

ABSTRACT

An area of research that has had little attention is the experiences of Indigenous doctoral students, told from their perspectives. This study offers an in-depth understanding of Indigenous doctoral students' experiences related to admission and all program milestones during their enrollment in a Canadian research-intensive university. In this research 13 Indigenous doctoral students, most of whom were enrolled in the Faculty of Education doctoral programs at the University of British Columbia, shared their life experience stories about (a) how their web of relationships with family, community, peers, mentors, program structures, and university structures combined to support, guide, and assist them prior to and during their studies; (b) how they created community spaces to remain connected to their programs academically and socially; and (c) how they viewed tensions between their programmatic experiences and their community affiliations. For many Indigenous students, the doctoral journey does not occur in isolation, which is theorized through the lens of Kirkness and Barnhardt's 4Rs, of *Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility* (1991). The participants' life experience stories were situated within Archibald's (2008b) Indigenous Storywork methodology to safeguard the integrity of the stories' meanings.

I discovered that some Indigenous students found the higher education experience isolating and challenging, if not alienating, and did not feel that the university was a place for them. However, they also experienced success through creating community, maintaining their family and cultural connections, engaging in Indigenous peer-support and mentoring programs, and receiving respectful mentoring from faculty. University services and programs that provided a safe, culturally responsive environment for Indigenous doctoral students to flourish included the First Nations Longhouse; Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement, which is a peer support program; and an annual Indigenous Graduate Student Symposium.

A contribution of this study is the extension of Kirkness and Barnhardt's 4Rs to include *Recognition, Reclamation, Redress, and Reconciliation*. These additional 4Rs stem from the findings and emphasize the importance of doctoral studies for Indigenous students' future leadership, policy, and self-determination contributions to their own communities and to Canadian society.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Place of Birth: Vancouver, Canada

Academic Studies: B.Ed. University of British Columbia, 1998
M.Ed. University of British Columbia, 2003

Current Position: Ph.D. candidate, UBC

GRADUATE STUDIES

Field of Study: Indigenous Research Specialization, Educational Studies

Courses

EDST 601A	Doctoral Seminar	Dr. Kjell Rubenson & Dr. Deidre Kelly
EDUC 503A	Ethnography and Education	Dr. Lisa Loutzenheiser
EADM 508A	Introduction to Indigenous Methodologies	Dr. Jo-ann Archibald & Dr. Lester Rigney
EADM 508B	Indigenous Research and Epistemology	Dr. Michael Marker
EDST 601B	Doctoral Seminar: Advanced Research Methods in Educational Research	Dr. André Mazawi
EDST 565D	Indigenous Knowledges and Education	Dr. Jo-ann Archibald
EDST 602A	Doctoral Seminar	Dr. Tom Sork
INDSI 501	Instructional Skills Workshop	

AWARDS

Gina Blondin Memorial Ts'Kel Award
New Relationship Trust (2008, 2009)



a place of mind

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

PROGRAMME

The Final Oral Examination
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
(Educational Studies)

HEATHER LYNN COMMODORE

B.Ed., University of British Columbia, 1998
M.Ed., University of British Columbia, 2003

Wednesday, May 23, 2018, 1:00 pm
Boardroom, First Nations Longhouse, 1985 West Mall
Latecomers will not be admitted

**“Pulling Together in the Academic Canoe: The Experiences of
Indigenous Doctoral Students”**

EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Chair:

Prof Patrick Moore (Anthropology)

Supervisory Committee:

Prof Jo-ann Archibald, Research Co-Supervisor (Educational Studies)
Prof André Mazawi, Research Co-Supervisor (Educational Studies)
Prof Thomas Sork, (Educational Studies)

University Examiners:

Prof Michael Marker (Educational Studies)
Prof Carl Leggo (Language and Literacy Education)

External Examiner:

Prof Stephanie Waterman
Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
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