

Mind the Gap: Forming a Sustainable K-16 Higher Education-Community Partnership

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Background

Established in June 2015, the K-16 Research and Development Network brought together faculty from Thompson Rivers University (TRU) and teachers from School District 73 (SD73) to provide engaging opportunities for K-12 students to extend their learning beyond school and for post-secondary students and instructors to work with school-age students in research and pedagogical initiatives.

TRU is already deeply connected to our community. Many TRU staff and faculty members have children that attend pre-school and K-12 schools in our district. They are being taught and supervised to a large extent by TRU graduates. When they graduate, many will continue their education at TRU, perhaps even to become a teacher in the preK-12 sector from which they came or to teach or work at TRU. Thus the circle continues. This project is directed at the gap between post-secondary learning and entry into the first year of education at TRU.

The Mind the Gap project was awarded \$86,000 by Thompson Rivers University in April 2018 to further develop this project through hiring a project coordinator, bringing in guest speakers, supporting meeting and travel costs, and to offer release time to SD73 teachers to participate in professional development.

The transition from secondary school to higher education is critical for academic success (Roderick, Nagaoka, Coca, 2009). Essential to this transition is the communication between the instructors of the two sectors as there is a

...need to increase the dialogue between high school teachers and college professors as there exists reciprocal unawareness regarding curricular changes and the learning environment faced by students at both academic levels (Nunez Rodriquez et al, 2017, p. 402).

Thompson Rivers University and SD73 are located on the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc territory within the unceded traditional lands of Secwepemcúl'ecw (Secwepemc Nation).



Goals

The Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) and the School of Education will take the lead in creating pedagogical and curricular connections between regional K-12 partners and TRU. The intent of the “Mind the Gap” project is to bridge several gaps within and between these two sectors, with the following goals:

- 1. Increase knowledge transfer*
- 2. Ease transitions for students between grade 12 and 1st year*
- 3. Spread awareness of research-based assessment strategies*
- 4. Foster a community of shared learning and creative approaches to teaching and learning*



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TRU Initiatives

Within the Faculty of Education and Social Work, several successful initiatives are already underway.

A teacher is working with two chemistry professors at TRU to provide students' access to instruments for chemical analysis of water samples.

An art teacher is working with a plant ecologist to help students learn the art of observation.

A teacher is working with a faculty member in science education to extend a school-wide inquiry-based teaching program.

A digipen program is teaching students about the technology, craft, and business of creating video games. The faculty member and teacher are working together to research the impact of this program on student career choices.

Provincial Connections

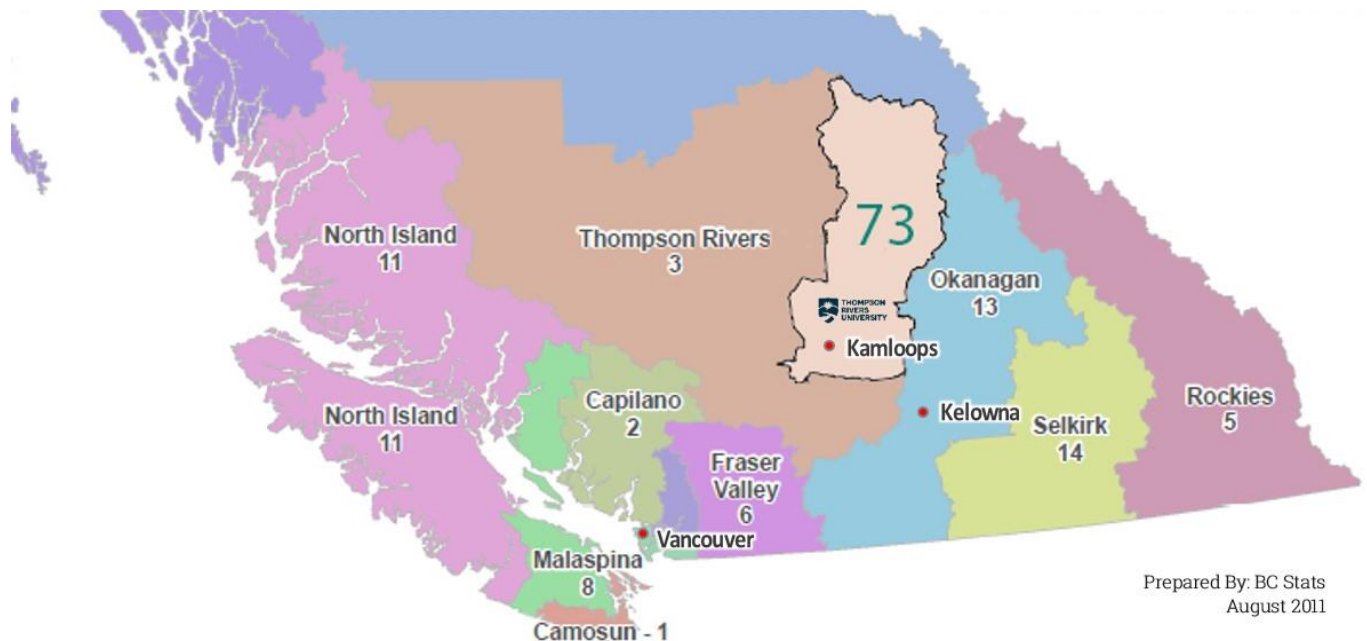
This project is part of a larger consortium of BC post-secondary institutions working together to foster partnerships with the preK-12 community of teachers and learners.

Working with the BC Teaching and Learning Council in partnership with BCcampus, several institutions have started to form partnerships with their local school districts, leading workshops, providing shared learning opportunities and chances for networking and knowledge-building.

Projects are currently underway at:

- Capilano University
- Emily Carr University of Art and Design
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Langara College
- North Island College
- Selkirk College
- Simon Fraser University
- Vancouver Island University

British Columbia College Regions



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The Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching promotes teaching excellence for all TRU faculty members. The centre supports faculty in their work to develop innovative and engaging pedagogies and programs across the university communities to improve student learning, recruitment, transition and retention.