Indigenous Connectivity:
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students’ Journeys to Canada for Study Abroad

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ENHANCING PROGRAMS TO INTEGRATE TERTIARY OUTBOUND MOBILITY EXPERIENCES

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Quick Scan of the Room

What are some of your overseas / cross-cultural experiences as a staff or student?

Examples:

- Study Abroad
- Short-Term Placement
- Professional Experience
- Study Tours
- Volunteering
- Service-Learning
EPITOME Project

Case Study: Indigenous Students’ Journeys
Background

Across the Australian university landscape, educators are striving to internationalise the curriculum and develop students as culturally competent ‘global citizens.’
The desire to design, implement and embed Outbound Mobility Programs (OMPs) into the curriculum to create a more globally aware Australian workforce for the future has inspired our research.
The materials co-created by students and staff will assist in leveraging students’ positive experiences to enhance recruitment, preparation and re-entry phases of OMPs and amplify their learning outcomes.
mixed methods research design:
online surveys, case studies, interviews, photo-elicitation, and social media.
Overview of Findings
Participants (n = 157)
20 Programs in Asia-Pacific Region

1 Study Tour to Canada
Majority of mobility experiences are 2 – 4 weeks

- 58% for 2-4 weeks
- 30% for one semester
- 10% for less than 2 weeks
- 2% for one academic year
KEY FINDINGS

72% of students said, "No, omes are not something I talk about with friends."

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Almost 1/4 students who participated had already lived overseas for 6 months or more...

Women are twice as likely to participate in OME.
5 Things non-participants think of OMEs

The problem is not that they think study abroad is unappealing or unimportant. It's the conflicting considerations in their lives that stop them from going.

Over 80% of participants-to-be reported no training for intercultural communication.

- Fun
- Life changing experience
- More attractive to employers
- Increase my confidence
- Universities offer limited support
5 Considerations Students Have When Thinking About Whether to Go: Finance, Time, Other Overseas Travel, Destination Unappealing, Work Commitments.
Indigenous Student International Study Experiences

Learning Abroad 2015 (AUIDF, 2016)

Average = 0.4%
Where are we now?

While universities acknowledge that access and equity are key concerns for studying abroad, “…only five institutions Australia-wide advertise specific access/equity grants/scholarships to support learning abroad programs, and only two of these are aimed at Indigenous students” (Harrison & Potts, 2016).
There is a significant focus on internationalisation and global citizenship; however,

“the virtues of education by travelling are well known to popular culture yet there is a seemingly obvious gap in its university scholarship – especially in the fields and disciplines of Indigenous education and Indigenous studies” (Revell, Milroy, & Thomas, forthcoming).
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- Exploring the experiences of eight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers on a short-term study tour to the University of Victoria.

- Retrospective narratives through focus group, interviews, and photo-elicitation.
Interconnected Themes:

Connection

Language
Identity
Healing
Action
“To get over there and feel the ground and touch and smell, and see all the things that are happening in a country so far away from us, in Canada, and having that perspective of that connection to culture is very important.”
Connection: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander & First Nations Cultures

- Becoming part of the landscape and place.
- A sense of commonality (e.g. dreamtime stories, cultural practices, and community).
- Shared experiences of colonisation.
Language: Renewal and Revitalisation

Everyday use.

Indigenous curriculum, language, and methodologies.

Indigenous Service Centre, Tribal School, and First Peoples House.
Identity: Self-reflection beyond the classroom…

“I’ve never thought about my Indigenous culture. I never really grew up with my Indigenous culture…”

So going over there and learning from their traditions and learning all the issues which really are similar to our Indigenous issues in Australia, you come back and it made me realise I really need to learn a lot more about my past generations and more about my family and our family tree.

It’s something that I don’t think you could learn from a classroom.”
Healing: Cultural connectedness

That’s what I’m perceiving what healing is, that it’s happiness. You feel connected, it’s spiritual, it’s meaning, it’s all connected.
From One Song Line To Another
Lynne Thomas
Elder in Residence at University of Victoria, Aunt May Sam
Rochelle Koster
“I found a passion for who I am, and for my culture.”
Donna Collier
In a world of globalisation, Indigenous people are speaking with greater confidence and collective solidarity about justice, sovereignty and cultural renewal (Revell et al., forthcoming; Sissons, 2005).

“Indigenous Australians are creating space within tertiary institutions as part of the broader project of cultural renaissance” (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006).
Practical Implications

**Student Voice:** The importance of listening to and learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to enhance their experiences of tertiary study (Barney, 2016).

**Cultural Understanding:** Creating positive learning environments and culturally safe spaces.

**Support:** Pursuing funding (NCP; Endeavour Mobility Grants); and building university support and peer networks.
References


Barney, K. (2016). Listening to and learning from the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to facilitate success. Student Success, 7(1), 1-11. doi: 10.5204/ssj.v7i1.317


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