

**Transcript of ACE-WIL Town Hall: COWIL Panel Discussion – Insights on Three Work-Integrated Learning Initiatives from Northern and Interior B.C.**

**BCcampus webinar recorded on June 28, 2022**

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**Panelists: Margaret Hohner, Melissa Fournier, and Jessi Guercio**

HELENA PRINS:

Everyone, welcome. Welcome to our town hall today here on this Tuesday. And wherever you are, I hope you are doing well. And we thank you for joining us. We are recording this session. So if you would prefer not to be recorded, please turn off your camera. And we also have enabled live captioning. My name is Helena Prins and I'll be your host. But by no means did I do a lot for this session. It is really wonderful that we have Hannah. I am not going to attempt her last name who has put this for us together. We have an exciting panel for you, but more about the agenda later. First, I want to hand it over to a director of large Melissa who is going to do the territorial acknowledgment.

MELISSA FOURNIER:

Thank you, Helena. Good afternoon, everyone. I feel so privileged to have been offered the opportunity today to provide a land acknowledgement, land acknowledgements. As we know, our small and really important step in what is a larger picture for a movement of truth and reconciliation, and my personal and professional responsibilities and efforts for ally ship, for social action and courage, where actions speak louder than words towards decolonization, reconciliation and Indigenization. I originated from Quebec, where my mother's side were settlers of European descent, and my father's side continues to be explored since he was adopted with roots from many wacky. Recently I've been reflecting quite a bit on my connection to land with memories of outdoor excursions that go way back to my childhood and how appreciative I really am to continue to have opportunities to explore and play on the lands where I am today. My work is with College of New Caledonia, which is located in Prince George on the traditional and unceded territory of the Lheidli T'enneh

I've learned that Lheidli means the people from the confluence of the river where the two rivers flow together. A name that emphasizes the deep connections between Lheidli T'enneh culture and place. In the College of New Caledonia is honored to work with Indigenous communities at the northern region inclusive of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples. And we acknowledge the graciousness that the First Nations people in welcoming all of us and those who are seeking knowledge on the surrounding traditional territories. Today I am attending this meeting virtually from Williams Lake, which is located on the traditional unceded territory of the northern Secwepemc. The Secwepemc are known as the people from where the water flowed, where they held jurisdiction and managed large tract, large tracts of the Fraser River watershed and the surrounding areas. I'm a visitor on these lands and in recognition and appreciation of

Indigenous people who, as the original owners of these lands, have had ties to these since time immemorial, before settlers and visitors arrived.

I am truly honored to be able to work, live and play here. I thank you again for this opportunity and I invite all of you to include your land acknowledgements in the chat.

HELENA PRINS:

Thank you so much, Melissa. So for everyone, we have a big agenda and I'll do a quick run through of the agenda. We're going to start with short breakout room. Don't worry, it's really going to be four people for five minutes so it won't get too awkward and too long, by the way. So we'll we'll kick it off just to give you an opportunity to connect with your peers in the sector. And then we are very fortunate to have Brian Train here from the ministry is going to give us a short update. And then the reason why you're all probably here is for the marvelous panel that Hannah put together for us, who's going to give us some updates on their projects. And then we have two announcements, one from Meg around Sustainable Development Goals. You remember we had a fabulous professional development opportunity recently and from there some next steps. So Meg will tell you more about that and we will wrap up the session with the lovely Anna. Whose our President who will give you some further updates. So without further ado, let's let's get connecting here.

And I love this picture. We thought it might be fun seeing that we're all really in the work around work and helping people to find their dream jobs. We thought it might be fun today to talk about the worst job that you've ever had and look at that picture to get an idea of what some people do every day. And it would be great to share with your partners why this was the worst job. And if you really cannot think of a worst job and you would much rather talk about the summer ahead, we invite you to otherwise, after you introduce yourself, just brag about your wonderful summer ahead. OK, so it will be a short five minute stint with three other people in the room. So Kelsey from BCcampus will send you off to your breakout room. Welcome back, everyone. We had fun in our room, I can disclose what was said in the courtroom, but we had fun. So I hope all of you had a quick, fun chat with your colleagues in the sector. Right now, we are very fortunate to have Brian Train here. Brian, thank you so much for joining us today and for giving us a short update from the ministry.

BRAIN TRAIN:

So I'm sure that most people here today have heard of co-op and working integrated learning initiatives, and hopefully you've been able to participate or contribute to one of the many, many projects that have been running at our institutions since 2019, 20. So Phase one was involved about \$9 million in funding that the ministry provided, and it funded 74 different projects that involved all 25 of our post-secondary institutions. It's wild up now a final report and a comprehensive final report is about to be released from the ministry. It will be going out to the vice presidents, academic first. Then we're going to be distributing widely. It'll be available ACE-WIL website to the members of the BC Wil Council. And personally, I intend on sending copies to as many people I can find with jobs analogous to mine and ministries in other

provinces and brag about what we've been able to do in BC. Phase two is underway. We have five and a half million dollars in funding for that. We're supporting 45 projects, again, involving 25 or 25 public post-secondary institutions.

Most projects will complete in August. We've had a few delays with a few projects, so they're getting a few extensions due to Omicron, hiring delays, other personal project management items. But everything will be sewn up by the end of December this year. Thank you.

HANNAH AHLUWALIA:

Great. Thank you, Brian. If we could go to the next site. Thank you. So, yeah, thank you, Brian. We're going to now move on to the main part of the session, which is the panel that we have for you today. And my name is Hannah Ahluwalia. I am the co-op and WIL initiative project manager and I will be the panel moderator today. So first of all, I want to say thank you so much for our three panelists for joining us today. Our first panelist is Margaret Hohner. Margaret is a co-coordinator at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology and Co-op at NVIT is new and is a one person department. So Margaret does it all. And then our next panelist is Melissa Fournier. Melissa is a work integrated learning coordinator at the College of New Caledonia and supports existing work, integrated learning and new initiatives across the institution. And then our last panelist is Jessi Guercio. Jessi is the employer liaison coordinator for Thompson Rivers University in the Career and Experiential Learning Office Office.

Jessi works closely with UBC, Okanagan and University of Northern British Columbia in the Interior and North and Interior and Northern Work Integrated Learning Initiative, which is a partnership that aims to engage emerging student talent with employment opportunities, that supports the changing needs and development of small and medium sized organizations within our regions. So the goal for the panel today is to provide a brief overview of the of three Co-op and WIL initiatives that are happening in these regions and describe the unique challenges and adaptations for WIL in these regions and contexts. As we listen to the discussion. Let's keep a few key questions in mind. First, how can we work together? How can we work together towards the common goal of making will more accessible and inclusive for students and partners throughout BC? And what can we learn and apply to our practice? So we have 30 minutes allotted for the discussion and then ten minutes saved at the end the questions.

However, please feel free to add your questions and comments in the chat as they come up, as we want this to be as open and discussion as possible. So with that, we will begin the panel by allowing each panelist to provide a brief overview of their project. And we will begin with Margaret.

MARGARET HOHNER:

Hi. Thank you very much. And it's it's really great to be here to share my experiences. And I'm sure that my experiences are very similar to what a lot of especially the smaller institutions are experiencing. But so number one, I would really like to thank the ministry. So Brian, if you were on here, we would not have co-op at VRT if the ministry did not have these projects and these

funding is the funding happening. We are totally have been sponsored by the ministry projects and and it has been extremely successful. So, you know, 63 work integrated learning experiences that would not have happened if we had not received this. And it's mostly for Indigenous students. So so thank you so much. So the goal of our project was really to open more doors of opportunity for Indigenous students. We really wanted to. We had started a project the year before. We had received some funding from Business in Higher Education where we partnered with the Chamber of Commerce, and we really wanted to continue that partnership because it was really it was really helping to increase the numbers of local businesses that could partake in like hiring work, integrated learning students or co-op students.

So so that was the focus of the second part of this project was to really enhance that relationship with our Chamber of Commerce and increase the number of students graduating with good, relevant work experience and leading to better employment opportunities for our students. So a lot of that is really educating, educating businesses. So we're a small town, small businesses. Businesses lack capacity. They're often one to ten people in those businesses. And mostly they're tourism. They're small businesses, you know, support businesses for a small town. So they many of them have no idea what you're talking about when you talk Co-op or the new work integrated learning. So was huge to educate our businesses on the availability of student talent right here in their in their hometown of Merritt and utilizing NVIT students to kind of fill those gaps. So, you know, it was amazing. We've made huge inroads, but we have a lot to do. Our students, we lack students. So we have a lot and a lot of you are probably experiencing this, but our businesses can't find workers.

All of my students since we started this program have been getting Co-op placements, no problem in multiple placements. So they've been continuing on for two, three or four semesters at these placements and they've been really valuable for, for our businesses, but we lack students. So COVID really was difficult for us as a really small institution. We were not able to do the recruitment that we needed, especially in programs that are highly needed where they need students. So that's business, you know, and tourism, those kinds of things, maybe cultural in the arts. So that really hindered us. So this year we've we've got a lot fewer students than we anticipated just because of that issue. Right? Some of the things that Hannah and I discussed in one of our conversations was in a small town in rural BC we have a lot of unique challenges, I think. I think they're unique to any how, for our students to partake in work experience is, you know, or co-op experiences. So for one, for instance, say say we have some professional Co-op.

So our health care system or things like that, who need help, who have to go elsewhere to get jobs. So, for instance, there's jobs and experiences in Kamloops and or Archer Center or Cologne or Vancouver. Our students have the unique challenges that they have or that, number one, they may be the only. They may be the main person in their family. And they live in multigenerational groups. And so their responsibilities are not just for themselves or for their

children, their grandchildren and their elders. And so it's really difficult for them to go and take a work experience out of town. The other thing is transportation. Many of our students do not have driver's licenses. They don't have they can't afford to have a vehicle or insure a vehicle. So they can't, you know, go out of town to these different places that they would like to go to to get their experience. So they really have to we have to keep that local, you know, so they have a lot of extra challenges. And also we don't have bus service.

Right? So, you know, I know my time is probably there is a lot of there's a lot of different things. So, you know, we're making a lot of progress. I guess I just want to say it's been a great opportunity to connect with all of these local businesses. And we are making a difference. It's just it's slow progress.

HANNAH AHLUWALIA:

Well, thank you very much, Margaret. And we're definitely going to get more into the challenges later in the panel. So next, we're going to go to Melissa, who's going to give an overview of her project.

MELISSA FOURNIER:

Thank you, Hannah. The Northern Wheel Hub Project is a partnership between Coast Mountain College and College of New Caledonia, with a focus to raise WIL awareness and connect the North through starting work. Integrated Learning Conversations Now. The partnership is a continuation of the Northern Consortium that was created from Phase one funding and we sure are appreciative of the Ministry's ongoing support towards our WIL efforts. Now our project goals were to raise WIL awareness with external outreach and to grow our WIL networks externally and to connect student experiences for continued centralized work, integrated learning supports within each of our institutions. Our external outreach was achieved two ways through the participation of various chambers of commerce through the Northern Corridor Network. So from Quesnel to Prince Rupert, and we were really fortunate to deliver a WIL information session and presentation to memberships across those chambers of commerce during BC chamber Week. And our second was through targeted approaches for outreach, our phase one efforts were mostly geared internally within each of our institutions to facilitate online virtual work.

Integrated learning, which the timing was, couldn't have fallen better with the onset of pandemic. But we did notice a huge needed emphasis to really establish a better work integrated learning network externally and a huge need for stakeholder engagement. So in that there's a piece to and Margaret referred to this because there's a huge piece to inform and educate external stakeholders that want to participate and work integrated learning, because many haven't even heard of of what it is or how it can benefit the student and their organizations. And then within our second goal, we were aiming to connect 100 work integrated learning, student experiences. So this could be done through traditional and micro work, integrated learning experiences. And so it's been really interesting work, ongoing work

with Coast Mountain College and, and yeah, the learning continues. And now we'll pass it off to you. Jesse from Thompson Rivers University.

JESSI GUERCIO:

Thank you and much appreciated. Yeah. We'll talk about the Tri-university interior and northern workings, creative learning, having and our partnerships. So the partnership is between three university UBC Okanagan, University of British Columbia and Thompson rivers University. And the main goal is really help with that emerging student talent and really connecting them with the small and medium sized businesses within our region. Sometimes they can interview the city of councils or even more rural communities within the three regions that we're at. And we really wanted to understand the barriers and challenges of what these small businesses go through. And so that was a big piece, a big push in phase one, which again, we're very appreciative for both phases being funded by the government and experienced in this project. And so what we did is we wanted to really get to talk to a lot of community partnerships, employee engagement, to really understand what could really be the barrier for these organizations there within that small and medium size ranges.

So we found out a lot throughout the throughout the first, I think first year we did this which was from last January until pretty much last January until this past January. So yeah. And our goal was really to target 250 employers and 20% of new placements and being in Indigenous communities and support employers in interior and or the communities to hire students for 130 WIL placements. So again, overall, this has actually been based, this project being based on a previous relationship that was developed in 2017, which is into your research, into your University Research Coalition. And it's a partnership that forms a core research innovation talents within an infrastructure within our three universities, and that's been doing really well as well. So we were actually very in touch with that association as well as we have done our project. And so we've really made a very concerted effort is to really develop these relationships and industry partners for our regions. It can be chambers, it can be development communities or some trusts that we want to continue the communications.

Because I think if we really get into those networks that are becoming the main communication pretty much post for a lot of these small and medium sized businesses when they engage in and understand the resources and benefits and toolkits that they can use. I think the Chamber have been really getting a really good support for that, a bit like venture campuses, for example, in the campus region. So that's been something that's really been helpful for our project and really help our employers that we engage with, really access our toolkit and our resources, which we have developed through our three universities and have it hosted up on the website. So that's, I think that's the general nutshell of what our project and what we've been up to. I think what we really appreciate is this knowledge sharing, the collaboration that we can do, because I think, again, having three universities is never, and collaborating, is never an easy feat, I should say. We've been really excited and the meetings and the knowledge sharing that we've been able to do and help grow each one of our well programs.

So I think all of our three university programs are at different spots of where they might be in their respective institutions. So the learning aspect of this has been really kind of breath taking almost, to really engage well in these regions that maybe haven't experienced as much as the large communities, maybe in the lower mainland. Yeah, that's the quick introduction for INWIL.

HANNAH AHLUWALIA:

Thank you, Jessi so now we'll just go into yep perfect. Just all the panelists. So one of the things that really stood out to me with all of you were saying is the importance of the partnerships and relationships that you've made throughout this initiative. However, I know that sometimes getting employers of the ability to pay students and paid WIL experience is difficult. So I wonder if any of you can share some strategies that you've got to help employers and or WIL employers, paid WIL experiences for students.

MARGARET HOHNER:

Who wants to start?

MELISSA FOURNIER:

I can speak a little bit to it. Not that our project focused specifically on paid student experiences, but we we are anticipating it in forward looking, in continuing the work in the conversations with employers that this will be something that comes up. And so through the Northern WIL have project, Dan on my project partner and I put together an employer resource that includes a lot of funding links and we were and the intent with that resource. So there's information on work integrated learning generally because we understand that folks may be hearing about this for the first time. There's our contact information across both of our institutions and then there is this resource, this list of of links for funding and other resources. And the intent was to continue provide it to provide our support when employers were going to access one of these links or multiple links and perhaps how to navigate it and maybe to answer any questions, because sometimes it's just a quick point of reference that they're needing and just a little bit of support to navigate the resources.

And so that's that's what I'm going to speak on on that not that the project specifically was looking after paid student experiences.

MARGARET HOHNER:

Yeah. We found very similar things, Melissa. And I mean, really to the point that we had to like if. If one of our businesses was accessing a wage subsidy, we found that the wage subsidies were really cumbersome and very difficult for small businesses to navigate. They were requiring a lot of help, you know, and you know, we even had one business. They just could not do the online stuff. She was not very familiar with doing anything online, and then her bookkeeping system wasn't compatible with the wage subsidy system and there was just so many hassles. Right. And a lot of our small businesses found that. So having this partnership with the Chamber made a really huge difference because we had a dedicated person who could actually sit there

and I could hand stuff off to them. And it really helped being able to have another person who could walk them walk them through it and do the stuff for them, basically.

JESSI GUERCIO:

Yeah. And I think I can attest to that two, two comments already. And I think resources being a big piece of it. I think what we really and that trouble of doing the online form especially for smaller businesses. Yes. 100% agree. I think we definitely, as all three of us typically would have these meetings with all the funders that we can that we know of within provincially, federally. And they seem pretty willing to meet directly with these the small, small and medium sized employers, which helped a lot. They were really eager to be like, hey, if there's any trouble, if someone in the form of funding out, like let us know. We're happy to assist with that. And I think that's great for us. And I wasn't aware of that, maybe first first finding out a lot of these funding options. So resources toolkits, having the time to really take maybe that to be an event like this or a town hall to really go through it with these employers and see how they can they can really benefit from an experience that people experience.

I think that's been the best bet so far. But again, there's always going to be, you know, a very small business or those small hiccups that are unavoidable, like the software. Right. If it if something don't click it, unfortunately, it just doesn't click. So there's definitely need to be maybe a little bit more pieces. We totally understand that. But I think what's been done to a lot of these WIL project have been very helpful for these.

HANNAH AHLUWALIA:

We're on the faculty side of things to all talk about educating faculty when we can speak a little bit more about some challenges and some learnings that have emerged from that part of the work.

MARGARET HOHNER:

Well, in NVIT Most of our faculty just don't understand. And they still don't understand what co-op work integrated learning is, but they engage in it. So, you know, they're doing a lot, but they just don't recognize that that they're doing it. So. And it's, you know, quite frankly, it's been really difficult to engage with faculty over the pandemic. And we just haven't had the opportunities to be in the same rooms to chat it up. So that has been a huge challenge.

JESSI GUERCIO:

I can again very similar pieces. I think a lot of our, you know, TRU being a pretty medium sized university. But within BC I think we've had a lot of faculty to a lot of different programs that excel very well on work experiences and the like. OK, so how about Co-op? How about WIL? And they're like, Well, what's that? And just like, what's I don't know how to do that next step. Like, we're great at just doing it the way we want to do it. They don't want to incorporate a little bit of that, maybe that co-curricular piece to it. So I think really helping faculty understand that there's definitely benefits to these students if you can really track what they're doing and how they're doing it. So I think we've we're getting a little bit better at really just engaging



faculty different ways. The Student Faculty Council meetings are in certain areas where we can really engage faculty. Like, it's great what you're doing, but could you, you know, could you add this little three piece to it? Because again, I think they don't make, then they're talking about the site visits and they're talking about the form they have to fill out.

And it's just like, well, they don't want to add that extra piece to it. Right? They liked it the way they did. So it's just it's just really helping them, you know, let them know that you're not on your own. We're happy to help that process, the whole process, but it's just getting them convinced. It's really just get in that first time. When they get that first experience or that first student, it's usually easy too.

MELISSA FOURNIER:

I would echo that Jessi, at College of New Caledonia. There's a lot of work integrated learning happening across programming, and it's happening and it's going well. But there are just some support pieces that are centralized now within the college for the work integrated learning that's happening. And so and really what I'm noticing is that that's opening up opportunities to maybe streamline the information so that there's processes in place that maybe not everybody knows about or that there's opportunity to gain some of those pieces like what you're saying, you know, maybe with employer feedback or student feedback and so on.

HANNAH AHLUWALIA:

Melissa, I know that you mentioned that there is also micro WIL that you were doing through this project. And I imagine that you really have to work with faculty to get those kind of programs. Can you explain a little bit more about what that looks like?

MELISSA FOURNIER:

Yeah, I'll give you one example. So Micro WIL, we understand them to be short and intensive work, integrated learning experiences, where the student can, of course link what's being learned in the classroom to the workplace. And so one example of that at College of New Caledonia was bringing in a key northern employer. So the students within their area of study identified top three employers that they would like to hear from. And then we sourced their their top choice and they formulated questions based on their learning to ask the employer so that they were bringing the learning back around to the workplace. And that's being informed by the workplace and that that event just turned out so well. The students gained a lot of perspective. What's great, though, is the employer gain perspective as well. The feedback was that we've always wanted to and we're hearing this feedback from more than one employers that we've always wanted to connect with post-secondary never really knew how. Now, now we have that conversation started, but better yet, let's keep that conversation going.

Because while the employer is thinking forward, how can we connect again for the next year? We're thinking that as well. How can we connect again for the next year and for the next group of students?

HANNAH AHLUWALIA:

That's great. Micro-WIL is definitely a big opportunity, especially if you can get it in existing courses and work with faculty.

MELISSA FOURNIER:

And just to make sure, Hannah, that with Micro WIL, it's still really important that we're embedding what the student is learning to that workplace experience. So while it might be short and intensive, maybe a half day, we really have to ensure that the students are formulating some sort of a thinking and learning that's going to be linked to that short intensive opportunity.

HANNAH AHLUWALIA:

It's great. Thank you. Alright. I'll give us a bigger question now. What are some highlights or key takeaways that you've had in the, over the course of these projects? All of you are projects are working on projects that have been continuations from phase one. So you have a long period of time. So.

MELISSA FOURNIER:

If you don't mind if I go, folx. OK. I think I kind of spoke to it a little bit already. And that's that we're hearing from employers that they've always wanted to connect from post-secondary but didn't really know how, which really validates the work in the efforts that are being made by Coast Mountain and College of New Caledonia for that external outreach and really building that stakeholder network for work, integrated learning.

MARGARET HOHNER:

Yeah. Melissa. Same here. And we've just I think the biggest thing has been on the relationship building with all of the local businesses and NGOs. Right? And with just so empty, it is in the backyard of all of all of these businesses. But they've never they never think to go to us or, you know, they might think to have their students enroll in our school, but they're not thinking outside the box that they can actually engage with us at all and to use our students and our courses to benefit the greater community. So for us, it's, it's just been the biggest takeaway has been, gosh, this is all about relationship building. And we've our relationship with the chamber has really helped us engage and so many more people and businesses and NGOs. So we've been very, very fortunate in that way. Yeah. So I would say that's the biggest takeaway is that we're building relationships.

JESSI GUERCIO:

Yeah. I'm actually a quick takeaway as well, I think both from the employer and student side employers. We've done some surveys through both the employers and we've connected with this through this project and some of the students that we were able to survey from three universities, but anyway from the employer side. We found out that close to 85% of respondents felt strongly that engaging students in work for work related experience prior to graduation will help keep talent within the region long term. Because again, a lot of these

employers are thinking, “Oh, a 4-month term, OK”, but I trained this individual and now they're going to go and then they're going to go to another opportunity, another city. But again, I think maybe that was our mindset and maybe to some organizations. But I think what we found is that through these one on one consultations or or three or one, that guest was going to university. We we found out that these employers are really, really engaged to help these Co-op students.

I just I think they want that we want these students have that experience and they want to keep them around more long term. So like four months, eight months could be more the option, I would say, must be more the option and hopefully providing them that experience that makes them want to stay local and stay regionally. And that kind of goes along with when we survey students that we found out that, you know, we always think in this city, like counties or all the cities that maybe are here today, that they want to go to a bigger city like Vancouver, Calgary or Toronto. But a lot of the students that we surveyed, when they want to do a cooperative scheme, it's been within their university, but in the region maybe close by again, that's been their number one choice. But again, there are some factors that, of course, housing and and and probably the pandemic when we when we surveyed them. But that's a really insane, insightful pathway to know that some students, a good chunk of students actually do want to stay local and they don't want to go to the huge corporations in the big metropolitan city.

So that was that was a really interesting takeaway for us.

MARGARET HOHNER:

Our students were the same way, and our employers, our employers we're looking at long term. They were invested in our students and the majority of our students got hired on full time afterwards by the employers that they did an experience with. So and our students were really happy with that. Like I said before, our students wanted to stay local.

MELISSA FOURNIER:

A highlight definitely has been student feedback, which is consistently providing the value that's placed on connecting with employers and, and when they receive feedback as well on, on their questions and their experiences and so on and how they're doing. So definitely seeing some commonalities.

HANNAH AHLUWALIA:

That's great that also students want to stay. That's amazing. So what insights do you have on things you might do differently next time? What would you change?

MARGARET HOHNER:

I'd ask for more money for more people.

MELISSA FOURNIER:

Margaret, you know I'm there with you. These these initiatives are targeted and they're

purpose for and they're important. It's important work. And it would be great to just be able to keep building on the work year after year after year. But unfortunately, it's not how the funding works.

MARGARET HOHNER:

Yes. And it's just that's the biggest, most frustrating thing is that we say we can start these pilots and these projects and we're making a difference in our communities. And it's you know, it's huge for these small communities. And there is no there's there's nothing set up for the future, you know. So I think that, yeah, that's probably our, our most difficult challenge, right?

HANNAH AHLUWALIA:

Yeah, in your work. Yeah, Jessi.

JESSI GUERCIO:

Sorry. Yeah, yeah. I just want to say yeah, for sure Margaret. That's a really good point. But and the reason being, too, that that future planning of succession planning and making these projects evergreen, maybe once we don't want as as it was discussed earlier, we don't want these, you know, the funding ends in August and possibly December. We don't want this just for it to just, you know, kind of dissipate as we do, because we did some pretty good work into it. So it's really just trying to find it. And for us and and I think I think Dan's on the call too here, which does, does a lot of the project planning and the Tri-university project trying to make sure we finished a lot of the some really cool projects that could last beyond this funding beyond us. If it's if we pass on the project, we want to do that now in the next couple of months, which just adds a lot to us, right? It's like, let's finish these four projects the next couple of months where we have funding. And so our, our non busy summer becomes a very busy summer that we unexpectedly didn't know that we had.

So that's, I think that's been a big piece to know that we want to create stuff that's going to last beyond the funding, that kind of beyond maybe the work that we do because we don't want it to go away. I think there's really benefits to all the work that we're doing here.

HANNAH AHLUWALIA:

Yeah, I think that kind of fits into what I want to ask is what like what is it been like trying to work with the people that are in charge of the budgets and trying to get these initiatives to be like sustainable and long lasting initiatives?

MARGARET HOHNER:

Well, they love the work that we do. They love everything that's happening. But they can't get money out of thin air. Right? In a really small institution. It's so different than the big institutions where you guys have international students. We have not we have no extra money coming in from other sources or endowments or anything. Right? So we're you know, the only way you can scrip together two pennies is to take it away from somebody else who really needs it. Excuse me.

HANNAH:

Jessi, your thoughts?

JESSI GUERCIO:

No, I think. Yeah. I think these are all true. And these are some inconvenient or unfortunate truth to the matter. And I totally understand. And I think I'm very grateful for for for the funding that we did get. So that's definitely not to be confused and just hoping I guess there are institutions that I think what we want to really share is that at least from my, our, my, our project that we do to enable is that connecting and collaborating with with universities within BC is one of the most beneficial and helpful things that we can do with regards to WIL. And I know as well in a lot of different areas that really, really help start the trend on on what to do in those kind of collaborative events and townhalls and all those fun activities. But I would say that that's the biggest piece outside of this funding. They'll have this project because again, you don't need realistically funding to connect and to foster communication and to foster growth within within WIL in our regions. And I think that's I think that the best thing I want to share with other people that are in the industry and WIL offices that are joining the call today is that there's there's ways that we can still achieving and still grow well.

I think we should have a collaborative get it two heads are better than one but maybe 25 heads are better than one or I think that's about how many how many institutions are around you. So yeah, that's my word.

MELISSA FOURNIER:

Most definitely. And I would say that forward looking, it's important to even find ways to continue collaborating. I think employers and organizations appreciate it when post-secondary team up and offer their services because it just makes it easier for them really. And the point of contacts is just makes it easier. And I think that that's an important aspect of post-secondary. And what we do in the work that we do in our outreach is that this collaboration speaks volumes to external external viewing. Yeah.

MARGARET HOHNER:

You know, the other thing is with all of the other projects, the work that, you know, the other institutions have been doing have been huge for us. Like we're benefiting greatly from, you know, all this influx of money that has happened to develop different resources and to gather different ideas and implement different ideas. So, you know, the the whole the whole thing that has been done here over the past couple of years has been has been wonderful. And and we we as small institutions are benefiting greatly from the work that all of the larger institutions are doing. And I'm, you know, really grateful for that, for sure.

HANNAH AHLUWALIA:

Yeah. The fact that all of you and also that we have this town hall and that all of you have created and fostered really strong relationships with businesses and other institutions is just amazing. So I'm going to ask us the last question and then we'll get into to the questions in the

audience. The last question I have is what information do you want to leave with others in the world community that are doing work outside of your region? Especially for those in urban cities, maybe in the lower mainland Vancouver Island? What are you going to leave them with?

MELISSA FOURNIER:

Well, I can speak from the northern perspective. You know, Coast Mountain College, College of New Caledonia fall within the Cariboo North Coast in the Chaco labor market regions. And we know that in the report, the Cariboo region is one of the one of the top three largest. And we know that there's over, what, 35,000 job openings within those two labor market regions. So we have a huge need to support within our post-secondary efforts. And and I believe that we are truly doing that through work, integrated learning work for sure. And so it's something to be cognizant of when we're thinking of post-secondary and work integrated learning within the north is that because of a large area, accessibility varies across our regions. And at times they impose barriers right for logistics of work, integrated learning placements for connectivity of technology and this was mentioned already is the digital literacy of the various organizations and employers. And so these are important pieces to keep in mind in moving forward and to continue supporting and to not forget them and to really begin the conversation fundamentally, hey, do you know what work integrated learning is?

And we call it WIL, and once they hear it, they hear it over and over and over because they start recognizing it and asking questions.

JESSI GUERCIO:

Yeah. And I think I touched a little bit to the the communication piece and the collaborative piece earlier, but also to add on to that as the system, the nurturing of relationships and definitely that's our local employers are a community and they're decision makers within within the community. But I would even say to really focus also nurture your back to members nurture nurture the staff looking at the original institution. They're the best champions of what WIL can be because they'll hear from the students as well as the opportunities that they've been receiving. And so if they can then share that information to networks that they have, again, these these are these are professors. These are individuals that have had a huge connection to the industry that they were previously in that can spread that WIL message. Right? So I think outside just out of of of our region or maybe even just in general, even in Northern BC, if you go that large, it's just nurturing, right? And making sure that's not just done outside external link to go for it.

Just make sure it's done internally too. So they're aware of what can really be done to work well and all the different opportunities.

MARGARET HOHNER:

I have a slightly different take and Melissa alluded to this, but if I would like, you know, all of the bigger institutions who are in the lower mainland and to really think. Think about us when you're creating these relationships and you're trying to find spots for your students. We, I

certainly can't provide enough students to fill the need in a small rural community. And I'd really like your students. You have you have so many people down there and so much talent to draw from. I would love them to get out of the city and to come into rural and remote areas and to share their talent and expertise with our small communities because we need them. And so I'd love for you to expand yourselves out. Come and visit us. Let us introduce you, you know, to a lot of the different employers who are are looking to to fill and their, and increase their capacity. We we really need you guys.

JESSI GUERCIO:

That's what I quickly add on to that point. Sorry, just really quickly. 100% agree, Margeret. And I think I think so many students across across B.C., but especially in those larger regions that are not aware of the smaller rural communities. Again, the counties in Marion also may be very close together, but what we found serving the students, too, is that they they really appreciate they really want to know word of mouth. They really want to know what that organization with opportunities to sort of get into. And I feel like, again, with the resources of rural communities, they don't get to know the approach to some of these school students and they don't get to know the opportunities in these smaller regions. And I think that's something, again, that hopefully with collaboration and communication we can improve, but 100%. I agree, Margaret. I think there's so many I think there's so much benefit of working in a small rural community if they're from the big city.

HANNAH AHLUWALIA:

Well, thank you so much, Jessie, Margeret and Melissa, for your time and your insights. It's so valuable and it's helping to contribute to this community of practice throughout BC. Unfortunately, we're running low on time, so we're going to cut the question period a little short. And people I'm inviting people to please put their questions and chat. And if the panelists could also, if they feel comfortable, put their contact information in the chat so people can follow up with you and connect further. And yeah, thank you. I'm going to pass it on to Meg Thompson from the committee now to provide an update.

MEG THOMPSON:

Thank you, Hannah. Hi, everybody. On May fourth, the ACE PD committee hosted Dr. Candy. Ho, who provided. An inspirational and really engaging session called Making the Global Personal the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Will and Career Curricula. We had about 75 of our members attend, which was was really fantastic. And during Candy's session and in the networking activity following her session, many members commented on the hope that conversations amongst our membership around SDGs would continue. And then similar comments showed up in the post-event survey. Members told us that they wanted to find ways to share on SDGs, actions and ideas and to learn from each other and to showcase SDG related resources in the ACE WIL Resource Hub. So on behalf of the committee. I'm happy to report that. With the help of Hannah, there is now an SDG related resource pack on our hub,

so I encourage you to check it out. We hope to build on what we have there, which to date includes the video of Dr. Candy Ho's session on May 4th.

So if you missed the session, I strongly recommend you maybe watch it over a lunch break in. In her session there was a we created a paddling which is like a collaborative tool similar to a shared Google doc where members added how they are currently or wish to incorporate SDGs into their work so that a link to that is there. So that's a really interesting read. And then we also started off that pack with resource pack with a link to CIFAL Victoria, which is the Uvic and the UN Institute for Training and Research, of which there's 24 worldwide. So have a have a look at at that, that website. It talks a lot about SDG research and initiatives that are happening and also a link to what Uvic.ca is doing within our Co-op and careers services and across our university. So we're looking for additional resources. So please keep this in mind as you and your institutions engage in work that's related to SDGs, because the resource hub is a great space to showcase initiatives, programs and experiences, and my email address is in there, so feel free to reach out.

We would love to continue adding to it. That's it.

HANNAH:

So now, just Anna to provide a little update. Yeah.

SPEAKER:

Thanks so much, Hannah. I know we're one minute to one, everyone, but just a quick update from me. We're really excited to be planning our first conference since before the pandemic for next May, June, next year. As you can see from this slide, we're now looking for various co-chairs as well as committee members for the conference. And we've got some great plans and checklists and templates from previous conferences. So these roles are really great ways to connect with others in our region and maybe take on roles that you haven't had the opportunity to learn or take on in your day to day role within a defined time period. So if you're interested in taking part in these positions or in any other capacity for the conference, I'd like to encourage you to please reach out to Stephanie Greaves. I believe Stephanie's email address is there on the slide. I did see Stephanie on the session today. Stephanie is our Ace- WIL president elect and one of the three board members who will be leading our conference planning.

So yes, please do connect with them. If you're interested in taking part. To wrap up, I just want to say that it's been really great hearing from our whole panel on what they've been able to do and learn from these COWIL projects from the northern and interior BC region. Thank you again, Margaret, Melissa and Jessi for sharing with us today. I also want to thank Brian, as well as Helena and the rest of the BCcampus support team, Ian and Kelsey, and particularly Hannah, for all the heavy lifting and putting together this town hall. Thank all of you for attending our town hall today. We'll post the recording on ACE-WIL site in the coming weeks. And as will be taking a break from ACE- WIL programming for the summer. So July and August will resume some time in the fall, maybe after the September, the busy September. I just want to wish you



all a wonderful summer, so thank you for joining us and have a wonderful summer, everyone.  
Bye.