



# Research, Relationships & Reconciliation

## Applied Research Project

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**snəwəyət̓ leləm̓.**  
THE COLLEGE OF HIGHER LEARNING.

**Langara.**  
THE COLLEGE OF HIGHER LEARNING.

While Langara College resides on unceded traditional territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓ əm (Musqueam) and all in-person meetings took place in xʷməθkʷəy̓ əm territory, this work was written on the ancestral, unceded and occupied territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓ əm, Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Səl'ílwətaʔ (Tseil-Watuth) and K'ómoks Nations of the Coast Salish peoples - whose relationship with the land is ancient, primary and enduring.

# Executive Summary

This paper documents the Langara College Recreation Studies Department’s journey of building a sustainable, reciprocal partnership with Musqueam Recreation. More than a set of static outcomes, this research represents a practice of relationship-building—one that is designed to stand the test of time, adapt to evolving needs, and navigate the fluid dynamics of community and recreation with ease.

At the heart of this work is the understanding that strong relationships create the foundation for meaningful ideas and actions. While the research offers specific recommendations, such as supporting immediate community needs, promoting recreation as a viable career path, and developing Indigenous-specific training programs, these recommendations are not fixed. They are intended to evolve alongside the partnership, adapting to shifting priorities and emerging opportunities. The true success of this research lies not in rigid outcomes but in the ongoing relationships that foster trust, collaboration, truth sharing and growth.

This relationship-centered approach also acknowledges that while it is essential to center and uplift Indigenous priorities and methodologies, this must be done without imposing unnecessary workload or expectations. The partnership between Langara and Musqueam is a practice of balance—ensuring that the work reflects respect, fluidity, and mutual care.

Ultimately, this research advocates for a relational model of collaboration that prioritizes flexibility, responsiveness, shared responsibility and a relationship rooted in mutual goals and values. It is through these relationships that meaningful, sustainable actions can emerge, enriching both the Musqueam community and the Recreation Studies Department at Langara College. In this way, the work contributes to a broader commitment to reconciliation, equity, and the Indigenization of recreation education.

# Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Executive Summary</b>  | 3  |
| <b>Positioning</b>  | 5  |
| <b>Who We Are</b>   | 6  |
| <b>Introduction</b>   | 7  |
| <b>Research as a Practice of Building Relationship</b>  | 9  |
| <b>Methods &amp; Methodologies</b>  | 10 |
| <b>Part One: Immediate Actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Supporting Immediate &amp; Emerging Needs<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Data Gathering</li><li>○ Capturing the Canoe Races</li></ul></li></ul>  | 12 |
| <b>Part Two: Short Term Recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Advertising Careers in Recreation</li><li>● Student-led Initiatives</li></ul>   | 15 |
| <b>Part Three: Long Term Recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Indigenous-Specific Micro-Credential</li><li>● Indigenous-Specific Recreation Course</li><li>● Additional Long Term Ideas to Explore<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Indigenous Scholarships</li><li>○ Language and Culture Revitalization</li><li>○ Building Broader Relationships</li></ul></li></ul> | 17 |
| <b>Conclusion</b>   | 20 |
| <b>References</b>   | 21 |

# Positioning

In approaching this work with the Musqueam community, I position myself as both a researcher and a committed partner in the ongoing process of relationship-building and decolonization. As a sixth-generation settler born and raised on Nex̱wlélex̱m (Bowen Island) in Skwxwú7mesh, Səl'ílwətaʔ, and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm Territories, I carry a deep sense of responsibility to engage in this work with humility, care, and accountability to the land and its Indigenous peoples.

I reflect often on the words of Amba Sepie: “Although (my ancestors) came from ocean and walk new shores, I can do this relationship work right here. The journey toward becoming kin and reembedding, restoring, and healing alongside those communities who have suffered more violence than I can fathom or recall – it seems possible.” These words guide me as I strive to live in a way that honors the earth as my origin and to show up for the work that this place calls me to do.

In this research, my role is not to impose external perspectives but to listen, learn, and support the needs and priorities of the Musqueam people. This project is grounded in relational accountability, honoring the trust extended to me and ensuring the outcomes are of reciprocal benefit. Indigenous methodologies, particularly those highlighted in Shawn Wilson’s *Research is Ceremony*, guide this work by emphasizing the sacredness of relationship-building and the fluidity of time. I approach the project with the understanding that time is not linear but relational and generational—the work we do now connects us to past and future generations.

As an ally, I am committed to amplifying the voices of the Musqueam community and ensuring that the outcomes reflect their visions, aspirations, and needs. My connection to these lands and communities compels me to engage thoughtfully, prioritizing the long-term sustainability of relationships and the slow, meaningful change that emerges from moving at the speed of trust.

-Emma Courtney, lead researcher

## Who We Are



### **Lead Researcher**

Emma Courtney is a dedicated educator and researcher with experience in global leadership, intercultural communication, and decolonization. She holds a Master's in Global Leadership and has worked in both academia and community-based research. Her career spans diverse roles, from teaching leadership and recreation studies to leading applied research projects focused on Indigenous methodologies and systems thinking.

Emma's commitment to decolonizing education and empowering communities through research is reflected in her work with Indigenous Nations across British Columbia. She has led multiple projects that integrate Indigenous knowledge and worldviews into higher education. Her work with the Musqueam community builds on a history of engaging with Indigenous methodologies, including previous and ongoing projects where she successfully secured research grants to explore the intersections of recreation, cultural preservation, and land-based learning.

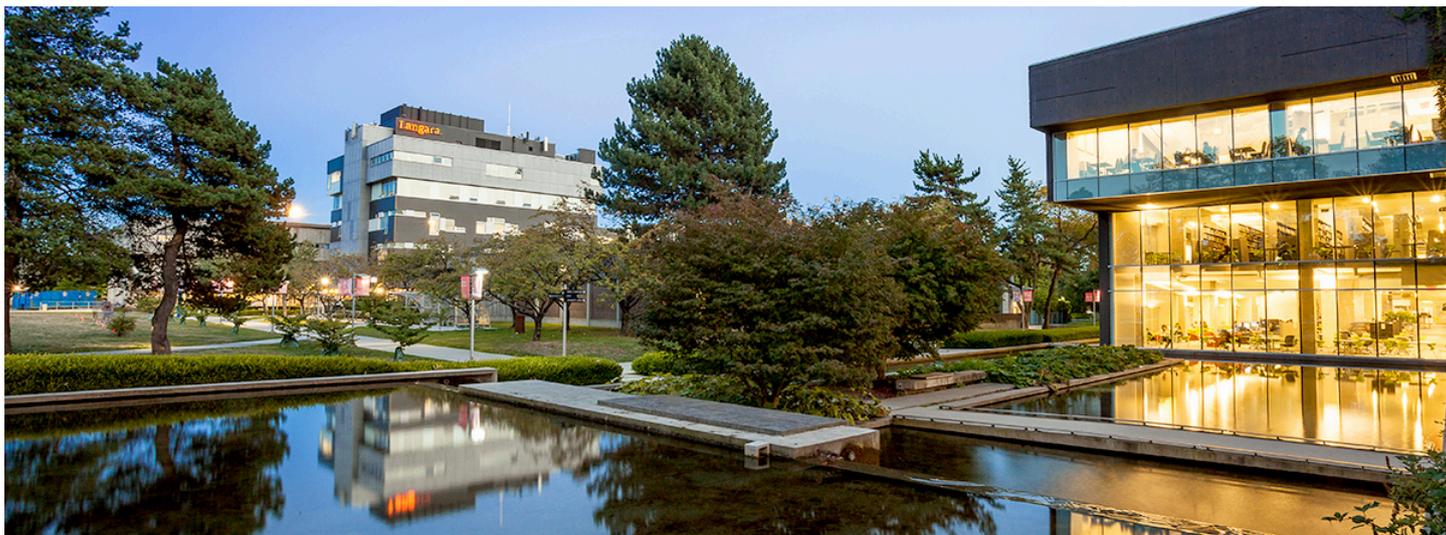


### **Community Partner**

Courtenay Gibson is a member of the Musqueam Indian Band and has worked as the Recreation Manager for 16 years after completing a Diploma in Aboriginal Sports Management connected to the 2008 North American Indigenous Games. She has also served as a senior manager for 8 departments focused on delivery of social programs to the Musqueam community in the areas of health, education, social development, employment and childcare.

She holds a diploma in Indigenous Community Development and Governance at UVIC. And recently completed an Indigenous Business and Leadership Masters of Business Administration at SFU. In addition to her work with Musqueam she continues to support SFU as a teaching and research assistant and promotes Indigenous worldviews as a guest speaker and contractor.

# Introduction



The Department of Recreation Studies at Langara College has put forward considerable efforts towards Langara College’s strategic priority of Indigenization. The Department has collectively explored ideas around decolonizing teaching and learning practices and incorporating Indigenous worldviews into courses and classroom contexts. While this effort is laudable, there are evident gaps in this approach that the Department has yet to fill. Specifically, the approach taken by the Department has involved a ‘pan-Indigenous’ assumption of Indigenization. By assuming pan-Indigenous approaches to decolonizing pedagogies and curriculum, the Department stumbles into the known pit-fall of colonial erasure, by failing to acknowledge the unique worldviews and approaches held and taken by individual Nations (personal communications, Sara Child, 2023).

Additionally, while the Department has worked to ‘Indigenize’ their approaches to teaching and learning, these actions only support existing and future Recreation Studies students, who are predominantly non-Indigenous. If an institution or department is Indigenizing for the purpose of addressing the [Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action](#), (TRC, 2015), and the CIGan [Indigenous Education Protocol](#) (CIGan, 2014), then more needs to be done to meet the immediate needs of Indigenous communities and Indigenous learners. This priority is also reflected in Langara’s recent [MOA with the Musqueam Nation](#) (Langara College, 2024). The first step in doing so is to better understand the immediate needs of Indigenous communities concerning the Department’s area of expertise, which leads to the research question that guided this project and paper:



*How might the Langara College Recreation Studies Department better serve the needs of local Indigenous communities through recreation education?*

The answer to this question came through dialogue and discussion with the Manager of Recreation at the Musqueam Community Centre, Courtenay Gibson. *The Recreation Studies Department can serve the needs of the Musqueam Community through the development and nurturing of a lasting, sustainable and fluid relationship with Musqueam Recreation.*

This research paper will discuss what the development and nurturing of such a relationship might look like, how such a relationship can deepen and evolve, and the subsequent recommendations for future action towards a lasting and meaningful relationship.

| This Research Paper is divided into Three Sections: |  |
|---|--|
| 1   | <b>Immediate action:</b> How the Recreation Studies Department can meet immediate needs through research and other initiatives   |
| 2   | <b>Short term action:</b> How the Recreation Studies Department can establish recurring actions to meet ongoing and emerging needs   |
| 3   | <b>Long term action:</b> Recommendations for the Recreation Studies Department to explore in partnership with Musqueam Recreation as a relationship becomes established and more opportunities for collaboration present |

Before delving directly into actions and recommendations, first, there must be a shared understanding of the unique composition of this emergent relationship, along with greater context and information on how such a relationship is mutually beneficial and worth pursuing for both parties.

# Research as a Practice of Building Relationship

Through this research project, the Recreation Studies Department is intentionally cultivating a relationship with Musqueam Recreation in a style that aligns with emergent strategy principles (Brown, 2017) and love as a methodology (Gallagher, 2018). This approach is centered on adapting to emerging needs and remaining fluid as the relationship develops over time.

One key aspect of using research to build relationships is prioritizing open and clear communication styles, which involve active listening and feedback, to ensure that all parties involved have a shared understanding of each other's needs and goals. As individual relationships begin to develop, the Department must work closely with members of the Musqueam community to ensure that any initiatives put in place are grounded in a deep understanding of local needs and values. This practice has been embodied through the research process with direct and open communication between Courtenay Gibson, the Manager of Musqueam Recreation, Yue-Ching Cheng, the Department Chair of Recreation Studies, and Emma Courtney, faculty member and researcher. Through a process of non-linear and informal conversations, meetings, emails and discussions, individual relationships that are rooted in the desire to listen and understand one another's needs, begin to emerge.

In the context of emergent strategy, the development of relationships is viewed as a microcosm of the larger transformative work being done. Therefore, it is crucial that relationships between the Department and the Nation are approached with the same care, intentionality, and energy that is put into other forms of action. As the Department steps forward into more individual relationships and connections with the Musqueam community, each Department member is encouraged to see the relationships that they hold as a microcosm of the larger Departmental and Institutional relationships at play. In short, the small is a reflection of the large, and this cannot be forgotten or neglected.

To build a strong and sustainable relationship with Musqueam Recreation, it must be recognized that each individual relationship must move at the speed of trust, taking the time to build trust and rapport with community members, and being responsive to their needs as they emerge. This approach requires long-term insight and an ongoing commitment to relationship-building and maintenance, rather than a short-term focus on specific outcomes or deliverables.

Overall, the Recreation Studies Department recognizes that cultivating a relationship with Musqueam Recreation will require ongoing care and attention. By following emergent strategy principles and prioritizing open communication, individual relationships, and the importance of moving at the speed of trust, the Department aims to build a partnership that is responsive, adaptive, and sustainable for the long term.

### Recreation Faculty Quick Tip



I will pause here to acknowledge that the concept of building relationships that do not hinge on a short-term focus or a specific outcome may be uncomfortable for those that work largely in a western mindset, as so often relationships are created through shared action or short term goals. What I will offer is that both truths can exist in the same interaction. Approaching a community member or recreation professional with the intent and invitation for a short-term outcome or deliverable (for example, seeking a guest speaker for a class) is appropriate so long as time and care is given to nurture a relationship outside of this specific ask. So this might look like booking longer than you think you might need for a meeting, to ensure there is time to talk about and get to know one another outside of the context of a specific ask. It might also look like inviting a guest speaker in with much broader parameters than you might feel comfortable with, and asking them to share what they would like to speak on or do with the students, rather than giving a narrow topic that fits the scope of the course content.

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## Methods and Methodologies

The methodologies employed in this research paper are grounded in the principles of love as a methodology (Gallagher, 2018), and research as ceremony (Wilson, 2008). These frameworks provide a holistic and relational approach to research, emphasizing deep respect for Indigenous knowledge systems, reflexivity, and the nurturing of meaningful and reciprocal relationships.

Love as a methodology, as discussed by Kathleen Gallagher (2018), recognizes the importance of love in research as a force that guides ethical engagement and transformative action. It encourages researchers to approach their work with empathy, compassion, and a commitment to justice. In this research project, the application of love as a methodology manifests in the intention to centre the needs and aspirations of the Musqueam community, listening deeply and responding with care.

Research as ceremony, as discussed by Shawn Wilson (2008), recognizes that research can be a sacred and transformative act. It views research as an opportunity for reciprocal exchange, respect, and learning between researchers and Indigenous communities. In this research project, research as the ceremony is embodied through the approach of the partnership with Musqueam Recreation as a sacred endeavour, recognizing the importance of nurturing relationships, conducting research with integrity and cultural sensitivity, and offering reciprocal benefits to the community.

By integrating love as a methodology and research as ceremony, the methodologies employed in this research paper aim to create a research process that goes beyond conventional academic practices. They emphasize the need for reflexivity, cultural humility, and an ethical commitment to Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty. Through these

methodologies, the research project seeks to contribute to knowledge creation in a way that is respectful, transformative, and in alignment with Indigenous values and aspirations.

## Author's note:

Working with Indigenous communities has profoundly reshaped my understanding of time. In mainstream, Western frameworks, time is often rigidly tied to schedules, deadlines, and the pursuit of efficiency. This perspective stands in stark contrast to the generational view of time that Indigenous communities often embody, where time is seen as cyclical, relational, and expansive—stretching beyond immediate tasks to encompass the well-being of future generations. In the context of this research project, both Courtenay and I were juggling multiple commitments, both personal and professional. The idea of adhering to a strict timeline seemed at odds with the deeper, more fluid nature of our work. Instead, we embraced a generational approach, one that honoured the ebb and flow of our lives and allowed for the shifting of priorities. Rather than being constricted by deadlines, we let the project unfold organically, trusting that the time invested would not only serve the present but also build a foundation for future relationships and continued learning.

This was not an easy shift for me. I had internalized the stress that comes with fixed timelines, viewing progress as something that had to be measured in immediate, visible outcomes. Yet this project taught me the value of patience and the importance of stepping aside to let the research grow in its own time, much like the relationships we were building. I am deeply grateful to Erin Wilkins and Yue-Ching Cheng, whose leadership as Department Chairs during this research allowed Courtenay and I the space to take this unhurried approach. Their flexibility enabled us to move beyond the conventional academic timelines of six months to a year, and instead focus on the long-term impact of our work. By doing so, we mirrored Indigenous ways of knowing, which are not confined by linear, short-term progress but are instead oriented toward sustaining relationships and ensuring the health of future generations.

This approach also represents a subtle challenge to the colonial structures that have long dictated academic research. Historically, colonialism has imposed standardization, efficiency, and linear progression as the dominant modes of knowledge production, sidelining Indigenous methodologies and other non-Western knowledge systems. By rejecting the rigid, time-bound academic model, we made room for diverse ways of knowing to flourish, allowing this project to become not just an exercise in research but in relational, generational learning.

Could this shift toward a more generational perspective signal an opportunity for broader departmental reform, especially as the decolonization of academia gains momentum? I believe so. By moving away from the colonial obsession with fixed timelines, departments can lead the way in fostering inclusivity and embracing a wider array of worldviews. This is not just about loosening deadlines but about fundamentally reshaping the ethos of academic research to prioritize relationships, cultural continuity, and long-term impact—values that honor the generations past, present, and future.

# Part One: Immediate Action

When I first reached out to Courtenay Gibson to inquire about her interest in exploring this research topic with me, two things very quickly emerged from our correspondence: 1. Yes, not only was there great interest in looking at how and where the Recreation Studies Department could build a relationship with the Musqueam Recreation, but Courtenay had an abundance of ideas and areas to explore about what this could look like in practice and 2. Working together to actualize these ideas would need to be contingent on our (the Department's) ability to be flexible to the needs and schedules of Courtenay and her staff, as they had a lot going on.



The Musqueam Recreation Department operates with remarkable dedication and accomplishment, considering the limited staff and funding available. Courtenay operates with a staff of 3 full-time employees (including herself) and a rotating list of auxiliary employees. Their ongoing work in the community is truly commendable, as they continuously strive to meet the diverse needs and aspirations of their members. The Recreation Department not only maintains the community centre facilities, including a weight room, a large gym and multipurpose rooms, but keeps their facilities open 79 hours a week, for community members to access (Musqueam Indian Band, 2023). Additionally, they schedule and run a variety of classes, including fitness classes, button blanket classes and more. In addition to this, they also host and support a wide array of community events. While Courtenay worked with me on this research paper, she also organized and executed the Annual Youth Soccer Tournament, which hosted 55 teams and 109 games over a single weekend. Further, Courtenay and her staff cultivate and maintain relationships with businesses, other Nations, sport organizations and more, across the city and the province. All this to say that the the most immediate way that the Recreation Studies Department can support Musqueam Recreation is to leverage the resources available in our Department to support the workload and fill immediate needs where appropriate. This in turn creates more space and capacity for Courtenay and her team to look towards long-term ways in which a reciprocal relationship with the Recreation Studies Department can come into existence.

### Recreation Faculty Quick Tip:



When faculty are attempting to build relationships with or connect with Indigenous knowledge keepers, community leaders or organizations, for course related questions, I often hear that they will not receive replies, or any expressed interest, and faculty are unsure of how to proceed. In my experience, this speaks not to the disinterest of whomever is being contacted, but instead to the limited capacity available due to other more urgent and pressing needs to serve their community or organization. Therefore, in order to proceed in a good way, I encourage faculty to explore how they can position themselves to present possibilities to help or support existing and ongoing initiatives, before introducing or asking about new ideas that work to serve the needs of the Department first.

## Examples of Supporting Immediate and Emerging Needs

Throughout the creation of this research project, two short-term needs emerged for ways in which the Recreation Studies Department can support Musqueam Recreation. Below I will outline what was needed and how the Department worked to fill these needs.

### Data Gathering



For Courtenay and her team to make informed decisions about where to allocate their fiscal budget, there is a need to better understand what the desires and expectations of the Musqueam community are, concerning recreation. While there is a great opportunity here for this to be a larger, more involved research project (perhaps a research topic explored through RECR4400), it was important to determine how to meet this immediate need and plan for a future solution. With fluidity and immediacy in mind, we chose to move forward with an immediate solution, while maintaining the idea of future possibilities to address this annual need.

As such, we worked alongside Courtenay and her team to support the design and dissemination of a community survey. This partnership allowed us to align departmental resources with Musqueam’s immediate needs in a way that was mutually beneficial. Our Instructional Assistant, Dan Ostrov, developed social media posts and posters in collaboration with Courtenay to promote the survey within the community. This effort reflected our commitment to leveraging our existing resources to enhance Musqueam Recreation’s capacity while increasing community awareness of the Recreation Studies Department, and the programs offered.

The survey was designed to help Courtenay identify funding priorities, such as expanding adult fitness classes or designating gym time exclusively for female-identifying community members. Through this collaborative effort, 37 Musqueam community members participated, providing the data needed to inform organizational decisions for the year ahead. This work underscores our department's dedication to building sustainable partnerships rooted in reciprocity, where both parties share knowledge, resources, and benefits in ways that reflect respect and mutual support.

## Capturing the Canoe Races



Another significant event that Courtenay and her team executed while this research project was underway, was the War Canoe Races. Musqueam Recreation welcomed 15 large canoes and 75 small canoes onto their territory to participate in the annual war canoe race. While the planning for this event was underway, it came to light that many Elders had a repertoire of stories that contained important cultural knowledge and historical information that needed to be recorded and archived. Courtenay reached out to our Department to see if we could support them in this immediate need. As a result, our Department Chair, Yue-Ching, headed down to the Musqueam reserve with a camera in hand. While the races were underway, he captured footage of this unique recreational activity. It resulted in a high-quality photo album that Yue-Ching provisioned to Courtenay and her team for them to use the images captured as they see fit.

While these immediate actions to support the needs of Musqueam Recreation may be interpreted to do more for the Nation than the Recreation Studies Department, it's important to highlight how these actions are laced with reciprocity. This reciprocity might not be immediately evident, but these initiatives have amplified our Department's visibility within the community and fortified our partnership with Musqueam Recreation. In the data-gathering initiative, we not only provided Courtenay's team with valuable insights for budget allocation, but also increased the community's awareness of the Recreation Studies Department, and positioned the Department as a partner and supporter of Musqueam Recreation. Additionally, Capturing the War Canoe Races offered another opportunity for reciprocation. The resulting high-quality photo album not only served as a cultural repository for the community but also established the Department's identity as a respectful partner in Musqueam Recreation. To date, our active participation in Musqueam's immediate needs has not only built a stronger community relationship but has also enhanced the Department's reputation, showcasing the mutual benefits inherent in our partnership.

# Part Two: Short-Term Recommendations

The Recreation Studies Department can take an active role in developing short-term practices that address the ongoing needs of both the Recreation Studies Department and the Musqueam community, while simultaneously promoting student engagement and real-world learning experiences. These practices can be easily achieved, as they do not require additional funding or resources, but also serve as a bridge between academia and community (in which the Department already excels with non-Indigenous communities), facilitating mutual growth and exchange.

## Advertising Careers in Recreation

One such short-term practice could involve active participation from the Recreation Studies Department in career fairs and high school events hosted within the Musqueam community. This approach could be twofold: Firstly, it can serve as an educational platform, informing community members about the myriad career opportunities within the field of recreation. By presenting real-life examples of professionals in the field, we can inspire and educate attendees about the possibilities and paths in this sector. This would meet community needs, as it was identified early on in conversation with Courtenay that there was an inherent need to showcase recreation as a viable career path. This aligns with the understanding of the Recreation Studies Department, as it has been a longstanding recruitment challenge to position the industry of recreation as a desirable and viable career path, especially for high school students (Edey-Nicoll, 2019). Musqueam Recreation has identified that there is a struggle to find qualified recreation professionals within the community and a lack of understanding from auxiliary employees that recreation can be pursued as an educated profession with many opportunities for career growth. Secondly, this engagement can provide a clear overview of the pathways available through our Department, giving potential students a tangible roadmap to follow should they choose a career in recreation. This active engagement not only promotes our Department within the community but also provides prospective students with valuable insights into their future career paths.

This initiative is an identified 'low hanging fruit', as the Recreation Studies Department already has practices in place to attend local career and volunteer fairs and give presentations at local high schools. The Instructional Assistant is traditionally responsible for supporting recruitment initiatives by raising awareness of careers in recreation, in both the recreation industry (by attending volunteer fairs at local recreation and community centres, or other community events such as the Sunset Community Centre Canada Day event) and in local high schools (by providing interactive presentations to high school students, to educate them on career opportunities in recreation, and by attending career fairs at local high schools, such as the Lord Byng Career Fair). To achieve this short-term action, the Instructional Assistant could work with the Musqueam Community Centre to identify appropriate events to attend and to connect with the local high school to schedule presentations.

## Student-Led Initiatives

Another short-term practice could be centred around capacity building through student-led initiatives. Students in the Department could design and execute various community projects such as event planning (with the support and guidance of instructors, for example, there could be alignment with the following courses: RECR1168, RECR3200), conducting research initiatives (through RECR4400), or participating at an internship with Musqueam Recreation (involving the courses RECR2388 and RECR2487). For example, students could work with community members to organize recreational events that cater to specific demographics, or they could conduct research projects that provide actionable insights for community development. These initiatives provide students with valuable, hands-on experiences while contributing positively to the community. Furthermore, internships at Musqueam Recreation could provide students with practical work experience and offer the recreation centre extra support and the fresh perspectives of a student. These real-world experiences not only enhance the student's learning but also support the needs of Musqueam Recreation in a more structured and sustained format.

Moreover, the collective imagination of a diverse group—comprising students, instructors, and community members—can result in a plethora of additional ideas. Hence, fostering open conversations and creative brainstorming among these groups will undoubtedly yield innovative and impactful strategies to further support Musqueam Recreation. As previously noted, the premise of these discussions should be grounded in collaboration, inclusivity, and a shared vision for the betterment of community recreation. To this end, it is essential to create spaces where these dialogues can occur—platforms that encourage the exchange of ideas between students, instructors, and Musqueam Recreation representatives. This initiative will have its first opportunity for exploration in Spring 2025 when the Musqueam community will host the Langara Recreation Studies Faculty for a Cultural Day in the Musqueam Cultural Centre.

# Part Three: Long-Term Recommendations

The exploration of long-term capacity-building practices is vital to creating a sustainable impact and nurturing an ongoing, lasting relationship. While short-term engagements allow for immediate support and hands-on student experiences, it's the long-term strategies that provide a shared vision of where this relationship might lead and how each party can support and foster the growth of the other.

## Indigenous Specific Micro-credential

One significant recommendation is the development of an Indigenous-specific micro-credential. This specialized credential would not only provide recognition of the specific skills and knowledge relevant to Indigenous recreation but also serve to attract more Indigenous students to the field. The creation of this micro-credential should involve consultation with Indigenous communities to ensure relevance and respect for cultural knowledge. This micro-credential could be created in a way where it scaffolds into the existing diploma and degree, and could be advertised specifically to recreation professionals in the Musqueam and other local Indigenous communities, looking to further their career in recreation. It would be important to have this course taught or co-taught by an instructor who identifies as Indigenous, ideally from the Musqueam community. This micro-credential would need to be organized in such a way that its learning outcomes were specific to the skillset necessary to be a successful professional in Indigenous-led recreation organizations. Discussion with Courtenay revealed that the learning outcomes specified in our current programs do not necessarily align with the needs of an Indigenous recreation professional. The exploration of the viability and creation of such a micro-credential could be an entire research project in itself, so I will instead present this idea as a high-level concept with an invitation for further research to explore this notion.

## Indigenous-Specific Recreation Course

Developing an Indigenous-focused recreation course is an exceptional opportunity to expand the collective understanding of recreation from the unique perspective of Indigenous communities. This course could delve into the rich history and significance of traditional games and the role of recreation in Indigenous societies on the West Coast and beyond. Students can unearth the stories behind traditional activities, examining how they served not merely as pastimes, but also as mechanisms for teaching valuable life skills, fostering community bonds, and preserving cultural heritage (Oksasikewiyin, personal communication, 2021).

This course could also explore the central role that recreation plays in contemporary Indigenous communities. Community centres often act as integral gathering places, providing a venue for traditional events such as funerals and other ceremonies. These centres

encapsulate the heart of community life, acting as vessels that carry cultural continuity while facilitating essential communal bonds. By illuminating local Indigenous community centres, students can gain a deeper understanding of how Indigenous communities use recreation to maintain and express their cultural identity.

The role of sport and recreation in empowering Indigenous communities can also be illustrated through examples such as [Nations Skate Youth](#) and the [All Native Basketball Tournament](#) in Northern BC. These initiatives not only promote physical health and wellbeing but also serve as platforms for cultural expression and unity. By studying these examples, students can appreciate the transformative power of sport and recreation within Indigenous communities and explore how similar strategies could be applied in other contexts.

This Indigenous-focused course could be offered through the special topics courses in the Recreation Studies Department, providing an opportunity for diploma students to explore an area of increasing importance and relevance. By making this course available as an elective to students across the entire college, we can promote a broader understanding and appreciation of Indigenous recreation practices, fostering an atmosphere of inclusivity and mutual respect. If it is successful as a special topics course, it could be explored to have it become a permanent course offered at Langara College.

Ultimately, through the creation of such a course, we affirm our commitment to incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing and doing within our academic curriculum, leading to a more inclusive and holistic view of recreation.

## Additional Long-Term Ideas to Explore

Moving beyond the realm of academic programs, we can also consider further avenues to support the Musqueam community and promote Indigenous representation within the field of recreation. These additional ideas do not solely focus on curriculum and program development but extend to funding opportunities, cultural preservation, and partnership building. By broadening our scope in this way, we embrace a comprehensive approach that integrates multiple facets of engagement and cooperation.

### Indigenous Scholarships

Another critical area to consider is the provision of Indigenous scholarships. These scholarships can support and incentivize Indigenous students to pursue a career in recreation studies. In this way, we not only make the field more accessible to Indigenous students but also encourage diverse perspectives within our classrooms and, ultimately, the profession.

### Language and Culture Revitalization

Revitalizing language and culture is another crucial area where the Recreation Studies Department can play a significant role. This recommendation calls for a more profound integration of Indigenous worldviews into the Department's ethos and curriculum. One means of accomplishing this is by incorporating aspects of Indigenous languages, such as

Hə́hə́míhə́m phrases and words, into our courses. This initiative can serve as a respectful acknowledgement of the traditional lands upon which we operate, and enhance students' understanding and appreciation of Indigenous cultures. Importantly, it also prepares students to work sensitively and effectively within recreation centres in the Lower Mainland, where the use of such language terms may be relevant and welcomed.

Moreover, we should explore how recreation centres, both in Indigenous communities and elsewhere, can be utilized to support language and culture revitalization. These centres can serve as community hubs that facilitate the transmission and preservation of Indigenous languages and cultures, a potential that our students could help realize. For instance, the provision of community classes on traditional activities such as basket weaving not only preserves and promotes these essential cultural practices but also offers community members at urban recreation centres unique learning experiences outside of the conventional offerings.

However, the implementation of these initiatives should not be taken lightly or carried out without due process. It is crucial that such efforts to incorporate Indigenous worldviews are led by, or conducted in close consultation with, Indigenous voices. This underscores the long-term nature of these initiatives: they are not one-off actions but require a sustained commitment to relationship-building and continuous learning from Indigenous perspectives.

In essence, the seeds of these ideas should be planted and nurtured within our current students, who are the future leaders and professionals in the field of recreation. As we cultivate these seeds, we not only enrich our students' education but also contribute to the broader movement toward respect, recognition, and revitalization of Indigenous cultures. By doing so, the Department affirms its commitment to an inclusive and holistic approach to recreation studies that respects and values Indigenous contributions to the field.

## **Building Broader Relationships**

Lastly, building broader relationships with ISPARC (Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation Council) and other organizations can create a network of mutual support and knowledge exchange. These connections could lead to collaborative projects, research opportunities, and shared resources, thereby strengthening the Department's capacity to support Indigenous recreation in a meaningful and sustained manner.

Each of these recommendations can contribute to the long-term goal of fostering stronger relationships with Indigenous communities, embedding Indigenous perspectives into our programming, and creating a more inclusive and representative Department. As we explore these recommendations, we must maintain an ongoing dialogue with Indigenous communities to ensure our actions align with their needs and aspirations.

# Conclusion

The Langara College Recreation Studies Department's commitment to Indigenization offers an opportunity to transform how it serves local Indigenous communities through recreation education. This paper has outlined a path for developing a long-term, sustainable partnership with Musqueam Recreation, grounded in mutual respect and shared growth.

Addressing the immediate needs of Musqueam Recreation—such as supporting workload demands and inviting student-led initiatives lays the foundation for a deeper relationship. These actions not only provide tangible benefits to Musqueam but also enhance the Department's standing as a trusted partner, demonstrating the reciprocity that is essential for genuine collaboration.

Short-term actions, like participating in career fairs and highlighting recreation as a viable career path, create avenues for Indigenous youth to envision their futures in recreation. By integrating Musqueam community members into the learning process, both as contributors and potential future students, the Department not only serves the community but enriches its own academic environment.

The long-term vision involves weaving Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into the core of the Department's curriculum. By co-creating educational content with Musqueam, the Department can dismantle colonial structures that have historically shaped recreation studies, allowing for a more inclusive and culturally relevant understanding of recreation.

Ultimately, this approach emphasizes flexibility, reflection, and continuous adaptation. Indigenization is not a one-time initiative but an ongoing, evolving process that requires listening, learning, and adjusting based on the needs and aspirations of the Musqueam community. The strategies discussed here are starting points, meant to inspire future initiatives that grow out of this relationship.

This partnership must always be rooted in reciprocity and a deep respect for Indigenous worldviews and contributions. The Recreation Studies Department's efforts toward Indigenization are not just about meeting the needs of Indigenous communities; they represent a transformation in how knowledge is valued, shared, and applied. By co-developing programs and initiatives with Musqueam, the Department enriches the academic environment for all learners and positions itself as a leader in promoting reconciliation through education.

As the Department moves forward, it will continue to grow alongside the Musqueam community, learning from their insights and adjusting its practices to remain responsive and respectful. The initiatives discussed here are just the beginning. The seeds planted today will flourish into long-term opportunities for collaboration, understanding, and mutual respect, honouring both the past and the future. In doing so, the Department contributes to a more inclusive and equitable field of recreation, where Indigenous communities are recognized, valued, and celebrated as essential partners and leaders.

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