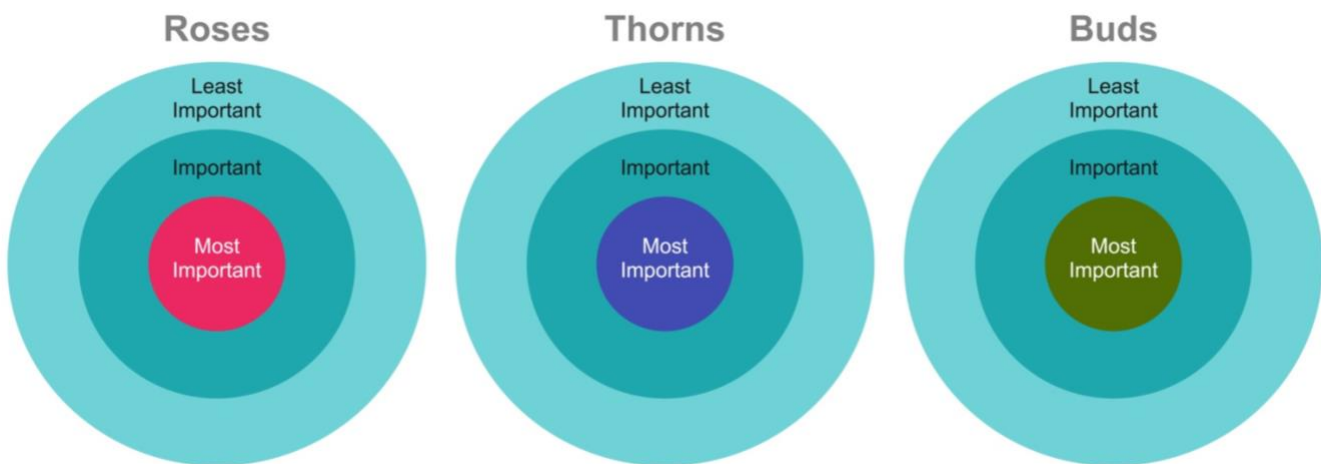
Figure 6 Set-up for the 'What's on Your Radar' activity based on the description in Atomic Object's *"Design Thinking Toolkit"* (Crawford, 2020)

Focus Group 1

This first focus group session aimed to collect information on the impacts, outcomes, and personal experiences people had with the two community engagement projects.

Eight people participated in this focus group: one Indigenous community member from both projects (2020 and 2023); three Indigenous community members from the 2023 project; and two former students

The structure of the session involved a short icebreaker followed by two design thinking activities. The first of these activities, called 'Rose, Thorn, Bud' (Crawford, 2018a) asked participants to consider their experiences of the projects and identify positive aspects (roses), negative aspects (thorns), and areas of opportunity (buds). This information was written out by participants on digital sticky notes and then placed in the appropriate column (rose, thorn, or bud) on the whiteboard.

The second of these design activities, called 'What's on Your Radar?' (Crawford, 2020) had participants collectively analyze the roses, thorns, and buds from the first activity and determine which of these resonated most with the group. On the whiteboard, three separate 'radars', each consisting of three concentric circles were laid out (see Figure 6). As a group, participants were asked to rank each rose on the first radar, placing most important items closest to the center, and least important items farthest from the center. The same ranking exercise was undertaken for the thorns and buds in the remaining two radars.

Focus Group 2 & 3

The second and third focus groups had the same structure but different groups of participants. Each session focused of verifying and analyzing data gathered in the questionnaires, the interview, and first focus group activities, and co-designing potential improvements and prioritizing potential outcomes to

engaging with Indigenous community through the types of projects being investigated.

Two people participated in the second focus group: one Indigenous community member from the 2023 project; and one former student from the 2020 project. Three people participated in the third focus group: one Indigenous community member from both projects (2020 and 2023); and two Indigenous community members from the 2023 project.

The sessions, once again, began with a short icebreaker activity followed by two design thinking activities. The first of these activities was an 'Impact & Effort Matrix' which was based on Atomic Object's 'Difficulty & Importance Matrix' activity (Crawford, 2018d). For this activity the whiteboard was set up with rectangular matrices, each divided into four quadrants and featuring x-axes from low effort to high effort moving from left to right, and y-axes from low impact to high impact moving from bottom to top (see Figure 7). Each participant was given two of these matrices, each with a set of pre-written sticky notes. One set of sticky notes listed potential outcomes and the second set listed potential improvements (see Appendix E) both based on the data collected from questionnaires, the interview, and the first focus group activities and discussion. Participants were then asked to position items on each of the matrices, outcomes on one, and improvements on the other, ranking them in terms of how they perceived the effort required and the impact on the project's experience for each.

Subsequently, the items were categorized as follows based on the quadrant in which they were placed:

- High Value – Items placed in the upper left quadrant were classified as "easy wins", being of high value and impact, and requiring little effort.

- Strategic – Items placed in the upper right quadrant were classified as "need-to-haves", requiring great effort, but having a high value and impact on the project.

High Impact

| HIGH VALUE
easy wins | STRATEGIC
need-to-haves |
| DISTRACTIONS
amusements | LUXURY
want-to-haves |

Low Effort / **High Effort**

Low Impact
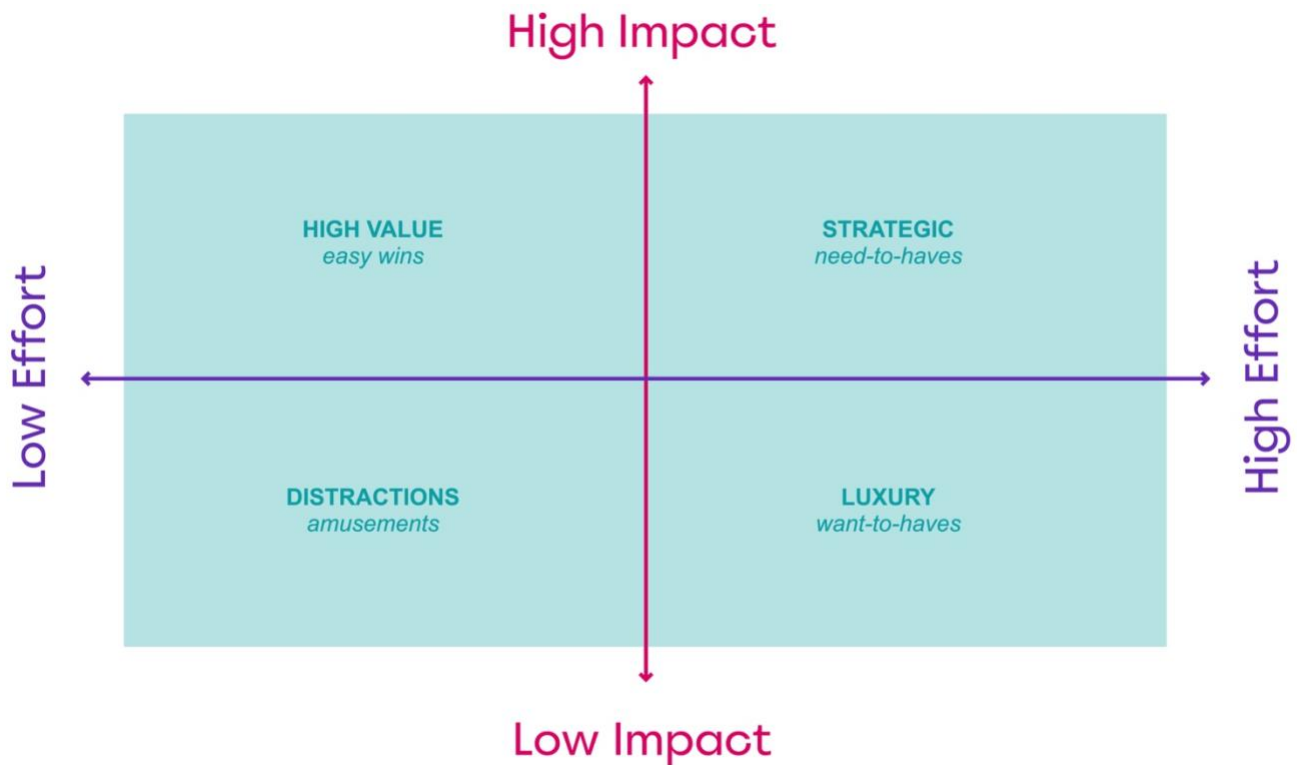
Figure 7 Set-up for the 'Impact & Effort Matrix' activity based on the description in Atomic Object's *"Design Thinking Toolkit"* (Crawford, 2018d)

- Luxury – Items placed in the lower right quadrant were classified as "want-to-haves", requiring a great amount of effort, but having little value or impact on the project.
- Distractions – Items placed in the lower left quadrant were classified as "amusements", having little value or impact on the project, and requiring little effort.

The second design activity for these sessions called 'How Might We...?' (Crawford, 2018c) asked participants to review the outcomes and improvements from each of their respective matrices in the previous activity that were found to be 'strategic', of 'high value' and which most resonated with them.

Similar items were combined, and participants collectively formulated the most appropriate wording for specific questions for these items starting with the words "How might we...?", as in "How might we achieve a given outcome or improvement?". After the questions were settled on, participants were then given time to write their individual answers to these questions on sticky notes and post them on the whiteboard. Afterwards these answers were discussed among the group.

A third design activity called 'I Like, I Wish, What if?' (Crawford, 2018b) was planned for both the second and third focus group to further verify the information, but had to be cancelled in both cases due to time restrictions.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this report was collected through questionnaires, focus groups, an interview, and researcher reflexivity exercises and documented through written questionnaire responses, audio and video recordings, transcripts, digital whiteboards, and audio journal reflections.

Grounded theory was used in part for aspects of the data analysis, based on the framework described by Chun Tie et al. (2019). This employed a constant comparative methodology to draw out themes from the various research activities. Open thematic coding using qualitative analysis software (Dedoose) was undertaken to initially synthesize the information gathered from questionnaire responses, the interview transcript, and the transcript and whiteboard from the first focus group. Themes emerging from this synthesis were used to create sets of sticky notes for potential outcomes and improvements (see Appendix E) which were incorporated into the design activities in the second and third focus groups. This data was then verified, interpreted, and analyzed by participants within these activities. Coding was used again to analyze data from the second and third focus groups. Themes emerging from this analysis were compared with those from the earlier coding exercise to develop theories.

Data gathered throughout the project has been aggregated before being disseminated in this final report. However, participants were given the option to agree to have statements from focus groups and the interview quoted and attributed to them by name in this final report (see the consent agreement in Appendix B).

Additionally, audio journal reflections formed an important step in my reflexivity practice, allowing me to sit with my privilege and bias, and helping to determine how to (re)frame my perspective and approach to the research project.

Findings

This chapter presents the findings from data collected in the three participant-led research activities: the questionnaire, the interview, and the focus groups. Findings are presented chronologically because data from the early research activities (the questionnaire, interview, and first focus group) informed, and were verified and expanded upon in the later research activities (the second and third focus groups) by participants.

Findings from Questionnaire

The questionnaire was an initial collection point for information on the impacts, outcomes, and personal experiences people had with the two community engagement projects. While the responses submitted were anonymous, they did indicate in which of the two projects the respondents had participated (either the 2020 project at the Brodie branch, or the 2023 project at the Waverley branch), and the roles that the respondents had played in each project (either an Indigenous community participant, or a student participant). General questions directed at all respondents intended to collect information on both positive and negative impacts, benefits, and pain points that everyone experienced with the projects, while questions specific to each role (Indigenous community participant or student participant) attempted to gather more discrete information on these two distinct perspectives to the projects (see Appendix C for questions).

Indigenous Community Insights
Data from the questionnaire responses revealed that all of the Indigenous respondents experienced a sense of feeling heard and valued through their involvement with these community engagement projects:

"I felt heard. My ideas were turned into reality, along with others who participated in the project. I felt like we were honouring the Indigenous Peoples of this area and creating a more inclusive space while also encouraging reconciliation between TBPL and Indigenous participants and library users"

– Anonymous Indigenous participant

A number of Indigenous respondents also expressed feelings of pride and accomplishment for their contributions to the projects and described their efforts and the project output (the furniture) as ways of honouring Indigenous Peoples and culture. One Indigenous respondent wrote:

"This was a once in a lifetime experience. Every time I walk into Thunder Bay Public Library and use the furniture that was created through this project, I am filled with a source of pride but also comfort. This furniture has not only made the space more usable and inviting but it gives it a unique touch that simply cannot be achieved with commercial office furniture. This furniture is a beautiful way to honour the Indigenous people that occupy this land and the programming space."

– Anonymous Indigenous participant

While another respondent expanded upon these feelings, describing a sense of ownership, and shared accomplishment that reinforced a connection to the work, the space, and the community of people involved:

"Having input in the design of the Indigenous space and seeing the fruition of our collaboration, the process gave an overall feeling of ownership in the outcome and everyone's input was incorporated, [providing a] feeling of community and connection."

– Anonymous Indigenous participant

While the questionnaire feedback from Indigenous respondents could be seen as overwhelmingly positive, one Indigenous respondent noted a desire to include non-Indigenous people from the TBPL's Indigenous Action Council (IAC), expressing concern over leaving them out of the process.

A general pattern which emerged from the responses was an appreciation for the collaborative nature of the project and the rewarding aspects of this type of approach. One respondent wrote:

"This was the best collaborative process I have been involved in. We not only learned how a collaborative process can produce results [in] which we all could see our contribution and truly feel like partners in the design, [but] what we were able to contribute was treated as valuable and important. I believe the students and instructors who engaged us in this process also learned much about Indigenous ways and how rich a product could be when including the Indigenous perspective in any planning and design."

– Anonymous Indigenous participant

As suggested in the respondent's quote above, a significant opportunity for students and instructors involved in these projects was learning about Indigenous culture. As the course instructor in the 2023 project, I can attest that I came away from my experience working alongside and co-creating with Indigenous people, with a much greater awareness and appreciation for Indigenous culture, and ways of knowing, doing, and being.

Student Insights

A few student respondents confirm similar experiences. One student respondent describes the enduring impact that Elder, Shelia De Corte's teachings had on them:

"I often think of Sheila's water walks, and the songs she sang for us. The experience of doing activities in Thunder Bay has stuck with me as a highlight of my education."

– Anonymous student participant

Questions directed specifically at students aimed to gather insights on their distinct experiences, and the learning outcomes which resulted from their involvement in these projects. While the majority of student respondents noted learning outcomes associated with furthering their knowledge of furniture design and fabrication, a few also mentioned the benefits of using a co-design process and working with community members:

"The biggest learning outcome for me was how to truly listen to what I was hearing from people, without my own design biases or wants, and how to design within the true desires of the community based on what I heard."

– Anonymous student participant

Similar to the feedback received from Indigenous respondents, student responses depict an overly positive experience with the two projects. When questioned about the projects' pain points, one student respondent discussed difficulties hearing about issues of housing insecurity and drug use within the community, and expressed concerns about having no direct impact on these issues through the project.

Another student respondent disclosed social challenges they faced, and suggested a more structured introduction to the project.

Findings from Semi-structured Interview

Instead of joining a focus group, one participant had a preference for a one-on-one interview. A list of open-ended questions (see Appendix D) provided a framework for the conversation. This interviewee had participated in the 2020 project as an Indigenous community member, but was also a staff member with the TBPL. Consequently, the interview revealed considerable and insightful information about the project and the library itself.

Building Relationships

As suggested by Gladue (2020), Styres (2017), Wilson (2008), and outlined under the Indigenous Research Paradigms section in the Literature Review, building relationships are a significant aspect of Indigenous research methods. Throughout the interview, the interviewee agrees with this view, and describes the relationships they built within this community engagement project as "meaningful". However, they also discussed further opportunities for relationship building within the project:

> "I remember there was at least once, maybe twice that [participants] flew in and out of Thunder Bay on the same day, and that really rubbed me the wrong way … One, I think that's too flashy. I think people in Thunder Bay think, "Wow! You must be rich." And two, I think it speaks to a pace that [you're] running at that just needs to be slower. If [the] schedule could allow for it, I think if you come up, you stay at least a night, if not two nights, and just do things slower … if you're going to build relationship here, just be here for a couple

days and don't try to cram ten things into your day – *just be*. I think that's really key to relationship building because then there are things that can kind of bubble up more organically that you can't schedule for and that are only going to come up because you were hanging out with people in Thunder Bay."

Impacts on the Students

Through these two community engagement projects, developing an intercultural competency could be seen as one of the intended learning outcomes for non-Indigenous students (and instructors alike). The interviewee candidly shares their thoughts about the lack of Indigenous knowledge and exposure with which students came into the project and the educational opportunities that they felt came from the students' experiences in Thunder Bay:

> "It was very obvious that none of those people had ever talked to an Indigenous person before. And so, I would definitely say that there was a lot of learning, for sure. In that first year [the 2020 project], I think there was one person of colour and everyone else was White … They did a snowshoe at Mount McKay and barely any of the Indigenous participants came because it was like -40°C that day. But all the students came, plus our guide who was Indigenous – a young guy from Fort William. And I think that, from what I remember hearing at the time, was super meaningful to students to experience because I remember, Beau [the guide] was sharing the traditional stories of Mount McKay and Animikii-waajiw while we went up. So, I think that was definitely a very educational experience for them."

The interviewee continued by mentioning the added work which the students' poor competency skills put on the Indigenous people involved in the project, but downplayed it saying, "... I personally love teaching, and they were a fun group of students".

Later in the conversation the interviewee shared, "tips for cross-cultural communication" with Anishinabek people, stating that, "... it would take a lot for them to tell you that you did something wrong, or that they disagree with something". They explained, that in the context of providing design critique and feedback, which occurred during concept presentations at the mid-point of both projects, this could be problematic. They suggest the use of more explicit questioning about specific aspects of a given design or concept.

Indigenous Ideas and Representation

One of the concerns in these two projects was the handling of Indigenous ideas and imagery and the nuance surrounding cultural appropriation. Kelly & Kennedy (2016) use a number of case studies to discuss the challenge of navigating Indigenous representation in design and the often difficult task of "identifying what is appropriate and what is appropriation" (p. 154). While the intention in both community projects was to create a space that expressed Indigeneity, it was important that Indigenous concepts, values, and imagery emerged directly from the Indigenous people involved, not

non-Indigenous students or instructors. When questioned about cultural appropriation and the manner in which Indigenous ideas were incorporated into the completed furniture pieces, the interviewee showed no concern, and expressed that many of the pieces, using the 'Common Grounds' Table from the Brodie project (see Figure 1) as an example, respectfully reflected Indigenous ideas of connectivity.

Another concern of these projects was the inclusion criteria for participant recruitment. Given that the scope of both projects was to co-create furniture for the TBPL's Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs), community participation was open to anyone who self-identified as *Indigenous*, not just people from local First Nations communities. As a result of these broader recruitment parameters, the project captured a much more diverse demographic than just the local Anishinabek people. This raised concerns for the interviewee when it came to representation and imagery from other Indigenous cultures within the furniture.

In the 2020 project at the Brodie branch, one of the tables designed for the IKC space featured imagery which was heavily influenced by a Mi'kmaq participant and the traditional quillwork patterns of their culture (see Figure 8). The interviewee questioned whether it was appropriate to include Mi'kmaq-inspired imagery on Anishinabek land, a vast distance from Mi'kmaq territory.

Figure 8 Table inlay inspired by Mi'kmaq quillwork (courtesy of Furniture Studio)

Impacts on the Library

Given that the interviewee was also a TBPL staff member, their interview revealed information about some of the racist issues they had confronted while working at the library. They described an environment with "deep institutional resistance to anything Indigenous", citing an incident during the first community project where they had to deal with the backlash of having a smudging without giving the two-week notice required by library policy.

Especially given this resistance, they expressed an appreciation for the high-quality, Indigenous design that came about from these projects:

> "It was quite meaningful, I think, to have Indigenous inspired designed and co-created furniture in the library take up so much space because every inch of space has to be really fought for."

Both projects resulted in a reimagined IKC more than double in size than its previous form and which became the focal point within its respective library branch.

Impacts on the Indigenous Community

While positive impacts to students and the library were apparent, the interviewee expressed strong concerns over the lack of benefits to Indigenous participants, suggesting ways where these types of projects could provide more technical skills and "build capacity for Indigenous young people in Thunder Bay to enter furniture design". During the conversation, they questioned whether Sheridan College could bring programs and education to Indigenous people in the North:

> "If institutions are serious about reconciliation and working with Indigenous people, they should be taking their programs into communities, and I know Lakehead and Confederation College do that in remote fly-in communities

throughout Northwestern Ontario a bit … And so, I just wonder what it would look like for Sheridan to partner with a First Nation to bring training like that to community."

On a smaller scale, which the interviewee suggests may be more appropriate to the scope of these types of community projects, they propose that adding one or two technical workshops into a weekend visit for Indigenous participants may help to "spark an interest" in furniture design or woodworking.

Power Dynamics

From the discussion on potential benefits to Indigenous participants, the conversation transitioned to the topics of poverty tourism and White saviourism. White saviourism or the "White Saviour-Industrial Complex", a term coined by Teju Cole (2012), "encapsulates a myth that non-White communities need White outsiders to rescue them" (Helmick, 2022, p. 9). The interviewee suggests that aspects of these community engagement projects have "a flavour of" poverty tourism and White saviourism. They state,

> "Thunder Bay has been in the media, so much for being so racist and so awful, and that racism is often very deadly – *literally deadly*. And so, I know it's kind of sexy and interesting for a group of progressive people from Toronto to come up and help poor Native people in Thunder Bay… it's like kind of exotic in that way."

They argue that these projects verge on these controversial practices because of the significant power difference which exists within them between the community, and students, project liaison, and instructors. In turn, they discuss the importance of building meaningful relationship:

"In general, in life, it pisses me off and annoys me when the only contact and relationship that White people have with Indigenous people is one where there's this power difference where White people there are in a position to help and that's the only time that they have contact with Indigenous people. To me, that says you don't actually have *true* relationship and friendship with Indigenous people because the only time you're there is to be helpful."

Findings from Focus Groups

The study involved three focus groups which all structured around design activities. These activities used online whiteboard software which provided participants collaborative multimodal means for interacting and sharing within the sessions. Participants were also encouraged to expand upon what they wrote during these design activities and often provided a reasoning for their decisions.

Focus Group 1

Like the questionnaire, the first focus group was a collection point for information on the impacts, outcomes, and personal experiences people had with the community projects. The two design activities within this first group aimed to uncover thicker data, essentially information that provided more context, than that which was collected from questionnaire responses.

The first activity, the 'Rose, Thorn, Bud' (described in detail in the Methods chapter) asked participants to write out positive aspects (roses), negative aspects (thorns), and areas of opportunity (buds). The second activity, 'What's on Your Radar?', then asked participants to collectively rank the importance of each of these items on three radars, a 'roses radar' a 'thorns radar', and a 'buds radar'.

While the sticky notes on the 'roses radar' (see Figure 9) captured most of the feedback from the group participants, the group discussion also revealed additional insightful information. All participants expressed an appreciation for the interesting variety of activities which took place during the co-design weekend, and the unstructured and informal opportunities that these activities afforded for meaningful relationship building between community and student participants. Community participants also valued the opportunities these activities presented to share with students their appreciation of and connection to the land. One student noted how influential the land was in the design of the furniture. Findings from these activities indicated that the following positive aspects most resonated with the focus group participants:

- Creating opportunities for community to feel heard, and provide input on the design of a public space which is intended to serve them

- Improving a space, and making it feel more welcoming and inclusive

- Having the opportunity to work collaboratively on a project and to see design ideas go from concept to reality

- Gaining a deeper understanding of Indigenous life and culture, and working to dispel some of the negative rumours associated with Thunder Bay

The discussion over the ranking of thorns did provide greater context of the projects' pain points and barriers, however, the sticky notes on the 'thorns radar' (see Figure 10) do succinctly summarize its key points. Findings from these activities indicated that the following negative aspects most resonated with the focus group participants:

- Communication between Indigenous and student participants after the co-design weekend was only transmitted through the project liaison and course instructors

- Project timeline did not allow enough opportunities for design revisions
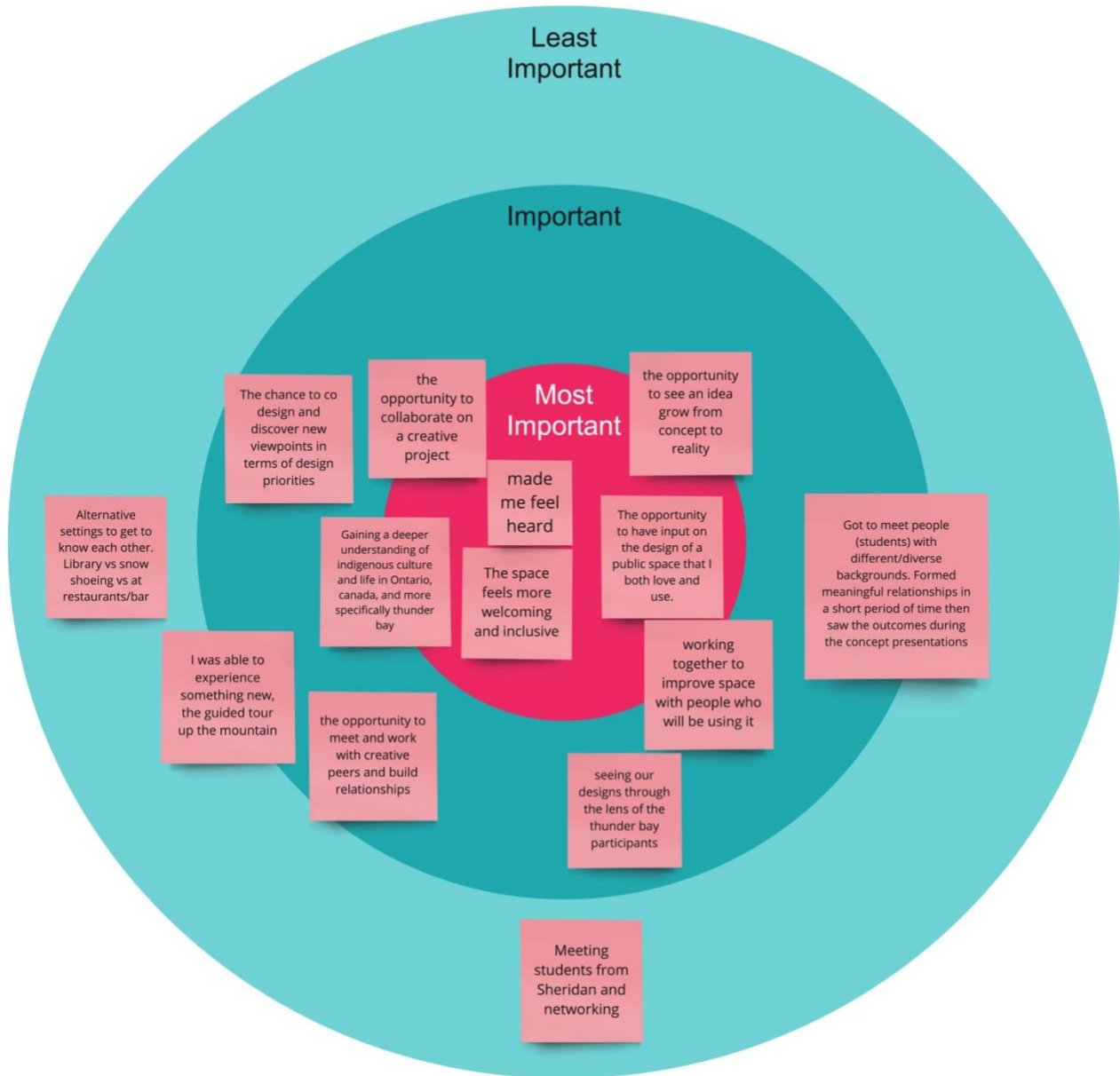
Figure 9 Roses radar from 'What's on Your Radar?' activity

Thorns

Least
Important

Important

Not all ideas were
achievable. Two
days was not
enough time. Felt
rushed at times.

our time in
thunder
bay felt
very rushed

Would be nice to
see all IAC
members
participate; non-
indigenous folks
too

Most
Important

all communication
after we left thunder
bay went through
the profs which
often led to
misunderstandings
of intent

challenges of
distance between
locations. its hard
to get quick
feedback when so
far apart

the days were
long and
needed more
breaks to
refresh energy

Space is
limited at
each library
branch

because we were
constrained to one
semester we weren't
able to have any
opportunities to
make revisions
based on feedback

Some people may
have experienced
barriers in
continuing on in
project: no internet
or laptop to join this
from home

wish the
lighting was
better in
the library
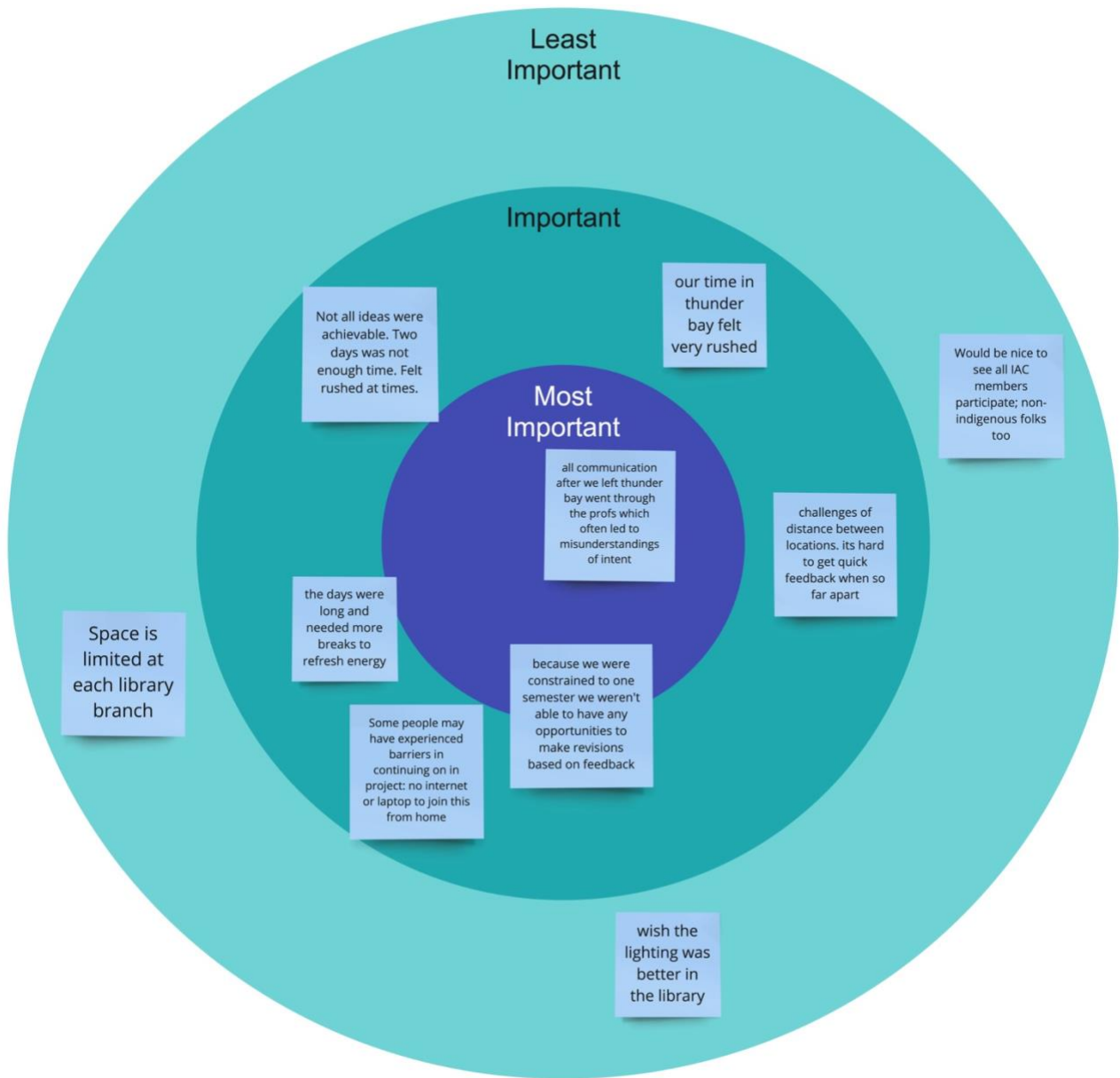
Figure 10 Thorns radar from 'What's on Your Radar?' activity

Figure 11 Buds radar from 'What's on Your Radar? activity

- Visits to Thunder Bay (for co-design and concept presentations) felt very rushed and did not allow for sufficient breaks

- Challenges around getting feedback due to the distance between Thunder Bay and the college

In response to these activities, focus group participants proposed several suggestions for project improvements.

Focus group participants supported the idea of increased opportunities for interaction, communication, sharing of ideas, and relationship building between Indigenous community members and students throughout the project. A key aspect to this discussion was that this should be a communication channel between students and Indigenous participants, rather than one that goes through the project liaison or course instructor. They also stressed that this should not involve sharing personal emails or require active back-and-forth discussion, but rather should be a place where everyone involved could input and see shared ideas. Participants proposed creating a blog, online whiteboard, or shared Google document, for this purpose. They also suggested that a blog, along with increased use of social media platforms such as Instagram could be ways to share information about the project's progress more broadly with the public and potentially generate interest and bring in future funding for these types of projects. Everyone also agreed that getting more funding for these types of projects was important, but this point did not generate much discussion.

Student participants put forth the suggestion of a longer project timeframe, but while discussing it quickly realized the value of deadlines and time constraints and how this reflected and helped prepare students for real-world scenarios. They openly wondered whether more direct lines of communication between them and Indigenous participants may help to resolve the time pressure they felt within the project. When prompted about whether the project should be drawn out over two semesters, student participants expressed concerns over what concessions they would need to make in other courses to accommodate this longer timeframe and seemed unwilling to make these concessions. Student participants from the 2020 project noted that the restrictions placed on their project due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and questioned whether they would have been able to complete the project within the school term without these restrictions. All student participants felt they would have benefitted from an additional two weeks of focused fabrication time.

One student participant suggested expanding the scope of the project to include exterior spaces. All participants agreed that outdoor spaces were important and could be impactful to include in these types of projects, but as one Indigenous participant noted, most of the library branches in Thunder Bay do not have outdoor spaces other than parking lots, stairs, and ramps.

All focus group participants thought that regular project reviews (such as this research project) would be useful but felt that they should occur shortly after the project was completed.

Finally, community participants were unanimously in favour of providing co-design activity questions ahead of time to allow people to consider answers beforehand, which they felt would capture more well-thought-out ideas and require little additional effort on the part of project organizers.

Focus Group 2 & 3

The second and third focus groups shared the same script and structure but were made up of two different groups of participants. These groups focused of verifying, interpreting, and analyzing data gathered in the questionnaires, the interview, and the first focus group activities. Focus group participants then ranked and iterated on potential outcomes and improvements for future community projects. These focus groups once again incorporated two design activities, the first of which, an 'Impact & Effort Matrix' (described in detail in the Methods chapter), asked participants to individually rank two sets of pre-

written sticky notes in terms of how they perceived the effort required and the impact on the project's experience for each. One set of sticky notes listed potential outcomes and the second set listed potential improvements (see Appendix E). Both sets were compiled using data collected and synthesized from questionnaires, the interview, and the first focus group activities and discussion. Each focus group participant completed their own two matrices, one for outcomes and another for improvements. While there was variation in these matrices, patterns and commonalities did emerge regarding how participants perceived the impact and effort for some key outcomes and improvements.

The following project *outcomes* emerged as high value 'easy wins' that require little effort, but were deemed to have a significant impact on the projects (listed from highest to lowest impact as ranked in the matrices):

- Allowing community to gain insight into the furniture design/making process
- Collaborative skill building
- Intergenerational interaction
- Expanding sources for design inspiration
- Feeling heard

The following project *outcomes* were determined to require considerable effort, but were deemed to be strategic 'need-to-haves' given the significant impact they have on the projects (listed from highest to lowest impact as ranked in the matrices):

- Honouring Indigenous ideas
- Developing a deeper understanding of Indigenous culture
- Building relationships
- Improving inclusivity in a public space
- Providing a sense of ownership in a public space
- Creating opportunities for more diverse design feedback

- Providing opportunity for community-driven design
- Creating opportunities for students to fabricate large-scale work
- A step towards reconciliation
- Exposing Indigenous youth to potential career/educational opportunities
- Applying students' design and fabrication skills in the real-world
- Creating high-quality custom furniture for the library at a reduced cost
- Exposing students to broader social issues and design problems

The following project *improvements* emerged as high value 'easy wins' that require little effort, but were deemed to have a significant impact on the projects (listed from highest to lowest impact as ranked in the matrices):

- Providing design activities and questions ahead of co-design
- Publicly sharing project progress in a blog or on social media
- More structured social introduction
- Creating more opportunities for community feedback prior to fabrication

The following project *improvements* were determined to require considerable effort, but were deemed to be strategic 'need-to-haves' given the significant impact they have on the projects (listed from highest to lowest impact as ranked in the matrices):

- Creating greater opportunities for skill building among Indigenous youth (i.e., technical furniture making workshop)
- More time for co-design process between students and community

- Create ongoing direct communication opportunities between students and community (not through professors)

- Extending project beyond a single school term (14 weeks)

- Greater preparatory training in cultural sensitivity and competency for students

- More funding

- Expanding scope of projects to include other library spaces (potentially exterior)

- Creating greater opportunities for non-Indigenous community participation

- More time for students to fabricate work

A few Indigenous participants expanded upon the pre-written sticky note set, providing additional ideas for *improvements*. These included:

- More media coverage before and after the project

- Adding Ojibwe translation to activities

- Conducting part of the co-design session in an Indigenous space (not just the library)

- Connecting with Hammarskjold High School and their tiny homes program

- Providing cedar water for everyone during the co-design activities

- Concluding the project with a traditional feast

The final design activity in these focus groups, 'How Might We...?' (described in detail in the Methods chapter), invited participants to collectively analyze and interpret the potential outcomes and improvements which most resonated with them from the 'Impact & Effort Matrix' activity. The questions and answers for the 'How Might We...?' activities from both the second and third focus groups have been consolidated in Figures 14 and 15.

Honouring Indigenous ideas, developing a deeper understanding of Indigenous culture, and building relationships garnered more attention in both sessions than other topics, and were talked about at length. Focus group participants discussed the importance of listening, incorporating Elder and land-based teachings, reflecting Indigenous values and culture through the work, and ways in which Indigenous community could drive the project and be acknowledged for their contributions. It was also suggested that future projects could work directly with First Nations communities, or with organizations that have pre-existing programming with Indigenous youth to develop more tangible skills for people in this demographic.

While it was suggested that questions start with the words "How might we...", participants in the third focus group took creative liberties, coming up with alternative wording in regard to questions about relationship building which proved to be an informative and effective discussion. These focus group participants emphasized the need for *meaningful* relationship building through these projects, calling for openness, willingness, kindness, trust, and mutual respect among participants and project organizers.

Potential Outcomes

How might we honour Indigenous ideas and develop a deeper understanding of Indigenous culture?

- Listening to Indigenous participants and incorporating those ideas
- Being out on the Land and incorporating Elder teachings
- Involving Elders
- Allow Indigenous participants to collaborate on the design process
- Acknowledge Indigenous participants when talking about the project
- Include the names of Indigenous participants on each of the furniture pieces
- Listening, cultural knowledge exhange and experiences. The co-design process itself honours Indigenous ideas

How might your participation in a project give you a sense of ownership?

- Able to see the fruits of my labour
- Welcoming space reflective of Indigenous values, traditions and activities
- Reflection of yourself and particpation (ideas)

How might we improve the accessibility of the library space to reflect the diversity of the community it serves?

- the process of community engagement and the incorporation of shared ideas improves the accessibility of the library space.
- learn about/observe the community actively using the space

How might we create hands-on opportunities for students to apply design and fabrication skills to large scale works?

- allowing students to take on the majority of the responsibilities for planning and fabricating the project
- involving grant applications as part of the learning process will help students equip themselves with the skills to apply for arts grants in their own individual craft careers.

How might we build meaningful relationships?

- Opening prayer and smudge
- Bring an offering to the First Nation community's band office
- further communication after visit to Thunder Bay
- Go to the First Nation community to invite their members to be involved/participate
- co-design builds relationships, the interactive activities and idea sharing also builds relationships
- encourage experiences outside of the formal co-design space

What do we mean by "meaningful relationships"?

- On-going collaboration between all participants
- Openness and willingness
- Based on mutual resepect and trust
- A sincere effort to understand why the furniture is important
- Connection
- Treating people with respect, kindness, and following through with advice and input
- Requires time

How will we know when we've built meaningful relationships?

- Incorporating Indigenous knowledge with western knowledge
- When our voice, culture and values are reflected
- You're always welcomed back

Figure 12 Potential outcomes 'How Might We...?' activity

Potential Improvements

How might we publicly share project progress?

- Blog/Instagram account run by students
- semi-formal space for communication between students and interested community members
- utilize the communications department at Sheridan to share media releases, photographs and good news stories

How might we provide design activities and questions ahead of co-design?

- once the participants have been determined, 48 hours prior to the engagement send questions or self reflection activities that could set the stage
- share some examples of past community engagement projects to provide an idea of what to expect

How might we create greater opportunities for skill building among Indigenous youth?

- Partner with organizations that immediately benefit Indigenous youth. A school like Dennis Franklin Cromarty or Indigenous Friendship Centres that service Indigenous folks in Canada who do not have an attachment to their home community.
- Working and providing a service to Indigenous organizations that advocate and support disenfranchised communities is reconciliation in action

How might we obtain more funding?

- Harness funding bodies such as the Ontario Arts Council or the Canada Arts Council.
- gain interest through exposure on social media
- using the communications tools Sheridan college has to offer to create hype and publicity.
- Look at grants to increase funding. The Ontario Arts Council definitely have grants that could support this project.

How might we optimize time during the co-design process?

- conduct an icebreaking activity and introduce the project on the first night at the social event. This saves time for the first full day and gives a greater opportunity for the groups to interact.
- provide a brief training session to the students on how the co-design process works prior to going to Thunder Bay. Students will be more self-sufficient and therefore more time efficient during the day
- add an additional trip to Thunder Bay :)

Figure 13 Potential improvements 'How Might We...?' activity

Discussion

The insights gained from this research project underline several crucial aspects of decentering curricula and pedagogies in post-secondary craft and design education, particularly within the context of community engagement projects involving Indigenous communities. The findings show that the community engagement projects examined here touch on all four of Shahjahan et al.'s (2022) ways in which decolonizing is actualized (see Literature Review). This chapter delves into the critical themes which emerged in the various research activities undertaken in this study, assessing the impacts, learning outcomes, and suggested improvements for these projects, and discussing implications for future practice and research.

Power Dynamics

One of the most pressing and unsettling issues highlighted by the project participants was the perception of power imbalances inherent in community engagement throughout these types of projects. The notion of White saviourism encapsulates the problematic dynamics where non-White communities are perceived as needing support by predominantly White outsiders (Helmick, 2022). This dynamic was evident in the sentiments expressed by Indigenous community members, who felt that the involvement of external, often White, student participants, instructors, and project organizers could resemble poverty tourism and White saviourism. This perception is critical as it underscores the importance of establishing genuine, equitable relationships between Indigenous community members, students, instructors, and project organizers rather than relationships predicated on a power imbalance.

Relationship Building

The importance of building meaningful and respectful relationships was a through-line, connecting the existing literature on Indigenous research paradigms to the study's findings. Participants stressed that relationships should not be based solely on the context of aid or support. Instead, they advocated for relationships characterized by mutual respect, understanding, openness, honesty, trust, and genuine connection. This aligns with the broader goals of decolonization and inclusive design, which both seek to dismantle hierarchical structures and foster a more egalitarian approach to education and community engagement.

Suggested Improvements

The feedback from participants highlighted several areas for improvement in the design and execution of these projects. Key suggestions included extending the duration of the projects, increasing cultural competency and sensitivity training for students, and enhancing direct communication between students and community members without intermediaries such as instructors or a project liaison. These suggestions emphasize the need for a more integrated and sustained engagement with the community, allowing for deeper understanding and collaboration.

A criticism of these projects in terms of their effectiveness in actualizing decolonization are that they predominantly benefit non-Indigenous students and the library much more than Indigenous participants and community. Participants of this study advocated for more significant and tangible benefits to Indigenous participants of these community projects, providing several suggestions particularly directed at Indigenous youth. These suggestions involved skill building initiatives such as technical workshops

intended to generate interest and forge pathways to careers in furniture design.

Additionally, participants recommended more inclusive practices, such as incorporating Ojibwe translations, partnering directly with First Nations communities, and conducting co-design sessions in Indigenous spaces. These improvements and practices would not only show greater respect for Indigenous cultures but encourage a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all participants and greater opportunity for students to learn about Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being.

Positive Outcomes

This study revealed a number of positive outcomes which signal some of the community engagement projects' successes. One of the outcomes confirmed through the research activities was that these projects made Indigenous participants feel that their input and contributions to the projects were valued and heard. Many cited examples of furniture resulting from the projects which reflected individual Indigenous participant's ideas and the greater community's values.

Another positive outcome identified was the influence that the land and cultural elements had on the design process. Community participants appreciated the opportunity to share their connection to the land with students, which, in turn, influenced the furniture created through these projects. This integration of cultural and environmental context is a powerful aspect of Indigenous-centered education, highlighting the importance of land-based learning and the inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being into the curriculum.

Reflections on Reflexivity Practice

Applying the personal research framework described in the Methods chapter (and as shown in Figure 5) highlighted the problem in using a binary (yes/no) approach which did not recognize the nuance that inevitably arises within this kind of study. However, this framework did provide structure and space for research reflexivity, allowing me to critically question my decisions and consider the study's impact on the participants and the community involved.

This practice revealed barriers and constraints imposed by doing research within the confines of an institutional setting which were incongruous with Indigenous research paradigms. Most notable were the effects that the formulaic approach to ethical standards prescribed by the Tri-Council REB had on the study. These established a mindset regarding my facilitation of the project that hindered meaningful relationship building, creating an "othering" effect that is antithetical to the principles of inclusivity and mutual respect. This effect was compounded by the inherent biases of my positionality. As a default, these standardized approaches also prioritized confidentiality at the expense of appropriate attribution and acknowledgment of participants' contributions. This not only undermines the value of the participants' input, but as Wilson (2008) notes, negates their and my ability to be held accountable within our relationship. Despite this, the REB did approve a consent process that allowed participants to decide for themselves whether they would like to be acknowledged and attributed by name within this study.

Among other aspects, the scope of this research project covered an evaluation of learning outcomes, and so included student participants who were predominantly non-Indigenous. Consequently, I question how centered Indigenous voices are in the study's findings and emerging themes, and whether tightening the scope of the project would have allowed for a greater assessment of the community engagement projects' decolonizing effects.

Similar to the findings in Feast & Vogels (2021), these community projects seem to contribute to culturally

sustaining curricula and pedagogies, rather than the revolutionary approach to decolonizing suggested by Tuhiwai Smith et al. (2019). Subsequently, these projects are prone to the same criticism in terms of their mainstreaming effects, and the resulting perpetuation of White privilege and colonial oppression.

This reflexive practice has helped to further understand my own ongoing journey with cultural competency, and to develop a deeper understanding of how my privilege functions. This practice has provided a degree of self-awareness which both informed my approach to facilitating the project and will guide my teaching practice moving forward.

Future Directions

The findings from this study suggest several directions for future research and practice. There is a need to explore more deeply the impact of extended project timelines on relationship building and project outcomes. Additionally, further research could investigate the effectiveness of different methods of community engagement and communication within these projects in reducing perceived power imbalances and fostering genuine partnerships.

Another area of interest could be the incorporation of cultural competency and sensitivity training for students as a preparatory step before engaging with Indigenous community. Evaluation of these efforts could determine their impact on students' understanding and respect for Indigenous cultures. Future projects could also experiment with various methods of integrating Indigenous languages and cultural practices into the design process, assessing their effects on both community satisfaction and learning outcomes.

This discussion has illuminated critical aspects of decolonizing work in craft and design education, particularly the importance of addressing power dynamics, fostering meaningful relationships, and integrating cultural and environmental contexts into the learning process. By heeding the feedback and insights from community participants, Sheridan's Furniture Studio can move closer to genuinely de-centering its curricula and practices to respect and uplift Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. However, the ongoing journey towards decolonization and reconciliation requires continual reflection, adaptation, and commitment to equity and inclusivity in all educational endeavors.

Conclusion

This Major Research Project (**MRP**) has explored the efforts to de-center the curricula and pedagogies of Sheridan College's Furniture Studio through engagement with Indigenous communities, specifically focusing on two community engagement projects with members of Thunder Bay's Indigenous community, and the Thunder Bay Public Library (TBPL). The findings affirm the importance of land-based learning, interconnectedness, and relationality to Indigenous ways of knowing and being, while providing valuable insights into the potential for more inclusive and equitable educational practices moving forward. The research identified several challenges, including the importance of building relationships through slower, more immersive engagement, managing power imbalances, and furthering benefits to the Indigenous community. The study also highlights the significant impact these projects have had on both Indigenous community members and student participants.

For Indigenous community members, the findings indicate that they felt heard, valued, and proud of their contributions. The collaborative nature of the projects fostered a sense of ownership and connection to the outcomes, reinforcing the importance of community involvement in design processes. These projects provided a platform for honouring Indigenous culture and knowledge, contributing to a more inclusive space within TBPL.

Students reported valuable learning experiences in co-design and community engagement. The exposure to Indigenous culture and teachings, left a lasting impression on students, broadening their perspectives and fostering intercultural competency. However, the research also highlighted the initial lack of Indigenous knowledge among students, suggesting a need for greater preparatory training.

While the research conducted in this **MRP** is limited to the findings of two community engagement projects, it demonstrates the transformative potential of de-centering Eurocentric curricula and pedagogies through Indigenous community engagement and the opportunities this presents for 'crafting' educational approaches by adapting to specific contexts and circumstances. The use of a participant-led, power-sharing model of research aligns with an inclusive design framework, as well as Indigenous research paradigms which prioritize relationality, reciprocity, and respect. It is essential to continue building on these foundations, ensuring that educational spaces become more equitable, inclusive, and reflective of diverse ways of knowing and being. It is my hope that this **MRP** contributes to the broader discourse on decolonizing education and promoting inclusive design by providing a concrete example of how these principles can be applied in practice.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Dear [participant's first name],

I am contacting you to see if you would be interested in participating in a research project. This project aims to examine the impact, outcomes, and personal experiences of the community engagement project between Sheridan College's Furniture Studio and the Thunder Bay Public Library which involved co-designing furniture for the Brodie branch and Waverley branch Indigenous Knowledge Centres.

As part of this project, you will be asked initially to complete a short questionnaire, and then to participate in focus group and co-design sessions. These sessions will take place online over Microsoft Teams in groups of 4 or 5 people on three separate occasions and take a total of 4 to 6 hours of your time. Should you agree to participate, you may choose to partake in as many or as few of these activities as you would like and can withdraw yourself and/or your data from the project at any time within the duration of the project. Any level of participation is appreciated, and participants will be provided compensation in the form of gift cards, comparable to the time provided for focus group and co-design sessions.

There are no known or foreseeable direct benefits associated with participation in this project. Regardless of whether you choose to participate or not it will not influence (either positively or negatively) your academic status and grades at Sheridan College, your access to Thunder Bay Public Library and its services, or your relationship to OCAD University and the Graduate Student Researcher or the Faculty Supervisor.

This project has been reviewed and received clearance through the Research Ethics Board at OCAD University (REB approval # 2024-06). If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in this project, please contact the Research Ethics Office through research@ocadu.ca. If you have any questions, require further information specific to the project, and/or are interested in participating, please contact Simon Ford using the contact information provided below.

Kind Regards,

Simon Ford
Graduate Student Researcher
Inclsuive Design (MDes.) Program
OCAD University
[phone number]
[email address]

Howard Munroe
Faculty Supervisor, & Assistant Professor
Faculty of Design
OCAD University
[phone number]
[email address]

Appendix B: Consent Form

Examining Efforts to De-center Sheridan College's Furniture Studio

Simon Ford
Graduate Student Researcher
Inclusive Design (MDes.) Program
OCAD University
[phone number]
[email address]

Howard Munroe
Faculty Supervisor, & Assistant Professor
Faculty of Design
OCAD University
[phone number]
[email address]

Purpose
You are invited to participate in a research project. This project aims to examine the impact, outcomes, and personal experiences of the community engagement project between Sheridan College's Furniture Studio and the Thunder Bay Public Library which involved co-designing furniture for the Brodie branch and Waverley branch Indigenous Knowledge Centres. To be considered for this research, prospective participants will have had to have participated in either one of these community engagement projects and have access the internet to engage in online research activities. We are looking to recruit a total of 8 to 10 participants.

These research activities will be facilitated by Simon Ford and will contribute to his Major Research Project as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design in Inclusive Design.

What's Involved
As part of this project, you will be asked initially to complete a short questionnaire, and then to participate in focus groups, and co-design sessions. These sessions will take place online over Zoom in groups of 4 or 5 people on three separate occasions, and take approximately 4 to 6 hours of your time. Should you agree to participate, you may choose to partake in as many or as few of these activities as you would like and can withdraw yourself and/or your data from the project at any time within the duration of the project. Any level of participation is appreciated, and there are no associated costs.

The only demographic data that will be collected will be your name and email contact information. This information is for internal use only, will always remain confidential and never be shared.

Potential Benefits
There are no known or foreseeable direct benefits associated with participation in this project. This project will be participatory and participant-led as an alternative and more inclusive approach to how research is typically undertaken. This approach aims to challenge who makes decisions around research, school policy, educational content, and teaching practices, and how Indigenous knowledge and culture can be meaningfully incorporated in post-secondary education. As a result, you may find participating in this project empowering and a beneficial way to learn more about this approach to research, while improving Sheridan College Furniture Studio's

approach to future community engagement projects. There is, however, no guarantee that you will receive any benefits from participating in this project.

Potential Risks

There may be very low risks associated with participation. Some people may find speaking and sharing information about personal experiences discomforting and stressful. Due to the nature of certain research activities where we will be working and discussing these personal experiences in small groups (of 4 to 5 people), these feelings may be increased. If you feel uncomfortable with any activity at any point within the project, you may decline to participate, answer questions, or withdraw completely from the project.

This project and its facilitator value differences among participants and ask that all participants be respectful of each other's perspectives and opinions. The Graduate Student Researcher reserves the right to ask individuals to leave a session and/or the project altogether if their behaviour is deemed to be disrespectful.

Confidentiality

This project involves collection of identifiable data. The research team will protect your personally identifiable information, including your name, so that no one will be able to connect your responses with any other information that identifies you. They will separate your name from your information as soon as possible, using instead an assigned number or code to match your study record with your answers. Personal experiences, perspectives, opinions, and ideas discussed within the project will be shared in a final report, but your name will not be included or associated with any specific data.

However, if you would like your contribution to this project to be acknowledged and to have your quotes attributed to you by name, please provide permission by indicating your consent to do so in the agreement below.

We also ask that all participants be respectful of one another by keeping all information that could potentially identify another participant confidential. There is, however, no way for the Graduate Student Researcher to guarantee confidentiality on behalf of other participants.

Focus groups and co-design sessions will be audio- and video-recorded and transcribed on Zoom for internal use to allow the Graduate Student Researcher to synthesize data. To participate in these sessions, participants will need to provide permission to be audio- and video-recorded by indicating their consent to do so in the agreement below. Participants have the right to review, edit, clarify and confirm the accuracy of their comments in these recordings and transcripts and may request versions of these which have been redacted to remove comments from other participants.

All data collected during this project such as questionnaire responses, recordings and transcripts will be stored on the Graduate Student Researcher's local server, backed up on OCAD University's cloud-based OneDrive, and require a password only known by the research team to access. Data will be kept for 1 year after the completion of this research project, after which time it will be deleted from the local server and cloud-based drive. Access to this data will be restricted to the Graduate Student Researcher, Simon Ford and Faculty Supervisor, Howard Munroe.

Incentives for Participation

Participants will be provided in-kind compensation for participation in focus groups and co-design sessions in the form of electronic gift cards and may choose from a selection of options (e.g., Tim Horton's, Swiss Chalet, Cineplex, Apple, Amazon, etc.). These will be issued via email at the end of each session and are not dependent on the completion of that session should you choose to withdraw your consent during that session. The value of electronic gift cards will be comparable to the time provided to the project in each session factoring for an hourly rate of $20 (i.e., participants in a two-hour focus group session will each receive a $40 e-gift card to their choice of retailer).

Voluntary Participation

You are free to decide whether or not to participate in this project and its activities. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the project.

Further, you may decide to withdraw from this project at any time, or request withdrawal of your data prior to data analysis. You may do so without providing a reason, and without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. The incentives described above will still be issued to you, should you decide during a session to withdraw. Regardless of whether you choose to participate, not participate, or withdraw from the project, it will not influence (either positively or negatively) your academic status and grades at Sheridan College, your access to Thunder Bay Public Library and its services, or your relationship to OCAD University and the Graduate Student Researcher, Simon Ford or the Faculty Supervisor, Howard Munroe.

Given the Graduate Student Researcher's position as Faculty and Acting Head in Sheridan's Furniture Studio, recruitment will exclude all students who are scheduled to take any of the courses led by him for the duration of the research project to mitigate risks associated with undue influence, manipulation, power dynamics, potential conflicts of interest, and to ensure credibility and validity of data collected.

To withdraw yourself from this project, please let Simon Ford know at any point during the project by emailing him at [email address]. To withdraw your data from this project, please contact Simon no later than [withdrawal date]. Participant data will be securely stored on the Graduate Student Researcher's local server and require a password only known by him to access. Participant data that is requested to be withdrawn will be deleted from this local server.

Publication of Results

Results of this project will be published in a Major Research Project report. In this publication, data will be grouped with information from other participants. Quotations from questionnaires, focus groups, and/or co-design sessions will not include identifiable information or be attributed to you without your permission. This report will be shared with Sheridan College, Thunder Bay Public Library, and available on OCAD University's Open Research Repository. It will also be made available to project participants. If you would like to receive a digital copy of this report after it has been produced, please contact Simon Ford.

Contact Information and Ethics Clearance

If you have any questions about this project or require further information, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact the Principal Facilitator, Simon Ford or the Faculty Supervisor, Howard Munroe using the contact information provided on the first page of this document. This project has

been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at OCAD University (REB approval # 2024-06).

If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this project, please contact:

Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
OCAD University
100 McCaul Street
Toronto, M5T1W1
(416) 977 6000 x4368
research@ocadu.ca

Agreement

I agree to participate in the project described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Consent Form. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the project and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Research Activities

I wish to participate in the following research activities (please check as many or as few as you would like):

☐ Online Questionnaire (10-20 minutes)

☐ Focus Group #1 * – impacts, outcomes, and personal experiences (90-120 minutes)

☐ Focus Group #2 * – analyzing data (90-120 minutes)

☐ Co-design * – ideating, iterating and evaluating design solutions (90-120 minutes)

* Focus group and co-design sessions will take place online over Zoom in groups of 4 or 5 people and require participants to provide consent below to be audio- and video-recorded.

Audio and Video Recording

☐ Yes, I agree to be audio and video recorded for the purposes of this project. I understand how these recordings will be stored and destroyed.

☐ No, I do <u>not</u> agree to be recorded for the purposes of this project.

Acknowledging Project Contributions

☐ Yes, I wish to be acknowledged for my contributions to this project. You may use my name in the Acknowledgements section of the report.

☐ No, I do <u>not</u> wish to be acknowledged for my contributions to this project. You may <u>not</u> use my name in the Acknowledgements section of the report.

<u>Attributing Quotes</u>

☐   Yes, I wish to have statements I have made during this project attributed to me by name. You may use my name alongside quotations that you have collected from me.

☐   No, I do <u>not</u> wish to have statements I have made during this project attributed to me by name. You may <u>not</u> use my name alongside quotations that you have collected from me.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix C: Questionnaire

The following text was used to create an online Microsoft Forms survey.

Sheridan College Furniture Studio/Thunder Bay Public Library Project Questionnaire

This questionnaire is one component of a research project which aims to examine the impact, outcomes, and personal experiences of the community engagement projects between Sheridan College's Furniture Studio and the Thunder Bay Public Library which involved co-designing furniture for the Indigenous Knowledge Centre at the library's Brodie and Waverley branches. Please think back to your experience of this project when considering and answering the questions below.

Section 1: Consent

1. I understand that responses to this questionnaire are anonymous and that I make the decision to participate or not based on the information I have read in the project's consent form. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the project and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time and request that my data be withdrawn up until the data analysis stage of the project. (* required)

    ☐ Yes, I agree to participate

    ☐ No, I do not agree to participate   (directs to end of questionnaire)

Section 2

2. In which of the Thunder Bay Public Library Indigenous Knowledge Centre projects did you participate?

    ☐ Brodie branch (2020)

    ☐ Waverley branch (2023)

Section 3

3. Please describe any positive impacts or benefits you experienced from participating in this project.

    > Enter your answer

4. Please describe any negative impacts or pain points you experienced from participating in this project.

> Enter your answer

5. What was your role in this project? (* required)

☐ Indigenous Community Participant   (directs to Section 4)

☐ Sheridan College Student Participant   (directs to Section 5)

Section 4: Indigenous Community Participant Questions

6. Do you feel as though you learned something from participating in this project? If so, please describe what you feel were the most valuable learning outcomes from your experience.

> Enter your answer

7. Do you feel that this project reflected Indigenous culture and values in a respectful and culturally appropriate way? Please explain.

> Enter your answer

8. Do you feel that your contributions to this project were heard and valued? Please explain.

> Enter your answer

9. Do you have any other comments that you would like to share about your experience with the Thunder Bay Public Library Indigenous Knowledge Centre project?

> Enter your answer

Section 5: Student Participant Questions

10. Please describe what you feel were the most valuable learning outcomes as a student participant in this project.

<div style="border:1px solid black; background:#cccccc; padding:20px;">Enter your answer</div>

11. Did this project introduce you to any new ways of thinking or approaches that you have since incorporated to your own life or design practice? If so, please explain.

<div style="border:1px solid black; background:#cccccc; padding:20px;">Enter your answer</div>

12. Do you feel that your contributions to this project were heard and valued? Please explain.

<div style="border:1px solid black; background:#cccccc; padding:20px;">Enter your answer</div>

13. Do you have any other comments that you would like to share about your experience with the Thunder Bay Public Library Indigenous Knowledge Centre project?

<div style="border:1px solid black; background:#cccccc; padding:20px;">Enter your answer</div>

Appendix D: Interview Script

- Please describe any positive impacts or benefits you experienced participating in this project.

- Do you feel this project offered valuable learning outcomes to community participants and students? If so, please describe.

- Please describe any negative impacts, pain points or barriers you experienced participating in this project.

- From your perspective, did this project support or build meaningful relationships and community? Did it engage with Indigenous community in a meaningful way? Do you have suggestions for how we can improve our approach to this type of engagement and relationship building moving forward?

- Do you feel that this project reflected Indigenous culture and values in a respectful, culturally sensitive, and culturally competent way?

Appendix E: Impact & Effort Activity

The following prewritten sticky note sets were given to participants in the second and third focus groups for the 'Impact & Effort Matrix' activity.
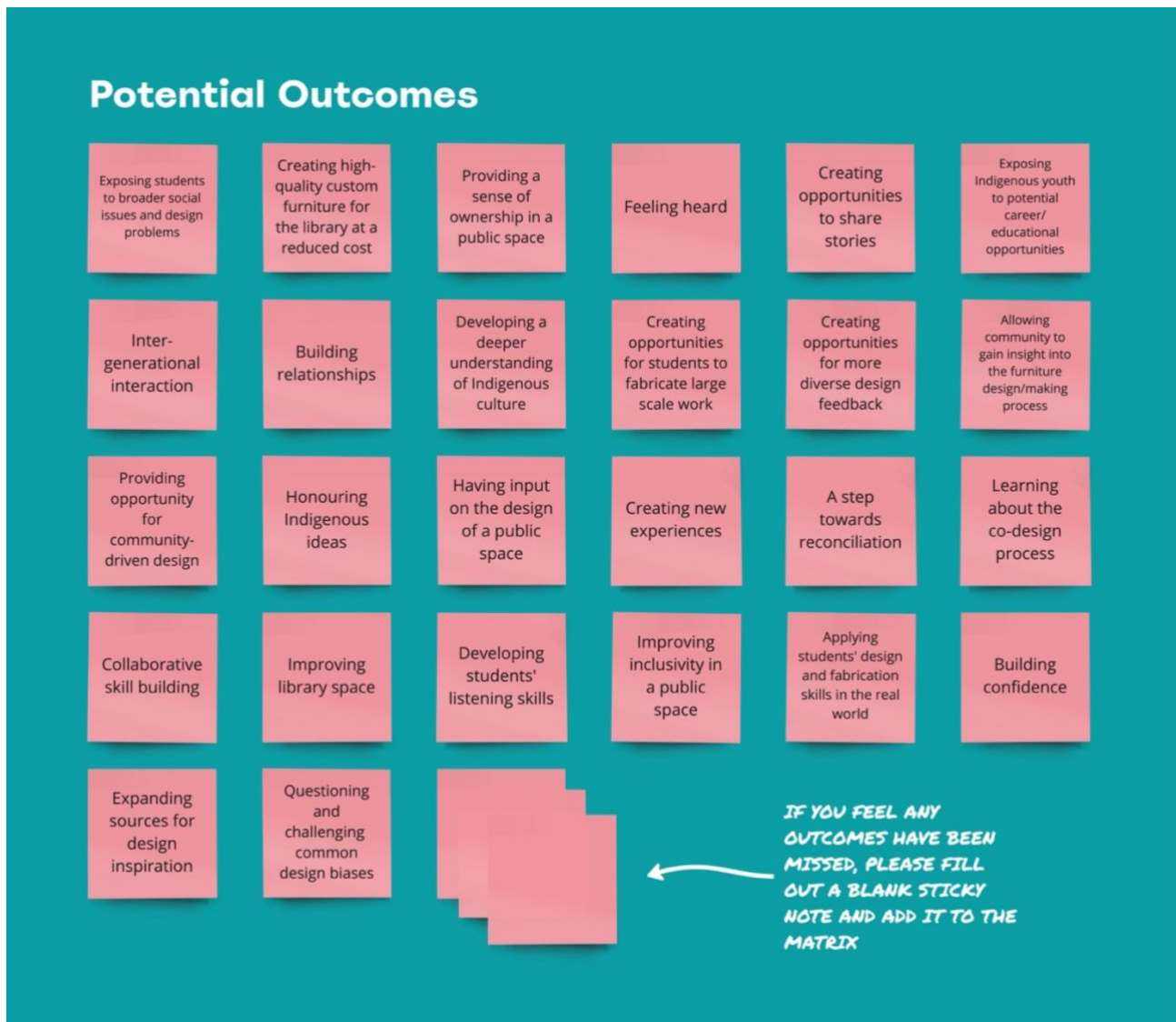

Figure 14 Potential outcomes sticky notes

Figure 15 Potential improvements sticky notes