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2024-25 Research Fellow

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Matty Hillman, 2024-25
BCcampus Research Fellow

Matty Hillman, MA (CYC), is a counsellor, instructor, and educational developer at Selkirk College in the beautiful Kootenay region of B.C., the traditional territory of the Sinixt people.



Understanding and Implementing Trauma-Informed Post-Secondary Education Through a Community of Practice

BCcampus Research Fellowship, 2024 / 25
Matty Hillman, Ed Developer, Selkirk College

Land Acknowledgement





Presentation Outline

INTRODUCTION

PROJECT BACKGROUND

KEY CONCEPTS and METHODOLOGY

TI EDUCATION PERSPECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

FINDINGS and HIGHLIGHTS

NEXT STEPS





Previous related work



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- [BCcampus FLO MicroCourse: The Space Between Us Navigating Boundaries in Post Secondary Education.](#) (2024)
- [BCcampus FLO MicroCourse: A TraumaInformed Approach to Your Syllabus.](#) (2023)
- [BCcampus FLO LabRecognition, Relationship, and Resilience — A Framework for Trauma-Informed Post-Secondary Education.](#) (2023)



BCcampus Research Fellows 2024/25



- Funding for small scale research in teaching and learning.
- Evidence based teaching practices that foster student success.
- Various options for deliverables.
- In conjunction with Selkirk College (ethics approval) and the Teaching & Learning Centre.
- Building on various TI education resources developed over the last 2 years.

Methodology



- Community of Practice Model
- Self-Identified participants from diverse disciplines
- Quantitative data through feedback forms (scaling, multiple choice)
- Qualitative data through open ended questions and observations

"Meeting others, especially outside of my own department, helped me move away from that feeling of imposter syndrome" Research Participant

Trauma -Informed Care Guidelines

Safety



Ensuring physical and emotional safety

Choice



Individual has choice and control

Collaboration



Making decisions with the individual and sharing power

Trustworthiness



Task clarity, consistency, and Interpersonal Boundaries

Empowerment



Prioritizing empowerment and skill building

Definitions

Principles in Practice

Common areas are welcoming and privacy is respected

Individuals are provided a clear and appropriate message about their rights and responsibilities

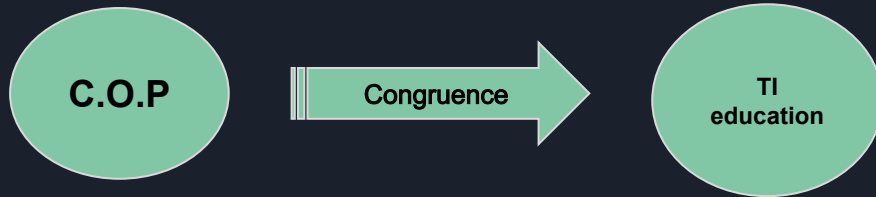
Individuals are provided a significant role in planning and evaluating services

Respectful and professional boundaries are maintained

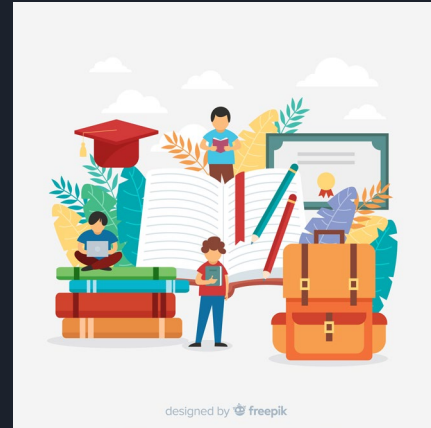
Providing an atmosphere that allows individuals to feel validated and affirmed with each and every contact at the agency

Community of Practice

- A group of professionals sharing knowledge and developing best practices in a particular field.
- Intimate (8 -12 participants) from various disciplines.
- Fosters safety and encourages vulnerability.



"Listening to peers talk about their practice and challenges was informative and supportive" - Research Participant



What defines us?



common purpose

success for our students

support and encouragement

technology

shared challenges

willingness to learn from one another

sharing of ideas

wanting the best for and from our students

flexibility

willingness to ask tough questions

patience

interdependence

common students

support

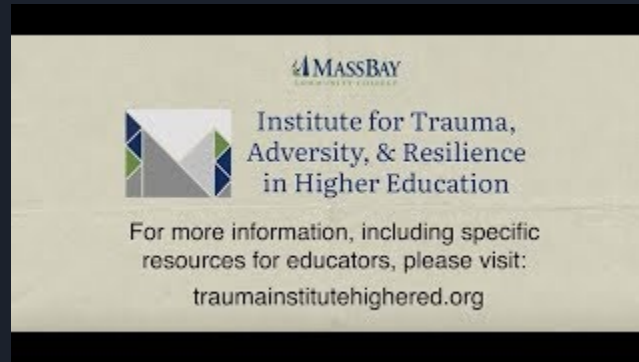


Trauma -Informed Education: Main Takeaways

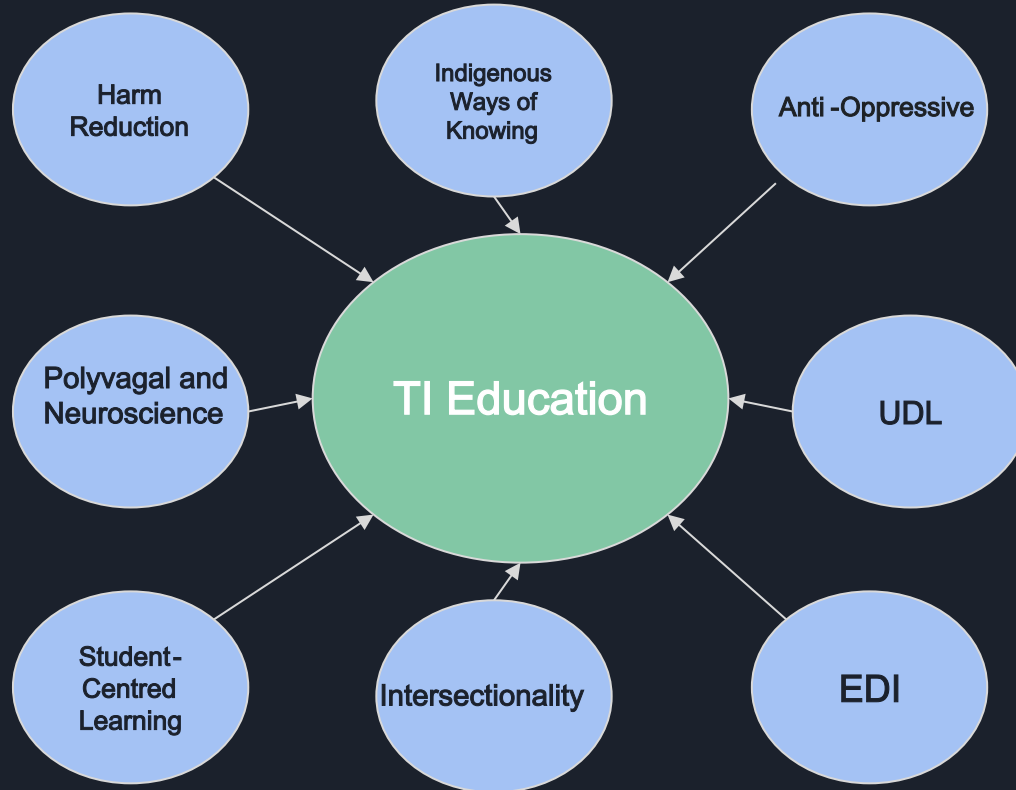
- TI education is about minimizing the chance for harming (retraumatizing) learners.
- Perspective shift for educators to see student challenges as being (possibly) adaptive responses to trauma.
- There are also practical things we can do in our course planning (assessments, language, accommodations, etc.).
- These changes are positive for all learners.
- Learners diverse intersecting identities create unique experiences
- PSIs can and should make changes at an institutional level to become more trauma -informed.

"You Can Trust Your Students"
-Jesse Strommel

Video: Brief overview and rationale for TI higher ed



Related terms and concepts



Considering your own pedagogy

Consider the following and share in the chat if you want.

1. What are you already doing ?
2. What are some strategies you could try?





RELATIONSHIP

No
SIGNIFICANT
LEARNING
OCCURS
WITHOUT A
SIGNIFICANT
relationship.
DR. JAMES COMER



Curiosity and Empathy



~~“What’s wrong with you ?!”~~

~~“What happened to you?!”~~



“How are you responding?”

“Just hearing and considering others’ experiences can really change things” Research Participant

Principles of TI teaching





Relational Teaching

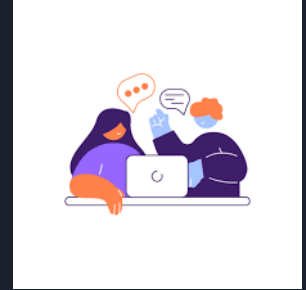
- Students are unique in their learning, background and identities - *avoid assumptions.*
- Consider learners with a holistic lens - *promote connection and inquiry.*
- Awareness of resources - *become comfortable discussing mental health and making referrals.*
- Maintain professional boundaries - *check in with yourself and others. Practice self-care.*

REFLECTION: *What comes up for you when considering the above suggestions? What else could be helpful for relationship building with learners?*

You never get a second chance to make a first im p r e s s i o n

Course Outlines, Welcome Letters or Videos all provide the first opportunity for connecting with your learners and providing valuable information.

- What to expect and where to get more support
- Teaching Philosophy
- Transparency
- Tone / Trust

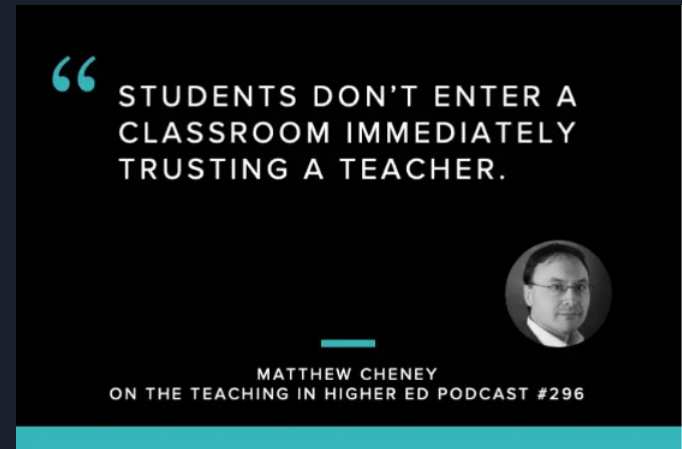


*"We get used to a bureaucratic
academic language that we oftentimes
just inherit."
-Matthew Cheney*

Interrogating Your Outline for Cruelty and Compassion

Because I say so...

[Toward Cruelty-Free Syllabi, with Matthew Cheney – Teaching in Higher Ed](#)



12:00 - 15:30



Areas to Consider

- Contact / Office hours as well as an explanation of what these times can be used for.
- Best contact methods and response time.
- Course guidelines for behavior and language.
- Policy explanation around attendance and submission deadlines.
- Sensitive content warnings related to any learning materials or topics that may be triggering for students.
- Self-care suggestions and links to campus and community support services.
- Your personal philosophy of supportive and student centred teaching.
- Your pronouns
- Options for diverse ways of showing knowledge (i.e., choice in assessments).



It's not just about teaching...

Trauma -informed principles should be embedded in all institutional policies and practices to implement system wide change.

- Reduce harm through retraumatization and put in place positive supports.
- Creates consistency in response across systems & departments.
- Increased positive outcomes for students and safer work environment for staff

Institutional Adaptations

- Environmental
- Policy
- Accessibility and Diversity
- Human Resources / onboarding
- Leadership practices
- Case and cause advocacy



"It can be very hard to implement aspects of TI teaching when entire faculties are not necessarily in alignment" Research Participant

Poll 1:

What do you consider to be the biggest challenges to implement TI practices in your institution?

1. Time / Person Power
2. Buy-in from multiple faculties / disciplines
3. Leadership support
4. Knowledge, Theory and Practice resources.





Back to the COP: Logistics

- Four meetings throughout the winter 2024 semester - two hours long.
- Each meeting consisted of discussing strategies and theory, reflection on practice and guest presenters. Dinner provided.
- Invitation to record observations throughout the semester in a journal.
- Pre and post survey to track pedagogical development.
- Topics and guest speakers: UDL (teaching and learning centre), Indigenous student safety (Indigenous Ed Developer), Accessibility & Accommodations and student voice.

The Space

Redesigned flexible learning space

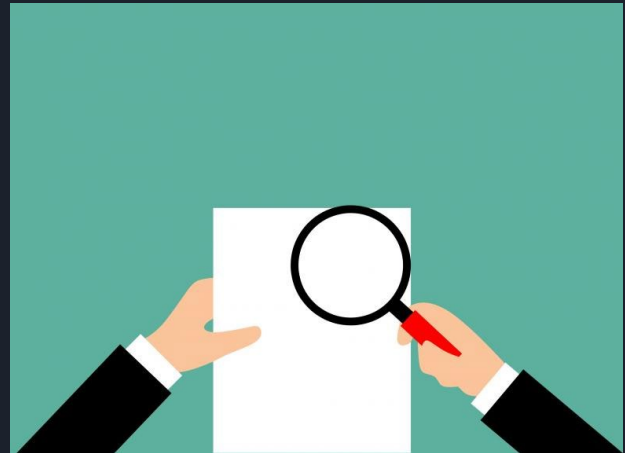
- Lighting upgrade (dimming)
- Mobile furniture and tech
- Circle configuration
- Food and refreshments



Findings and Highlights

Participants (7)

- All showed increased understanding of trauma and trauma-informed strategies .
- All maintained confidence in boundaries and some showed increase in self-awareness and the need for **consistent boundary implementation**.
- Implementation in TI strategies. Most consistent growth in:
 1. Consistency and Routine
 2. Choice and Flexibility
 3. Transparency
 4. Safe environment and student voice





Findings and Highlights

Minimizing Retraumatization

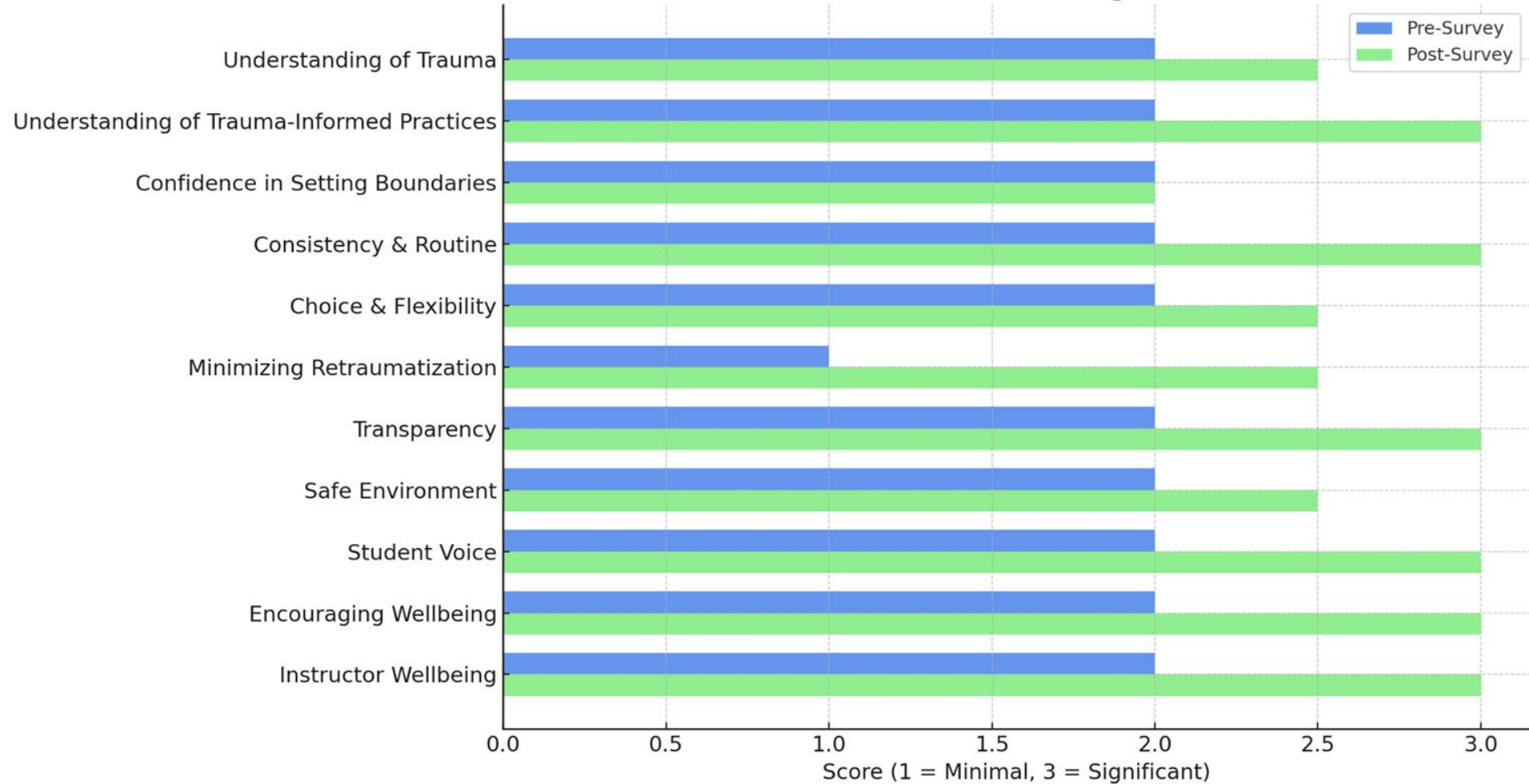
Shifted from general awareness to intentional use of strategies like content warnings, group agreements, and inclusive content presentation.

Encouraging Student and Instructor Wellbeing

Support for wellbeing expanded across participants- reminders and breaks to structured referrals, campus connections and proactive selfcare strategies.

Individual Participant: Pre vs Post Survey Comparison

Trauma-Informed Teaching Evaluation



Overall summary

Participants demonstrated:

- Moving from reactive to proactive TI pedagogy.
- Increased intentionality with boundaries and wellbeing strategies.
- Promoted inclusive teaching practices.
- Fostered shared understanding of impacts of trauma.

COP format offers a space for reflection, collaboration and support:

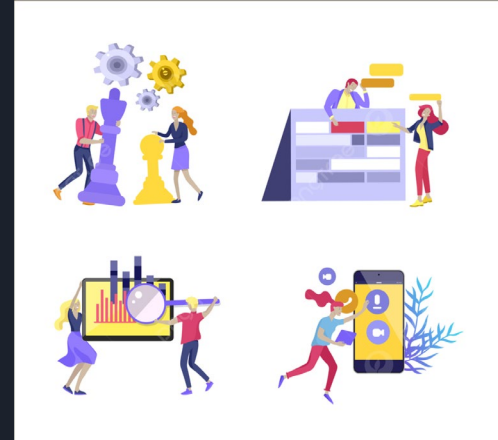
- Connection with peers
- Increased confidence and resilience.
- Strategy generation and strong desire for continued development.



What's next....

Development of a TI teaching resource in 2025/26

- Module based covering various topics and strategies of TI education.
- Interactive, multimedia.
- Open Education resource.



Poll 2:



What would you be most interested in participating in:

1. A longer (3 hour) presentation on TI education, with small group discussions.
2. A weeklong micro course “deep dive” into a specific TI teaching strategy (i.e., Navigating Boundaries, TI syllabi, or Developing a TI Teaching Philosophy).
3. A semester-long TI education community of practice (provincial scope).



References

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