

Transcript for In Their Own Words: Post-Secondary Students' Perspectives on Diversity, Inclusion, and Intercultural Learning (Panel Discussion)

BCcampus Panel Discussion hosted on October 6, 2025

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LEVA LEE:

Welcome everyone. It's 9:00. I think we can get started promptly. We have a very rich and I know that will be an engaging session for you this morning. Very, very happy to be here. Hello, My name is Leva Lee. I'm a learning advisor at BCcampus and I'm very pleased to be working with a wonderful group here, the TRU research team who are completing a BC campus research fellowship with us. Today, they're going to be sharing their work in a session called In Their Own Words: Post-Secondary Students' Perspectives on Diversity, Inclusion, and Intercultural Learning. Welcome, everyone. So I am very pleased to be introducing Kyra Garson. She is the intercultural coordinator at Thompson Rivers University, and she will be the moderator for today's session. Welcome to all of the TRU research team and BCcampus fellows. I'm going to hand things over to you, Kyra, because I know we've got a lot for today.

KYRA GARSON:

Thank you. I'll just take over the sharing here. Great. Good morning, everyone. Good morning, everyone, and thank you, Leva, for the introduction. I will introduce our team shortly, but before we begin, I'd just like to acknowledge that our team and the research that we're going to be sharing with you today was conducted on the unceded occupied territories of the Tk'emlúps People within Secwepemc Secwépemc'ulecw Thompson Rivers University main campus. And so this photograph is actually of the South Thompson River. The term Tk'emlúps is the Secwépemctsín word for Kamloops, and what it means is the meeting of two rivers. And so, where our campus looks down into the valley is where those two rivers meet, which is the meaning of Tk'emlúps.

Okay, so I want to introduce our large team. This is a very interdisciplinary team. It has had numerous people sort of come and go. The photo that you're looking at is actually the initial team, the original team, some of whom are here. But on our panel today, we have myself, Dr. Amie McLean. If you can give a wave, Amie is a Faculty member in the Faculty of Student Development. We have Dr. Alana Hoare, who is a Faculty member in the Education Department. We have Dr. Anila Virani who is a Faculty member in Nursing. And then we also have two of our current research assistants. We have Bisi, who is a student in the Master of Education program, coming from Nigeria to study at TRU, and we have Mamatha who is also a student in the Master of Education program, who's coming from India. And we will have an appearance from Mara as well, who is one of our research assistants who has graduated from the Master of Education program and is currently at work, so she'll be joining us via video with her responses to some of the questions. And many of these others were on our team but have either graduated or moved on. Brad Harasymchuck is currently on sabbatical. I believe that Yugie Jiang is in the audience, so maybe she'll pop in with some questions or comments at the end.

Great. So just to give you an idea of what we're up to for the next hour, I'm going to start with a sort of a broad overview of the project, give you a little bit of context that will hopefully help you understand the

responses. Then we're going to have a discussion where the panelists that I just introduced are going to respond to some questions that I've prepared. And then hopefully at the end, we'll have a little bit of time for questions or comments from any of you in the audience. All right.

So TRU has a long history of sort of trying to advance intercultural understanding, and the institution has actually committed to that in public commitments. In 2014, intercultural understanding became one of the four strategic priorities of the institution. It's also reflected in the vision and values. Intercultural understanding and Indigenous ways of knowing together form one of the four themes that frame our eight institutional learning outcomes. And we have a Senate Intercultural Understanding Subcommittee. And this is a subcommittee of Tk'emlúps Affairs, Indigenous Affairs, and the Senate International Affairs Committee. And so I wanted to start there with this committee because really this research sort of grew out of that. We were tracking our progress on the strategic priorities, intercultural understanding being one of them for a number of years as part of the NWCCU accreditation process. And through that, this committee was tracking responses, one of the indicators that we were tracking was the students' responses to the NSSE, the national student engagement survey. And we were specifically looking at student responses year over year, or NSSE runs in a three-year cycle, but we were looking at those over time to see what students' responses were related to their experiences of diversity and inclusion. And what we saw was that for some of the questions around their experiences, we were getting, you know, strongly agree or agree at about, you know, in some cases, maybe 60%, in other cases, maybe 50%, saying that they were having positive experiences. And so we started to wonder, you know, well, what about the other 40%? What about the other 45% in these specific questions? And we realized that the only way to understand that more was to really get into what are the students experiencing? The numbers can tell us one thing, but we should really be investigating this further. And that's where this research study sort of grew out of.

And so our purpose in sort of investigating this, I've already sort of said, we wanted to know more what are these experiences? And how are they impacting students in terms of their attitudes, knowledge, skills, and practice? But then sort of more around what are the barriers and what are the mechanisms for engagement or the barriers that students are facing. And within that, we were looking at, you know, how do we measure how the institution is doing beyond the accreditation process and really be able to understand and make better recommendations for changes either to pedagogy, to policy, or anything else. As you'll see, we ended up with a very large dataset that we are still sorting through. The research questions you see here, we were really trying to figure out sort of how and where is this engagement happening. What are those impacts in terms of skills, attitudes, knowledge, or practice? What are the barriers? And then the final piece was really, how do we understand if these experiences are different for different student groups? And so, specifically, in this study, we were looking at student status. So is it a different experience for international students than domestic students, than Indigenous students? Then further to that, does this change depending on the field of study, the area in which they're engaged in that learning? And then are there places in which those things overlap? So do domestic students in arts have a different experience than Indigenous students in arts, etc.? And so we'll get into sharing a little bit of that as well. We also collected beyond that. We asked students in the qualitative data to share with us if there were any aspects of their identity that they thought influenced their experiences of intercultural learning and inclusion. And this was not one of these, give us your identity characteristics kind of questions. It was an open question for students to share. And we're currently in the process of creating cases so that we can look at that intersectionality more deeply to understand how students' identity is impacting those experiences as well.

All right. So this is a very busy slide, but it's just to give you a sense of, you know, the vast amount of data that we're dealing with. There were two main datasets, the fall student Census, which were questions that TRU now collects annually, but based on those NSSE questions that I mentioned in the beginning. And so we were looking specifically at eight of those questions. You can see here this is more around the participation. So what we're looking at on the left side of the screen is the Fall Student Census participation. And then on the right side of the screen, the students that participated in an additional narrative part of the project where they answered three demographic questions and five open-ended questions that allowed them to really give us their story of their experience and give us more depth into understanding what those quantitative numbers might have been showing us. In general, all the data was collected in the 23/24 academic years. So the Fall Student Census data came from the fall of 2023. And the narrative responses we collected in the spring of 2024. So they're not the exact same set of students, and you can see that there are some variations in area of study or student status. But overall, the student status is relatively representative of the student population on campus in 2023. And the area of study, we see some slight differences between the student Census and the other. But because the dataset is so large, it's allowing us to kind of get a broader understanding, and then the qualitative data is allowing us really to understand some of those experiences much more fully.

Alright, so I think I've already kind of told you this, but there's the quantitative data set with over 3,000 students that we have analyzed and run ANOVA and Tukey and Mamatha will speak a little bit to her experience analyzing that. And then the narrative responses. We had 389 that were valid that we have moved into the analysis and coded those in Nvivo software. That process of coding, as you can imagine, with almost 400 responses, took almost a year. And many, many people on this team going over and re-coding and revising and looking again and so on. And so that was a really large part of the work that this team has been engaged in.

And so the mixed methods piece is important. I've already described why we wanted to do that. And we are at this stage. We've completed that thematic coding. We've run the analysis of variance and the Tukey and the descriptive stats, and we are looking into the analysis of all of that demographic data together and finally coming up with some interactions and outcomes. To be honest, when we decided to do this webinar on this date, we had full intentions of being a little bit further ahead. And so we're still really in that process of putting those two datasets together and allowing them to be in conversation with one another. And so at the current stage, we're using that ANOVA to, the ANOVA results, to generate questions that we can direct to that coded data and then using matrix coding that can tabulate the codes and attributes. So, for example, how are those demographics represented in the codes related to discrimination and racism, for example, or using cross coding, cross tab coding that will tabulate the frequency of the code. So for example, our nursing students represented more in the impact coding for attitudes or skills, and so on. And then with the cases, we can look at clustering of students that chose their identity, for example, students who chose to reveal their identity as white, and we can analyze their experience as groups. So that's where we're at now. Lots of work still to come.

So we wanted to move forward with the panel discussion. I've got five questions. All of the team that's here, as well as one of our team members on video will respond to those questions. They may decide they want to add to someone else's question, but we realize that we don't have a lot of time to get through the discussion. So we'll see how that goes, and then maybe we can engage the broader

audience in some dialogue following that. So I think that BCcampus is now going to take over the screen.

And the first question will actually be answered by video, by Mara, and then following that by Dr. McLean. So the first question that I posed to Mara, and she prepared her response was that the qualitative coding was focused on broad categories of the barriers, the enablers, and the impacts that students experience. And there were multiple subcodes under each of those. Could you describe how coding and analysis of the barriers showed tensions and how the responses revealed experiences that both resonate with or resist power and privilege? I'll leave it to Mara to respond.

MARA NANAMAN:

Right. In answering this question in doing the coding and analysis of the barriers, it revealed that the students' experiences with inclusion are deeply tied to questions of power and privilege, often in contradictory ways. So on the one hand, many respondents described feeling excluded and marginalized because of race, gender, or cultural background. Again, one student said that the university put on a very public domain for being inclusive, but that the actual campus said otherwise, and then another shared that certain levels of racism and prioritizing certain racial groups over others created a sense of separation. And so these voices show how privilege shapes which students feel included and which students feel left out. At the same time, the coding also revealed resistance, particularly from students who identified as white or male, who felt that EDI efforts sometimes excluded them. So I think that this tension shows how privilege can be both unacknowledged and challenged depending on the perspective. The analysis highlighted that these experiences are not uniform, they're complex, they're intersectional, and they also show how institutional initiatives may simultaneously empower some students while alienating others, which leads to a mix of resonance with and resistance to inclusion efforts.

KYRA:

All right. Thanks, Mara. If I could ask Dr. McLean to maybe add her comments to that.

AMIE MCLEAN:

Yeah, I think that here I'd really just like to amplify Mara's point regarding the complex and often contradictory nature of the responses in ways that really encourage us to understand students' responses as exercises of power and agency that are deeply woven into and implicated in broader dynamics of oppression and resistance. So as an example, when coding was complete, the subcategory of barriers with the largest overall portion of responses is that of no barriers. Without going any deeper, that sounds like a really positive result. But when you dig into the responses in that subcategory, a much more complex picture emerges. Some of those responses are very short, but those that do elaborate provide nuances that are incredibly important to consider. So within the subcategory, there are some highly, highly positive responses, which is definitely something to be celebrated. So for example, a quote from one student is, "It has been a wonderful experience since I started studying here. I always feel a sense of unity, love, affection, respect, care, and attachment, and of course, understanding of each." End quote. So I think when we initially hear that students are experiencing no barriers to inclusive and intercultural learning, that is exactly the kind of positive responses that we might initially expect and anticipate. But other responses raise issues that call for a more complex analysis and that make us need to recognize the potential tensions in trying to make sense of those much shorter answers as well. So for example, several students indicated that they face no barriers in such learning because they are white or

because they're members of dominant groups with one student explaining, I'm honestly not sure because I'm white, so a lot of inclusion programs don't affect me. Another student indicated, I think they are doing more than enough for diversity. I don't think anyone feels left out. And here's where we need a complex analysis to really think through the complexities of what's at play here. Because despite that students sense that no one feels left out, the data is very clear that many students are feeling left out and are experiencing very real impacts related to prejudice and discrimination. So when we see a significant group of students reporting no barriers, we have to think carefully about the identity factors and power dynamics that are at play, and to what degree we might also be documenting the ways in which more privileged students are insulated from exclusion and discrimination, potentially to the point that initiatives to enhance equitable, inclusive, and intercultural learning experiences are dismissed as unnecessary, wasteful, or even discriminatory against dominant groups. Those narratives, of course, resonate really strongly with contemporary backlash against EDI initiatives more broadly, including in ways that indicate white fragility and resonate with contemporary manifestations of white supremacy, with some students making some statements such as, I believe there is a lot of inclusion for people of colour, but no inclusion for the white people, just blame of a lot of things that have happened in the past to other people. So again, that importance of really, really the complex analysis and thankfully the qualitative data, the rich qualitative data we have allows us to dig in a little bit deeper.

KYRA:

Thank you, Amie. So Mara and Amie have been discussing the barriers and the coding of those barriers. We also really look at what are the enablers for students to have experiences of intercultural learning, inclusion, and equity. And so the qualitative coding also identified a number of enablers. And I'm going to ask my colleagues if they could please share their insights on a few of those key enablers. I think we wanted to start with Dr. Alana Hoare responding to those enablers.

ALANA HOARE:

Thank you. This set of enablers really builds on what Mara and Dr. McLean have spoken to so far in that students repeatedly express that under the right conditions, they're having some fantastic experiences in their classrooms, with their peers, with their instructors. I apologize for looking over at my screen. I really want to honour the authenticity of student voices. I'm going to be reading those direct quotes and so I apologize if I'm looking away. But students were really sharing their exposure to diverse perspectives. Having instructors who welcomed and invited a variety of different world views into the classroom, helped them and encouraged them to speak out. For example, an international student who studies in the Faculty of Education and Social Work said, "With group work with students from around the world, I learned to be more gentle, patient and empathetic while working with them." Similarly, a domestic, non-Indigenous student from the Faculty of Art said, "All of the courses I have been in have taught at least a little bit about inclusion and the impacts and history of colonialism. The education on inclusion and diversity has made me a more empathetic person." We can see here that students, depending on the courses that they're taking and the instructors who are teaching those courses are having really good experiences and it's helping to build their intercultural attitudes and skills in that place. These right conditions really require that instructors are modelling and intentionally designing learning activities to enhance students cultural awareness and critical reflexivity, rather than assuming or expecting students to have these skills when they come into the classroom. For example, an international student from the Faculty of Education, Social Work said, "Faculty members respect my cultural identity and are open to my culture, so I'm willing to contribute and speak out." For many students, this was a necessity. Without that respect for their culture or opportunities to engage, they

tend to silence themselves or feel silenced by others. A domestic non-Indigenous student from the School of Nursing said, "Lectures in class, round circle discussions exposed me to the variety of cultures and helped to remove internal bias that I was not aware of." Again, this intentional design of how conversations are facilitated and structured supported this student's ability to contribute. Another student, an international student again from the Faculty of Education and Social Work said, "In a few courses, I got into group work, and to be honest, it was not easy at all at the beginning. Students are from different places around the world and therefore, their personal education infrastructure and experiences were certainly various too. I learned to embrace the diversity of my classmates and to be more gentle, patient, and empathetic while working with them. I think I have become a better version of myself in terms of being more understanding, more empathetic, and more patient." We can see in these two disciplines that are highlighted, Nursing and Education and Social Work, students are having these facilitated experiences and they're learning about intercultural communication and learning to respect other cultures. But of course, that's also within an institution in which we have multiple disciplines. There's variety in how students are experiencing their education, so it's not uniform as Mara mentioned. A few contrasting experiences. This from a domestic non-Indigenous student, also in the School of Nursing said, "I think one of the biggest barriers is fear of speaking out. If you do speak out, then you have singled yourself out amongst your peers, and that is the last thing anyone wants." This student is coming into this group work thinking I need to have a similar perspective or opinion as my peers. Otherwise, I will be dismissed or silenced or could experience harm. An international student from the Faculty of Science expressed something similar. They said, "I think the thing that most impacts is how much diversity is there. Suppose if there is a group and that majority of people in that group belongs to only a single culture, then it becomes more dominated and people who are not in that group or are minor in number will feel like they're dominated, they'll feel frustrated and that will have a negative impact." We are seeing that students, like Dr. McLean mentioned, not all of them are having this really wonderful experience, and that tends to be because they are from a minority. So here students spoke to the importance of instructors who incorporate intercultural learning into their coursework. They intentionally do this rather than expecting students to have these skills, and students are experiencing the opportunity to develop their relational and intercultural communication skills, conflict-resolution strategies, and we're hearing students who are concerned about being silenced, dismissed, or afraid of speaking out and that represents quite a large demographic of students. So there is complexity within those identity factors. So students are recommending instructors present multiple world views, so they are modeling that and then intentionally designing the curriculum with guest lectures, cases, and readings, and opportunities to practise and discuss with people who have different perspectives than their own. I'll ask Dr. Virani too to expand on this.

ANILA:

Thank you, Alana, for sharing wonderful findings that we have from the preliminary qualitative analysis, especially within the classroom and within the curriculum and how teachers are planning to do all of those things and how our students are responding to these initiatives that teachers are taking. I'll speak about the intercultural learning at an institutional level. Another important theme that came in our data. Dr. Hoare talked about the classroom and within the curriculum and I'll talk about at TRU level, what programs and activities enable intercultural learning among students. Students consistently described TRU as a diverse and inclusive institution. Their comments reflected a general sense of appreciation. As also Dr. McLean explained, one student noted that "TRU is a very diverse environment with a diverse population and diverse opportunities." Now I'll also share some of the TRU events and activities that preliminary analysis has revealed as enablers for intercultural learning. First I'll talk about

one of my favourite ones, it's called International Days, or we usually call it at our University IDs. I can see smiles on honour teams' faces because we all love this one. This event celebrates global cultures and brings the TRU community together. Members of the community express their cultural identities through food, clothing, music, dance, and much more. ID activities provide students with opportunities to share their cultures and learn about others in a safe and welcoming environment. As one student said, "That TRU conducted IDs to promote cultural diversity and inclusion for everyone to enjoy." That was considered one of the biggest enablers that allowed students to do an intercultural exchange. Another powerful enable was Indigenous cultural celebrations and displays. These events offer students meaningful opportunities to engage with Indigenous culture and traditions and practices in a respectful environment. Through ceremonies, storytelling, art, and community gatherings, students gain deeper insights into Indigenous world views that fostered cultural awareness, mutual respect, and a stronger sense of connection within the TRU community. As one student said, "I took learning from the course, which is also one of my favourite too, which helped me take a deeper look at Indigenous history and culture." These events were seen as an opportunity not just to observe the diversity, but to participate in these intercultural exchanges. Peer mentorship programs were another enabler commonly cited by students. In these initiatives, senior students supported newcomers by helping them become familiar with TRU campus culture, navigated their new environment and access resources relevant to their academic and personal needs. What these mentorship programs did, they allowed mentor and mentee both to benefit from these programs. Through these shared experiences and meaningful interactions, mentors and mentees were able to reflect on their own identities and cultural perspectives, deepening their understanding of diversity and inclusion. Another enable was workshops and cultural awareness and inclusion that was offered by TRU, especially when they offered the space for open dialogue and skills building. Finally, students mentioned club and volunteering at campus and community events also a meaningful way to engage across cultures. These experiences were seen as especially valuable because they took learning beyond the classroom and allowed students to apply their understanding in a real world setting where students weren't worried about exams, instructor, being graded or something like that. These events just helped them go beyond these classrooms. Just to sum up, students view TRU as a diverse and inclusive space, peer interactions, mentorship programs, and culture events play a wider role in shaping their intercultural experiences. I'll conclude with the quote from one of the participants whose words beautifully capture the essence of intercultural learning and the transformative impact of these experiences. "Being a student at TRU, I have learned a lot about gender identity and expression and the Indigenous communities in Canada and gotten an opportunity to reflect on my positionality and intersectionality. Thank you."

KYRA:

Thank you, Alana and Anila. And I think we see from these discussions around the coding of the qualitative data that it is complex and that the students' experiences are not uniform. There are many positive experiences, but as our panelists are allowing us to understand, there's also some fairly negative experiences and some problematic responses from different groups. We've talked a bit about the coding of the qualitative data. I wanted to ask Mamatha to weigh in here. Mamatha had her main role on the team has been running the statistical analysis of that fall student Census data. So Mamatha, could you provide us with an overview of the quantitative findings and how those findings are starting to generate some questions that we will be raising in the next stage of analysis in putting those two datasets together?

MAMATHA YOGANADA:

For sure, Dr. Kyra. Before I start, I'd like to thank Yujie for laying the foundation from where I picked up because it wasn't an easy job, so I understand. But from the quantitative side, what I've seen so far is we are seeing meaningful variations across faculties that are school disciplines and between the student groups, which tells us experience isn't uniform. So it's not one size fits all. Context does matter, and rather than stopping at numbers, our next step is to run targeted queries in the qualitative dataset to see where student narratives confirm, complicate, or refute these patterns and crucially to understand why they occur. The integration is what will guide the practical changes in teaching, assessment, and in student supports. One of the examples that I can talk about is the sense of belonging. We see student status and faculty patterns where in some programs, the domestic international gap narrows and in others, it kind of widens. Our next step is to ask in the qualitative data set where the narratives are speaking to us and looking not only at the classroom moments, but also in interactions between faculty advisors and how the program environment signals safety and whether co-curricular spaces and peer mentoring clubs and the other cohort events, whether or not they create meaningful connections for different groups. So that's where we're at.

KYRA:

Yes. More to be done. Thank you. More to be done. And it is an exciting phase in the research where we're really able to take those numbers and really dig into, I guess, maybe the whys rather than just what are those numbers. So thank you for that. Okay. My next question, and I can't remember what you wanted to do with the order on this, but I wanted to ask, how do we, the team members, how do you think that these findings can improve student learning and experiences on the TRU campus, but maybe more broadly within the higher education community in the province? I think, Alana, you were first, but whoever decides to go can go.

ALANA:

Yeah, I'll start. I'm going to be speaking to this from my lens as a faculty member. I'm an assistant teaching professor in the School of Education and I work with teachers. I teach future teachers, so I'm constantly thinking about how am I preparing those teachers to then teach the future generation of learners? One of the things that the data has raised for me, is my concern as a teacher in the class and whether or not I'm complicit in or perpetuating this polarization that we see in society. When I was looking at the findings which both Mara and Dr. McClain have spoken to is about this anti-EDI sentiment or this EDI fatigue. And is there something that I'm doing in my classroom that might be contributing to this? The biggest concern for me when I think about this is my classroom should be a space in which people can interrogate their own assumptions, interrogate their own biases, and have the opportunity to wrestle with the things that they're thinking and the things that they believe so that we can have a conversation about it. Repeatedly we saw students expressing this self-censorship or silencing themselves because they don't want to, I guess, be attacked or to expose a belief that is unpopular. And while we do need to be mindful of how the things and the beliefs that people say might impact their peers, I do also worry about not having a space for students to then critically reflect and have an opportunity to say those kinds of things, whether that be in a space which is for that particular group rather than within a full group. One of the comments that really resonated most strongly with me was a domestic non-Indigenous student from the Faculty of Law who said, "I feel like I wasn't able to say my real opinions. For myself being white, I felt the class discussed all other cultures and only looked at white people in a negative way." For me, the student is then shutting themselves down from an opportunity to have a conversation and whether that conversation should be with the rest of their class or perhaps in a smaller group so that we are thinking about who might be impacted by the things that

they're saying. As an instructor, I think it is my responsibility to be teaching to all students. I apologize. My cat Loon is trying to get in on this webinar. So do I think that intercultural learning is important? Yes, I absolutely do. Yet I think as instructors, the data is telling us that how we engage in this learning, how we pick up EDI initiatives is really important and we need to be intentional about doing that in a way that all students can participate in those conversations. Several students did offer advice to us, and this is the part of the data that I really love. I give kudos to Dr. McLean for highlighting this because she really said students for expressing agency narratives, and that's really what we want to see. The students are demonstrating leadership in their own ways. So I've selected a couple of quotes where students are providing a solution or saying that they want to be a part of the solution. This is a domestic non-Indigenous student from the Faculty of Art, who is suggesting that "Although the institution is making some effort, for example, IDs, which is what Dr. Virani mentioned, there's no formal automatic accommodations for students observing Ramadan." The student also spoke to the fact that TRU has strategic priorities around Indigenization, decolonization and reconciliation, and yet the institution does not support Indigenous land defenders on the basis of their cultural connection to the land. The student is suggesting a disconnect between those things that we're saying and the supports or supports that we're offering to students. Students are asking this student in particular for more concrete engagement. Another student said, "My experiences have impacted me in many ways. I practised cultural humility on a regular basis. I have learned about historical impacts, trauma, and how to provide culturally safe care. Again, this is a student who's saying, Okay, I've learned something in the classroom and now I want to be teaching my peers, I want to be practising it myself, and they're really demonstrating this move towards praxis, which is what we're hoping to see, and I know we haven't had the opportunity to talk about this in this session, but when we look at intercultural skills, attitudes, knowledge, and praxis. Praxis is really the area that we see the least amount and not something that we're hoping to move towards and we saw very little evidence to justify that it exists on campus. I think good things and important things for instructors, Faculty like me to know is that students want a sense of agency. They want to be a part of this process. They need those skills to be able to do that successfully and the support of their institution to practise that. They want to be able to leverage their learning for me when I'm in my classroom, it's about how to help students develop that agency and do it in a thoughtful way. Thank you. Thanks, Alana. This is the perfect moment for us to hear from one of our students then. Bisi, would you like to add to Dr. Hoare's comments? Yes. Bisi, you've muted yourself. Oh. There you go. You've still muted yourself.

BISI ALE LORUNFEMI: I'm good. Can you hear me?

KYRA: You're good now.

BISI:

Yeah. Thank you. Thank you. Yeah, this research we are talking about today, for me, as a student, and literature review I've done on this topic is something incredible, valuable for us, as an institution, it's a map drawn from actual experience of students navigating complex terrain of inclusion and power on our campuses. When we are talking about inclusion and we are talking about belonging. This map, how do we use it on this particular research? How can these particular findings improve learning and student experiences? I just looked at it for this web in three ways. Firstly, we can move from theory to practice in our classrooms. Finally, we'll be talking about inclusion. What action do we need to take? We need to take this to our various classrooms. The findings show us that students are not just passive. They are a living crafting responses to dominant ideologies. As a student, I believe it is aligned with the research

that shows that student engagement and success are deeply tied to the quality of their interaction and sense of community. One of the previous research that I looked into under 2024, really talked about this. And I look at it. This is what we are talking about. Right now, a student might be sitting in a class, feeling that their history is ignored. Our research tells us that this happens frequently in various classrooms, even in TRU. This allows us to redesign our teaching to create assignments that let students analyze power, structures, and validate their resistance as a form of critical thinking. You know, as a student, when you sit down in the classroom, where you feel that you don't belong or where you're not welcome, the power to be able to think critically will be gone. It is to make students feel lost. It is to make them understand what they're learning. I think we can use this data with all what my other team has said about the data analysis to train faculty to facilitate difficult conversations, turning moments of resistance into powerful learning opportunities for students. This makes education more relevant and engaging, directly imparting how we as a student, how we learn and what we learn. I look at this in the second way. We can build a genuine culture of belonging in our classroom, not just inclusion alone. Belonging is needed. We know that many of the scholars have even talked about it, like one of the literature I read Laine et. al, 2024. He said that belonging is a cornerstone of a student's success. If a student does not belong, so class of such a student is not guaranteed. But our studies show that belonging is not created by just including students in the existing system. It is about changing the system to value their own self as a student within the classroom. When we understand the specific ways students feel pressure to confirm is a challenge for international students from some of the scholars that have reviewed that I've seen from this research so far, we can create targeted support. This could mean funding peer mentorship programs, like one of the students I talked about. The ideas are part of the things that I've seen, part of the statistics that are that we have. Students love that, to be able to participate, to mingle with other peers. We can create a dedicated standard spaces or ensuring that all students of both services are truly culturally competent. It's another way for us to have it. It's another for it to be culturally competent. This moves us from one size fit all mode. It's built community where every student feels that they can thrive. I look at the third reason as evidence to make a real institutional change. We are talking about intercultural learning. What are we doing about it? Are we ready to change things? Are we ready to move forward or we still want to sit down to be talking about it? It is one thing that we need a more equitable campus. It is another to show a study, proving we are now students facing barriers. These results provide hard data because the data is very huge to justify new policies on intercultural learning in our classrooms on campus. We need to allocate resources for EDI training and support pedagogical innovations to meaningful impact in our classroom. It gives us evidence to champion initiatives that create safer, more and more equitable learning environments for students. This research already has enough data which my team has spoken about. These findings will guide us. They will show where cracks are on our system. More importantly, they eliminate the past students are craving for themselves. On these notes, I believe that we are meant to learn, listen, and use knowledge to build a campus that does not just welcome students, but truly empower every student to thrive for us to succeed. Thank you.

KYRA:

Thank you, Bisi. I'd like to invite Dr. McLean to maybe add a few brief comments to the dialogue.

AMIE:

Yeah, I'm so inspired by Bisi and Dr. Hoare and their answers to this. So you'll forgive me if my somewhat cheeky response to this answer is in terms of how can the findings improve students' learning and experiences is that they can't. By themselves, these findings are nothing. They're just a bunch of

quotes loaded into a data analysis program sprinkled through conference presentations and future publications. These results can only improve students' learning and experiences on our campuses if there's a collective will and determination to make sure that the knowledges, experiences, and voices of these students are acted upon. That takes dedication, it takes perseverance and work that is much harder and much heavier than it really should be. I know that dedication, perseverance, and willingness do exist on this team, and I suspect it exists among many, most, perhaps all of those who are attending today. But do I have confidence that the broader collective of administrators and faculty needed that have the capacity and the courage to do this work in a moment of budgetary crisis, mass social polarization, and EDI backlash? Do I believe that all those sessionals and precarious faculty and staff who are holding our institutions together right now are going to be meaningfully empowered and resourced to do the work that is necessary to actually mobilize this knowledge? To be honest, I have more questions than answers on that front. But I do know that students who answered the call to participate in this research have given us an incredibly powerful gift. It's a gift of better understanding the complex power dynamics and complexities of diverse student experiences of inclusion and intercultural learning and of allowing the potential to intentionally develop empirically grounded approaches to inclusive pedagogical approaches and innovations. It's a gift that we overlook at our own risk because when we transform students' experiences, we transform our institutions, and we contribute to much broader social transformation. And those promises and potential are so evident over and over again in the responses of students in this study, many of which have been highlighted over and over again by my fellow panelists today. I would just say that the promise and the potential is overflowing. The question that remains is can we appropriately mobilize these findings to really make that change happen? I'll leave it there.

KYRA:

Thank you, Amie. Yes, it's a sobering thought that we may miss this opportunity because of the times we're living in. I have one more question, and we did entitle this talk as In Their Own Voices. And we have, as you've heard, some powerful student voices within our team. So the final question, I will just pose to all of the students. Mara has prepared a video, and it's really very simple question about why the students on this team think that this research is important.

MARA:

Hi, everyone. Before I answer the question of why this research is important, I want to preface my response with the contextualization that my focus in the work was to code responses that express barriers. That's why my response will be quite barrier focused. I think that this research is important because it gives voice to the lived experiences of students in TRU, and I think that it surfaces the complexities of inclusion and belonging that aren't always visible in official narratives. My role in the project, like I said, was coding responses that express barriers. And so what stood out to me is how layered and intersectional these experiences were. So students expressed, some students spoke about how they felt that there was an overcommitment to EDI. The words EDI, fatigue were used. One student remarked that it's all I see around the campus. It's very apparent and it feels very forced. I think they are doing more than enough for diversity. For others, they express being on the receiving end of exclusionary practices and attitudes and unrecognized privilege. For example, there was one domestic nursing student who expressed that if you are of Caucasian origin and/or male, there's much prejudice placed upon you. And also there were strong perceptions of superficial efforts. Students identify a gap between the public commitments and the actual practices on campus. So one student said that TRU puts in a very public domain for being inclusive, but the actual campus says otherwise. And so I think

that what emerged in my coding of the responses that express barriers is that, is the idea that inclusion is not a single uniform experience, it's shaped by so many factors by race, gender culture, student status, institutional structures, and sometimes divides are really less about visible difference, but more about invisible barriers. I think that this quote captures that. As a domestic student, it is difficult to connect with international students as we don't face the same barriers even if we are similar in race. Again, overall, I think this research is important because it highlights that invisible divides can matter more than visible identity.

KYRA:

Great. I am looking at the time, and we are running out. Could I first, I would say, see if there's a couple of questions in the chat. I'd like to address those following hearing from Mamatha and Bisi. And Mamatha and Bisi, I apologize. Could you shorten your final comment just so that we don't keep folks. We're happy to hang out for a few minutes and answer any other questions following the webinar, but respecting that some people probably have to go teach a class or have another meeting or something at 10:00. I'll stop there. Mamatha, would you please add brief comments on why you think the research is important?

MAMATHA:

As a M Ed. student researcher, and for a student who's been here for longer than I've begun my education here, I've also completed another one year. Considering that fact, I understand how important this research is, and it's not just for reporting. We're using practical evidence, and we can now question, what can we change so that students feel more safe and they're able to learn with a sense of belonging and it's easy to understand diversity doesn't automatically mean inclusion, and it's also easy to assume that because we say our campus is diverse and everyone feels like they belong, but the interactions are not naturally inclusive. So to make it really short for me, that's why this research is important. It gives us a credible way to see where student experiences differ and understand why and then change practice with student voices as partners, not just as data points. Also in building learning environments to be much safer, more equitable, and more just. That's about it.

KYRA:

Well said. Bisi, can you take us to the finish line?

BISI:

Okay. As for me, as a student, I believe this research is important because it addresses real life dynamics as students do experience on a daily basis. For instance, I will just make it brief. We have a group project in one of my semesters that a brilliant student was very quiet. We were thinking maybe she didn't know what to do. We didn't know that we were wrong. Only when we didn't get a clue to what we wanted to do, and she realized all of us we feel. That was when she just told us that she felt marginalized with the way we organized, the way we believed she is. And we were like, as a student, if we cannot create a space where everybody is inclusive, if the instructors didn't do that, we will keep creating problems for others. From my perspective, I believe the work is crucial for good three reasons. Because of time, I only give the three reasons. I won't elaborate much on it. It gave a choice. Our voice to end our struggles as students. It's provided proof that what is needed is for us to demand a better learning environment. It prepares all of us as students for a real world. Results show that meaningful intercultural learning is a strong predictor of post-graduation success for any student in any institution. By my understanding, power dynamics on campus, we develop a critical lens for a diverse and equal world. When this is done

on the campus, within classroom, every student will be able to thrive for success. It is important for us to continue on this research and to make a change, to make sure that everything we are talking about, we put it in action. We need to develop and transform the university into a training ground for justice, empathy, and leadership. This research is important because it sees us, it's listening to us. It advocates for us as a university where every student has power, not just to learn, but to thrive and to be a leader in future. Thank you.

KYRA:

Thank you. Again, apologies for going slightly over on our time, but I think it was very powerful to hear from the students that are not only having these experiences as well, but also looking at the data from across the campus. One of our students that's no longer on the project, really spoke very eloquently about their experience of reading some of the comments and how difficult it was for them to try to remain objective when they were reading comments from their peers, both that resonated with them in ways that they shared the experience, but in particular, those that were, you know, maybe unintentionally discriminatory or, as we coded it, unrecognized privilege was a code that came up a lot. And so the students that have been involved in this project have had to read those things and try to digest them, which I commend them all for. So thank you very much. I'm just quickly, I would like to address the couple of questions and mostly, I'm going to say, send me an email. The last slide in the slide deck that you'll receive does have my contact information in it. Feel free to reach out if you had a specific question.

The two questions in the chat, one of them is around, did we look at persons of colour international and persons of colour domestic? Not yet is the answer to that. But in those identity factors that we invited, we do have some of that data, not for every student because we didn't ask them to identify. We invited them to share identity factors that they thought might influence their experience. Many did, some did not. So stay tuned for the answer to that question.

Are we comfortable letting you know which faculties are most inclusive? And again, not yet, but we will have that finalized data soon. We can tell you where the variances between the faculties are in the quantitative data, absolutely. But again, that only gives us the numbers, right? And so now we're at the stage where as Mamatha showed us that we're now looking at how do we use those numbers to dig deeper to find out the answers to why that is. So it's not just is that faculty more inclusive. Why is that faculty providing perhaps a different experience for students. Those were the two questions. As I said, we're happy to hang around if necessary. But thank you to everyone who joined us today, and I'll turn it over to Leva to close the session.