



Indspire

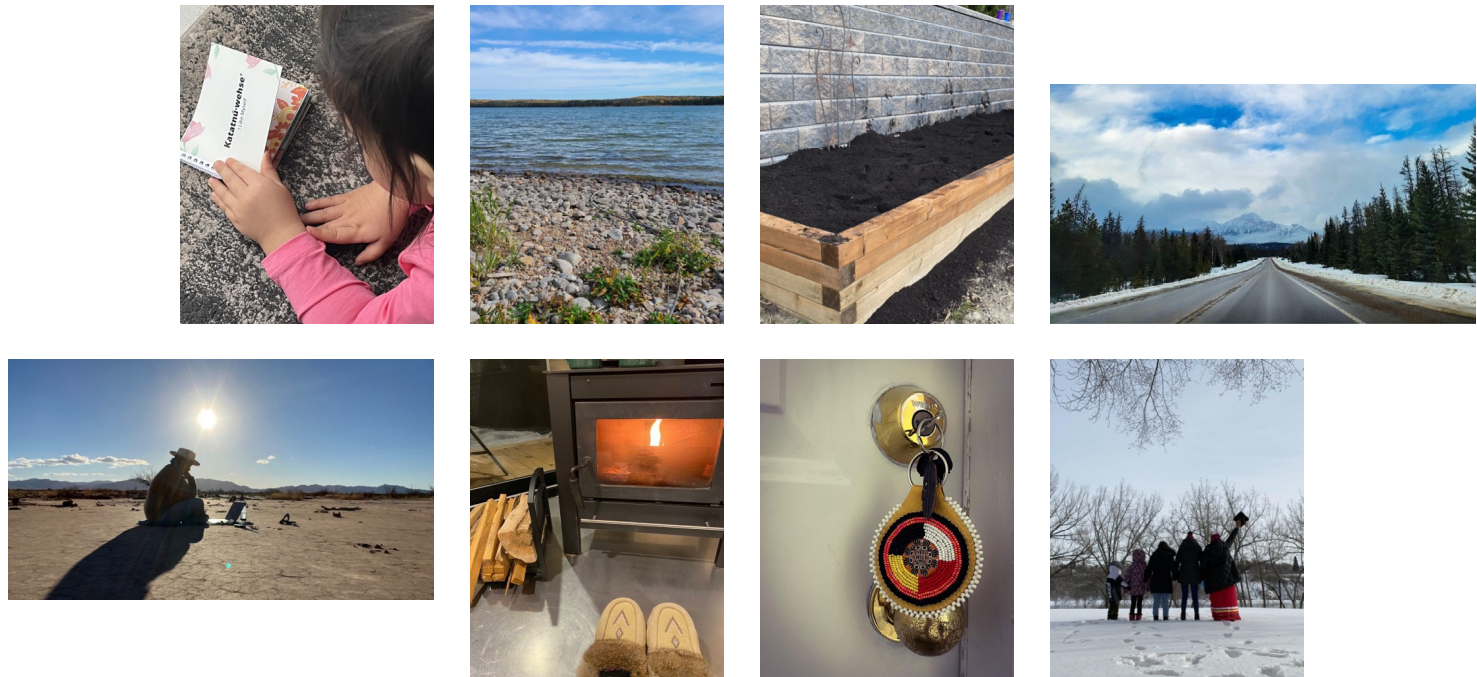
Indigenous education,
Canada's future.

L'éducation des autochtones.
L'avenir du Canada.

Journeys to Success

Empowering Indigenous Visions of Success
Through Photovoice





About Indspire

Indspire is an Indigenous national registered charity that invests in the education of Indigenous people for the long-term benefit of these individuals, their families and communities, and Canada. With the support of its funding partners, Indspire disburses financial awards, delivers programs, and shares resources with the goal of improving educational outcomes for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students. Through Indspire’s education offerings, we provide resources to students, educators, communities, and other stakeholders who are committed to improving success for Indigenous youth. In 2021-2022, Indspire awarded over \$23 million through 6,612 bursaries and scholarships to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis youth, making it the largest funder of Indigenous post-secondary education outside the federal government.

Co-researchers

Shawna D’Antimo Wikwemikong First Nation	Descanon Cook Opaskwayak Cree Nation	Daisy Houle Saddle Lake Cree Nation
Jaiden Herkimer Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation	Felicity Crookedneck Ministikwan Lake Cree Nation	Parker Thibert South Okanagan Similkameen Métis Nation
Karsyn Summers Chippewas of the Thames First Nation	Marley Curtis Métis Nation of Alberta	

Founding Supporters



About the Research Knowledge Nest

The Indspire *Research Knowledge Nest* is the first Indigenous research program of its kind in Canada. With data analysis skills rapidly becoming critical to economic success, the *Research Nest* is poised to seize this exciting opportunity to foster Indigenous engagement and leadership in quantitative research and data science roles. The program will be guided by an Advisory Committee of researchers, leaders, and key stakeholders who will provide direction and input on the development of this important initiative.

Prologue

Acknowledgements

Chi-Miigwetch to all the staff at Indspire who work hard to support Indigenous success and provided us the opportunity to share our voices through this project. Hearing our stories and supporting us to make this project happen through our own vision has allowed us to feel validated and empowered in our own unique journeys towards success.

We also want to recognize the Indspire **Research Knowledge Nest** and its staff members for making this project possible with encouragement, assistance, and support. This includes Research Assistants Shawna D’Antimo, Jaiden Herkimer, and Karsyn Summers, who facilitated the required planning and training to conduct the research. A sincere thank-you to our manager, Jamie Ricci, who provided invaluable support and guidance throughout the project.

Chi-Miigwetch to Julia Stoneman Sinclair who gave us our inspiration to conduct this photovoice project. Sharing your experiences and providing us with your mentorship and guidance has opened us up in ways we had not imagined. Your encouragement and support to start our project in a good way will always be valued and appreciated.

We would like to especially thank all our co-researchers who opened their minds and hearts to something new and participated in this journey together towards learning about what success means to us. Our time, commitment, and stories have made this project come to life in such meaningful and unexpected ways. It has been an honour to be part of a group filled with diverse experiences, knowledge, and hope for a brighter future.

Finally, it is important for us to acknowledge all our relations, including our ancestors, the land, and the Creator for providing us with strength, sustenance, and direction throughout our journeys. We hope this is just the start of many good things to come through the stories we have shared and the relationships we have worked to build together.

Situating our Research

The intention behind situating ourselves in this research is to share some of the influences that form our experiences and create a unique impact on the research we do, the way we relate to it, and how we use it to give back. As post-secondary-educated Indigenous students, we have unique perspectives and experiences that help to form our view of Indigenous success. Being current and recent Indigenous students means that we are part of the larger community that we have focused our research on.

The intergenerational effects of colonization and government-implemented policies have had direct impacts on our lives, families, and communities. We share an understanding in our lived experiences of oppression and marginalization that continue to be seen in the context of dominant Western systems that contribute to the power imbalance experienced by Indigenous people. We feel the need to create space for Indigenous perspectives that are often misrepresented, not included, or missing within mainstream society.

Our research aims to change the narrative and empower each other on this journey together to value, amplify, and strengthen our Indigenous voices. It is important for us to acknowledge that there are many diverse experiences within Indigenous communities that cannot be fully captured in this report. We hope our photovoice project is only the beginning of inspiring and encouraging more Indigenous people to share their voices and experiences with the world through a more positive lens.

Introduction

Background

At Indspire, we believe that Indigenous communities have the right to define their own vision of success. This photovoice project intends to encourage, present, and highlight Indigenous perceptions of success through photographs and narratives. The goal is to raise awareness and dialogue to better support Indigenous communities' image of success. The purpose is to represent and empower Indigenous visions and voices to strengthen the wider community's understanding of Indigenous worldviews. To further support Indspire's interest in supporting Indigenous students' unique journey to success, the research question 'What is success within an Indigenous lens?' was developed for our project.

The results of this research help support Indigenous students achieve a path to success through enhancements to programs such as Indspire's *Rivers to Success* Indigenous Mentorship program. It also provides understanding to post-secondary institutions and support systems around Indigenous students' unique images of success and the types of goals that are meaningful to them. This report serves as an important reminder that Indigenous student success comes in many different forms and requires a wholistic lens for appropriate support. Learning about the ways Indigenous students view success creates space to celebrate and acknowledge their journeys toward success.

The use of participatory action research projects such as photovoice creates an opportunity to share the voices, experiences, and perspectives of those who are often not heard with the public. It also empowers individuals to reflect on and document personal experiences in relation to the

conditions of their environment. This encourages the development of a critical consciousness where students learn to recognize issues of inequities and social injustice and seek action for meaningful change. The hope is that, through sharing our stories, we will influence those in greater positions of power to implement needed changes that address diverse community experiences and promote healthy, successful lives.

Project Focus

Our intention is to study Indigenous students' views of success and highlight the unique perceptions of success for Indigenous communities. Through telling our individual stories using photovoice, we will share photos and narratives about the meaning of success. We hope to encourage growth and understanding of Indigenous knowledge, values, and worldviews using student-centred research for the benefit of communities.

Literature Review

Indigenous Success

To provide a base foundation of knowledge upon which to build our research, we have included a short literature review about the meaning of success in context with Indigenous student perspectives.

Success is a complex concept which can be interpreted in many ways, depending on the interpreter. For Indigenous students, definitions of success often differ from traditional, Westernized perceptions of the word. For example, Joseph and Windchief (2015) describe Indigenous success as being "defined by cultural connectedness to community." At Indspire, we support students in the pursuit of their educational success, no matter what success looks like to them. As such, it is important that we explore the question: what does success look like for Indigenous students and graduates?

In examining current knowledge on the topic, it becomes clear that motivation is highly intertwined with individual ideas of success. An example of this relationship is that Indigenous students' motivations are often increased by their need to successfully take knowledge back to their communities. Typically, there are two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic (Guiffrida, 2006). Intrinsic motivation is doing something (e.g., learning) because you genuinely want to; it is motivation from within. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is a means to an end (e.g., getting good grades or praise); it is external.

Additionally, cultural identity is vital to defining success (CHiXapkaid et al., 2011). Specifically, students' motivation is affected by "their culture, ethnicity, educational, and socioeconomic upbringings" (Chelberg & Bosman, 2020). Guiffrida (2006) explains that cultural factors affect a student's source of motivation. Often, people fall into one of two cultural distinctions: collectivism (e.g., valuing interdependence, harmony, community) or individualism (e.g., valuing independence, competition, and the self).

Indigenous students tend to be more intrinsically motivated and collectivistic in nature (Guiffrida, 2006). This means their definitions of success are more likely to be about wanting to seek knowledge and to serve others. However, this does not align with typical societal or institutional ideas of success, which lean towards self-actualization (academically, professionally) and personal gain over others. For example, graduation from a formal education program is the standard Western measure of success, which ignores Indigenous measures such as traditional language efficacy and ceremonial participation (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007).

Indigenous students are achieving educational success in many ways, and as such, it is important to not take a deficit perspective on their definition of success (CHiXapkaid et al., 2011). While most Indigenous people will agree that pursuing post-secondary education to work towards their careers is important, it is still necessary to incorporate Indigenous views of lifelong learning and wholistic being into perceptions of success (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007; CHiXapkaid et al., 2011). As a

result, here are some common reasons Indigenous students pursue post-secondary education and what defines their success:

- Becoming role models, leaders, and mentors for youth (Kirby et al., 2020; Rodon et al., 2015; Timmons, 2013)
- Bringing knowledge back to and improving life for their community (Asmar et al., 2015; Chelberg & Bosman, 2020; ChiXapkaid et al., 2011; Guiffrida, 2006; Joseph & Windchief, 2015; Timmons, 2013)
- Pursuing their enjoyment of learning (Guiffrida, 2006; Rodon et al., 2015)
- Learning life skills, culture, language, personal talents, gifts, and experiencing growth (ChiXapkaid et al., 2011; Lenny, 2019; Rodon et al., 2015; Timmons, 2013)
- Affecting change and breaking cycles of unemployment and poverty (Chelberg & Bosman, 2020; Guiffrida, 2006; Timmons, 2013)
- Living a balanced life of wholistic wellbeing (mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical) (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007; ChiXapkaid et al., 2011; Lenny, 2019)

Even so, success is a very expansive concept that cannot always be captured by words alone. Indigenous perspectives of success is an under-researched topic which requires further exploration. That is why, with this photovoice project, we have attempted to show Indigenous students' ideas of success through the lens of photographs and narratives.

Project Design

Research Question

The question we intended to learn more about was 'what does success look like through an Indigenous perspective?' Through engaging with Indigenous students, we aimed to promote empowerment by utilizing a strength-based approach. The purpose of this project is to encourage, highlight, and celebrate the unique meanings of Indigenous success. Combining this research question with the use of photography and narrative-writing allowed Indigenous students the opportunity to authentically share their voices.

Methodology

We used a participatory action research methodology to conduct our project. This means that community members who are directly impacted by the research topic are involved as co-researchers. The power in this approach emerges through the co-researchers who are viewed as equals in the research project and are engaged in project planning and decision-making processes. To learn more about what success looks like through an Indigenous perspective, we recruited current Indigenous students across Canada to participate as co-researchers. To reflect community interests, key incorporations throughout our project included relationship-building, inclusion, and collaboration. This created an important space for Indigenous students to tell their own stories and be empowered using their own words.

Methods

We used photovoice as a visual research method to capture photos about what success looks like. This method promotes the empowerment of co-researchers through sharing their own experiences and realities using pictures and narratives. We felt that photovoice was the most meaningful method to collaboratively engage with Indigenous students. In this process we created shared group guidelines to support us to work together in a positive and constructive way. We also incorporated the use of group-building activities such as icebreakers to help us get to know each other and develop relationships. This method works to strengthen co-researchers' voices and creates a sense of ownership in the project.

We recruited co-researchers using Indspire's social media and emails to Indspire's *Rivers to Success* participants. Co-researchers were invited to participate in six virtual meetings on Zoom ranging from one to two hours each. The goal of these meetings was to learn about photovoice, engage with other co-researchers in project development, and provide a space for support. The photovoice training covered co-researcher responsibilities, basic photography techniques, ethical and safety concerns, narrative writing, and social action (such as events or exhibits). This training allowed co-researchers to capture two to three photos and create accompanying narratives on their own time, with support from group discussions. To recognize the value of the co-researchers' time and commitment, an honorarium was provided as part of the project.

Data Analysis

We facilitated a collaborative data analysis using our photos, narratives, and group discussions. Each photo was initially shared without the narrative to promote discussion around what success looks like through our photographs. Following this, the co-researcher was given the opportunity to share their narrative and personal meaning of success with the group. An initial thematic data analysis was completed, and we conducted a data validation process with co-researchers for further input. To validate the themes that emerged from our photos and discussions, we reviewed each theme and made revisions as needed to better reflect our ideas of success. We also incorporated a photovoice-themed activity using Google Jamboard, where co-researchers matched their icons to the themes that most represented their views of success.

Ethical Considerations

Involvement as a co-researcher for this research project was voluntary and co-researchers provided informed consent to be involved. Co-researchers were given the opportunity to include their identity, use an alias, or remain anonymous and have their identity confidential. All platforms and servers used for facilitation and data storage were private and secure. The benefit of participating as a co-researcher was the opportunity to learn, share, and reflect. The potential harm in participating was that the co-researcher might not agree with the opinions of others and could be unsatisfied with the findings.

Photography release forms were signed to obtain permission to use co-researchers' photographs developed during our project for reports, exhibits, and presentations. Co-researchers were given the opportunity to edit and review all photos and content up until the final report's release. Co-researcher meetings were used as an ongoing space and opportunity for co-researchers to review their photos and contributions to the project. Consent was obtained to audio-record the photo discussion and analysis meetings to ensure that our group discussions were captured accurately.



Our Results

Photographs and Narratives





Language at Home

Karsyn Summers

This photo represents success to me; I see my efforts being reflected through my daughter. Every day throws a new curve ball at us, whether it is the pandemic, or a new developmental stage. Either way, we make those adjustments and take on the day.

Here, my daughter is lying on the floor, reading her positive affirmations book in the Oneida language. This is meaningful in many ways, including it being a handmade book from a family member. She

lies on the floor, behind my work desk, and keeps herself busy. It isn't always this peaceful, but I had to capture this moment. When the day-to-day flow feels chaotic, there are moments in the day where I show appreciation for times like this. And our languages and the people who work hard to keep them alive are a reminder of why I keep going and do the work that I do.



By the Water

Daisy Houle

Kingsmere Lake in the fall is a calming place to be. I started working at this National Park in 2017. Since then, I have been asked to return to the park every year.

Being at the park to me means I do not have to worry during the day or however long I stay. I have met dear friends working in the park and it has sustained me every year since I started.

This means success to me because I do not have to worry about what I will be doing 4 months out of the year. I was able to go to work and recharge by being surrounded by nature and good people.



Bountiful Harvest Awaits

Parker Thibert

A bountiful harvest awaits after a long day’s work building the garden and filling it with fresh soil; it is now ready to be planted. This garden will provide fresh fruit and vegetables to my family. Initially, there is nothing to yield; one must be patient and care for what has been planted. However, eventually there will be a bountiful harvest that will feed a family and provide comfort knowing where one’s food comes from.

The simple facets of gardening can teach you about happiness. It may not come in a day, a week, a month, but it must start with something small: the seed. It must be cared for and fed, you must find what feeds the happiness in your life and “water” your garden. This will eventually yield you a Bountiful Harvest of Happiness.

Success is about the little things that will one day yield a Bountiful Harvest.



Learning on the Land

Canon Cook

As I travel over this continent, under the Jay’s Treaty—a right for all Indigenous born in the settler state of Canada and which specifically allows us to work, study, live and invest in the settler state of the US of A—I can still pursue my academic education wherever I am. This means that I can combine my academic studies with on-the-ground learning from the Land, wherever this may be. I have a particular draw towards the desert as it feels to be the flipside of where I grew up in Northern Manitoba.

The climate is harsh, requires grit to thrive in, and although it may look empty from the unseeing eye, the ecological environment is teeming with life whether it be under the snow or under the rocks in the sand. This gift of learning from different environments deepens my understanding of myself and of the Land and I am constantly reminded that all this learning, like the shadow thrown by the Sun, is not just for me to clasp close to my chest but will be important for many others; it is bigger than myself. This also helps me not feel so lonely out here on the road and gives me excitement for the future.



As the Sky Clears

Marley Curtis

Driving home from Jasper National Park after a snowstorm in February, I noticed the sky above me clearing. Light illuminated the mountains ahead and the pavement reached up to support the rubber of my tires, where glassy ice had been under me only a few minutes before. I felt like everything in this moment characterized the clarity that accompanies success.

I often lose my grip on my path and slide around from side to side, but as long as I face forward and slow down, I know the path will eventually clear. Thick walls of pine and spruce (resolve and patience) keep me from slipping too far away from

success. When I am unsure of where I'm heading, I look ahead and prepare for the next obstacle. In this case a mountain lies directly in front of me. I can't see the road winding around its base from this part of the path, and I could make the mistake of assuming it's insurmountable. It won't be until I get to the mountain that my perspective will change, and I'll see the way around it.

Success means a clear sky. Recognizing that the weather may be out of my control but that I can always drive to the conditions, even if it means getting to my destination a little later than planned.



Resiliency

Felicity Crookedneck

Success to me is the feeling of accomplishment. I chose this photo because it explains my life today. This photo was taken on February 20, 2022, on Spadina Crescent in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. I am in my 4th year of Indigenous Social Work. It feels like the end of the tunnel for the completion of my degree. To me, success means overcoming every obstacle life throws at me. To be resilient, you must be able to continue moving forward no matter how difficult your journey can be.

I am wearing the ribbon skirt because I am proud to be an Indigenous mother. Wearing the colour red, symbolizes my support with Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. The ribbons are the colours of the Medicine Wheel that represent my life as a whole with the aspects Physical, Emotional, Spiritual and Mental. My Kokom Scarf represents having my aunties and kokoms who have passed; they are guiding me and looking out

for my children and me. The graduation hat in my hand, pointing towards the sky, represents the importance of education and how far we have come. My children and I are all holding hands; this symbolizes that we are going through this together. All of us looking forward means we are focused on our present and future. Looking at the trees represents our growth and strength throughout the years. The snow shows emptiness along our journey; we are living in an urban area 4 hours away from family, and our community. It gets cold and lonely. The river represents the barriers we face as an Indigenous family living in an urbanized environment. The footprints in the snow symbolize our past: no matter what we have experienced, we have always conquered. My daughter holding the mask between our hands symbolizes continuing our education despite the COVID-19 pandemic. We made it- we have survived.



Living in the Present

Jaiden Herkimer

For me, success means being truly present and in the moment. It is also about self-care and giving myself time to breathe.

This picture was taken on my vacation up North. It is one of the first vacations I have taken since before the pandemic. It was during this time that I was reminded of how important it is to do the things I enjoy and relax. As I sat by the fire, cozy and warm, I felt comfort. A sense of peace from not having to do anything or be anyone specific.

When I can find moments like this, I feel proud and successful, because I know I am doing the best I can and living for today, not the past or the future.



The Keys to Wellness

Shawna D'Antimo

Our right to have a healthy and safe environment to go home to every day is what success looks like to me. We each need access to the ability to build a strong and stable foundation to care for our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual wellness. Without the support of a healthy and safe home, it is difficult to thrive in other areas of our lives and find balance and harmony.

Experiences of housing insecurity have led me to feel incredibly grateful to have a place to call home.

The ability to achieve independence and care for myself was something I often reflected on to keep me going through the challenges I faced in post-secondary. I took this picture of my keys unlocking my apartment door because it reminds me of the importance of having a healthy and safe home to be empowered to succeed.



The Best of “Stay-At-Home”

Karsyn Summers

Another photo that represents success comes in a very similar form: my daughter Delilah, painting beside me, while I work. Another example of success is reflected in the way we choose to go about our day, finding peace within a chaotic schedule and showing appreciation through local Indigenous artists who choose to share their knowledges.

In this photo, I think of all of the wonderful opportunities we have as Indigenous people and

the connections we can make, although the stay-at-home order, while working remotely, does begin to feel isolating. I think of this moment where we can utilize that technology and those relationships to learn and keep ourselves busy. And here, I feel success in that my two-year old can express herself and her creativity.



Bringing Back Tradition

Daisy Houle

Nowadays face tattoos are highly stigmatized. Usually those that have them did not make good choices when they were younger.

Years ago, tattoos were a part of my culture. Tattoos were part of everyday life. They showed your status, who you were and where you belonged. The women's chin tattoos would display your age, adult or Elder, and their placement would say which group you belonged to. The practice died out, but it is coming back slowly.

After graduating with my first degree, I got mine done. I was successful in achieving the first part of my education and will continue to do so. I am proud of all my tattoos, and these are not ones that you cover up to be polite.



Perseverance

Parker Thibert

Sometimes the difficult times of the past look beautiful when you reach your destination.

After a long canoe trip where I was hammered with waves, wind, and a downpour of rain, I remember many times where I wanted to turn around and give up. However, after 20 km of perseverance I arrived at my destination where the weather cleared 20 minutes after.

Sometimes with life, you just need to persevere and reach the goal. When looking back at the hardships it gives you a different perspective of something beautiful about the things you overcame and how they shaped you to be stronger.

Success is not always what people see you achieve; it's the battles you overcome in silence, the personal victories only you see and experience.



Making Home Where My Feet Are

Canon Cook

This was my first month long stay, Seminole and Timucua homelands, with my Jay's Treaty travel. My hosts made a very comfortable spot for travelers and my dog and I marveled at the different trees, fauna, birds, animals and weather that I had only seen in picture books and movies before. Pictured here is "Spanish Moss hanging from a cypress tree."

Whenever I stay for a period longer than a week, I make sure to hang up my Indigekwe flag as it reminds me of who I am and the strong nations that

I come from, that I am proud to be out here, that I belong in this landscape, in a respectful manner, and that I want everyone to know it. Success to me is being able to travel to all parts of this continent, in my Ancestors' footsteps.



Traditions

Marley Curtis

Traditions, gratitude. My family assembles at my great-grandmother's house to learn how to bead, how to sew, how to cook, and how to tell stories. I find out what my second cousins, aunties, and my mother's old friends are up to through osmosis in my great-grandmother's house. Gossip and laughter spill into every corner, and I soak it up along with the sweet-smelling fragrance of pies and breads lining each counter. My mother is demanding that I let her trace the outline of my feet on a piece of paper so she can make me a blue pair of moccasins

to match hers (I really don't need a fourth pair). My uncle drops his plate of food (it was stacked too high). A new relation through marriage is being introduced (but they can't keep up with all the names being tossed at them).

This is my great-grandmother's success. As the matriarch of an enormous family, she is still passing on traditions to her great-great-grandchildren at 92 years old.



Mountain of Success

Felicity Crookedneck

I took this photo in Banff, Alberta on September 6, 2020.

The top of the mountain represents completion of my goals, which leads to the feeling of success. The beginning of the journey is the balcony-like area. Trust the process. The path is already structured out for you to follow. You need to follow the trail through the trees. The trees symbolize growth which means having to experience fear. To grow, we must come out of our comfort zone, and that brings

fear: fear of change, but change will be great. It may look frightening to begin but once you reach the top it will all be worth it. The other mountains aside from the one you are climbing represents the other goals in your life. The people on the trail symbolize that we all go at our own pace.



Connection & Curiosity

Jaiden Herkimer

Success, to me, means connecting with other people and maintaining curiosity and adventure in everything I do.

This picture was taken on my trip to Malta in 2020. We only had a few hours left until our flight home, and my friend and I spent the entire afternoon at a small coffee shop in the middle of the city. This is a core memory for me. I can still feel the warm breeze coming through the open windows, the smell of the Mediterranean Sea. I remember the friendly locals

and having the sense of “I made it.”

That is why I think success is meeting new people, discovering new places, and pursuing new experiences. You never know who you will meet or the connections you will make. However, it is one of the best feelings in the world when you can spend hours talking to someone over a cup of coffee, and truly enjoy the beauty of your surroundings.



A Sense of Purpose

Shawna D’Antimo

Finding a sense of purpose and a reason to wake up every day is what success looks like to me. I want to leave this world a better place so that we can all be happy and healthy for many generations to come. This begins with remembering our responsibility to care for our land and community, through learning to love, honour, and respect all our relations.

For a while, I didn’t know what my purpose in this world was and often felt hopeless thinking about the future. I attended post-secondary because I

wanted to do something meaningful and be part of creating a better life for our children, communities, and future generations. I took this picture walking through a local park because it reminds me of the gifts Mother Earth provides, and our responsibility to care for our children and environment so the generations ahead can also succeed.



The Impossible

Marley Curtis

“Unicorn” has a double meaning. Most people think of perfection when they think of the silver-haired creature. A unicorn, to them, is something outrageously flawless that they should want to be, or a lofty standard casually penned into job descriptions. Most people forget the other meaning: the impossible.

In the original interpretation, a “unicorn” isn’t perfection, it’s an extraordinary, wondrous, unadulterated reminder that flawlessness doesn’t

exist. If a person reaches for perfection, they will never find it. Yet everywhere they look they can find unicorns: an impossibly well-fitting and comfortable pair of pants, a niche gadget that they didn’t know they needed, a lover who ticks all the boxes. None of these things are “perfect,” but they are the “impossible” come to life.

Success is reaching for those “impossible” things that are imperfect.

Key Findings



Figure 1: Thematic analysis developed from our photo discussions.

Journeys to Success

Through this project, we learned that the meaning of success centers around each person’s unique journey and has no concrete set of rules among individuals. This led to the creation of the overarching theme ‘Journeys to Success,’ that represents how everyone has their own paths, destinations, and means to pursue success. Success encompasses a wholistic lifelong journey and is not one simple thing that can be defined for all. Life is full of new beginnings, adventures, and challenges to face on the path ahead. It is accordingly important to take a moment to appreciate how far you have come, to celebrate those successes along the way, and to keep moving forward in a good way.

In our research, we developed the following eight themes; however, it is important to acknowledge that they are not intended to encompass everyone’s views of success. The intention is to share some of the themes that emerged from our photos, narratives, and group discussions. We created the subsequent themes from aspects of our own journeys to success. We found multiple intersecting factors among the emerging themes that are interconnected and related to one another. We hope that, through your personal journey, some of these may also resonate with you or with those you encounter along the way.

Building Supportive Relationships

Success was seen in connecting with family, friends, and community members, and building supportive relationships throughout our journey. This involved our connection to the community and our responsibility to care for and support each other as equals. Building relationships was seen in opportunities to connect with others through conversations, sharing stories, and learning about one another. This included being able to gather together, socialize, and meet new people. Finding

those who can support us on our journey and with whom we can celebrate achievements is success.

Connecting to the Land

The opportunity to connect with and learn from the land represented how we related to the meaning of success. The land teaches us to become more sustainable for ourselves and the future. This included acknowledging our collective responsibility to care for the environment and work in balance with nature. This came through appreciation of the gifts and sustenance that Mother Earth offers. It is also evinced in the ability to work, study, travel, and retrace the steps of our ancestors. Success is always being able to connect to the land and feel a sense of belonging wherever we are on our journey.

Nurturing Good Intentions

In achieving success, we found meaning in nurturing good intentions for oneself, for others, and for the journey ahead. This included thinking about the present and future with intention and working towards healthy communities for many generations to come. It is learning from those who walked before us, to grow and continue forward. This involved protecting our women and children and investing in a brighter future. Learning to love, honour, and respect all our relations, and create a better life for our children, families, and communities is what success looks like.

Upholding Culture and Tradition

Proudly upholding our cultures, traditions, and identities was viewed as success. This involved carrying both Indigenous knowledge and Western education while maintaining our connection to our ways of being. We found hope in changing the narrative for future generations through

learning language, culture, and traditions. This included the promotion of cultural representation and reclamation of identity and place. Success is reclaiming our power and carrying on tradition for our ancestors who were violently denied these rights through acts of colonization and oppression.

Developing Sense of Self

The development of a sense of self is about the success of coming to know who we are and working towards balance and harmony. This involves taking the time to connect to ourselves, be as we are, and practice self-care and appreciation. Success is caring for our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual wellness to live a healthy life. This includes giving ourselves time to relax, have fun, be creative, and do what we enjoy. Success on the journey is also learning about ourselves through sharing oneself with others and understanding ourselves in relation to everything around us.

Passing on Knowledge

Part of how we view success is experienced through the importance of learning and passing on knowledge to present and future generations. This comes through opportunities to learn from our Elders, family, and community members who work to uphold their knowledge. This is done through education, learning language, practicing culture and tradition, and passing this down through children and grandchildren. The knowledge that our Elders hold through the stories they share and the skills they teach help to support our success and guide our journey.

Cultivating Strength and Resiliency

The ability to cultivate our strength and remain resilient despite all the obstacles we face throughout our lives was viewed as a success to us. This included feelings of giving up but ultimately persevering to overcome these challenges through determination. This was about being able to continue, no matter how difficult our journey can be, and allowing patience with ourselves to draw on our strength. Success comes from honouring the strengths of those who walked before us and carrying forward through the next generations, making our ancestors proud.

Creating Peace and Security

Our vision of success was seen in the ability to create and work towards a sense of peace and security wherever we are in our lives. This included having a warm place to stay, the security of being housed, and feelings of comfort and safety. It was also spoken about in terms of having access to healthy food and clean water. Feelings of peace, joy, and happiness were found through opportunities to appreciate the environment and create space for freedom of expression. This gives us somewhere quiet to recharge, focus, and care for our health and wellness to achieve success.



Figure 2: Word art created using the words in our photo titles.

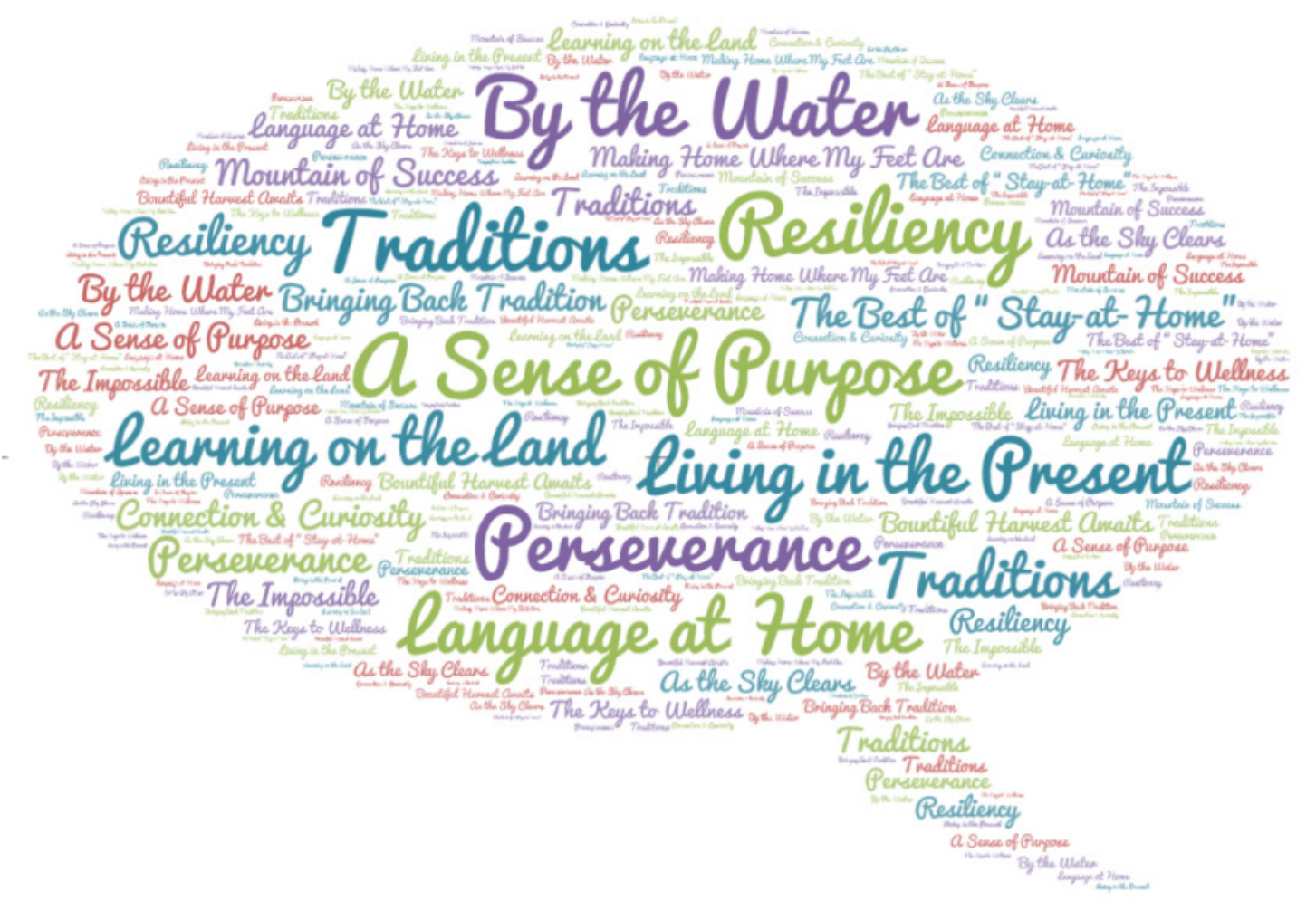


Figure 3: Word art created using each of our photo titles.

Conclusion

Summary

We acknowledge that a single photo cannot encompass all views of success, and that there is a need for a wholistic understanding. This sparked meaningful discussion and reflection. An emphasis was placed on the interconnection between our themes and how our photos worked together to create a more comprehensive picture oriented towards balance and harmony. Success within our journeys appeared in:

- Building Supportive Relationships
- Connecting to the Land
- Nurturing Good Intentions
- Upholding Culture and Tradition
- Developing Sense of Self
- Passing on Knowledge
- Cultivating Strength and Resiliency
- Creating Peace and Security

Through this project we learned that there is no one right path toward or meaning of success, and that everyone's path is unique. Greater support for success requires understanding and appreciating that everyone's views and journey to success are different. This means that it is important to provide space for people to define and celebrate their own success.

Closing

When thinking about the meaning of success, it is important to acknowledge where people are starting from, and to recognize that Indigenous students are often starting from a place that is different from others. Putting reconciliation into action requires efforts to encourage Indigenous Peoples' diverse perceptions of success and celebrate their ways of being and knowing. The photos and narratives we shared in this project are examples of success in our lives, and the themes represent areas that we found to support us through our journeys to success. While there are many factors to overcome on the journey, we have learned to recognize and celebrate our success along the way.

Once again, we want to acknowledge that the findings in this report are not meant to define what success is to everyone, and that many experiences of success live beyond what we have shared. Through this project, we hope to inspire other Indigenous community members to share their meanings of success, and further encourage and celebrate these unique views. With these thoughts in mind, we would love to have you join us on our journey together to learn about and highlight different perspectives of success. Become a part of building on this meaningful work using the hashtags #JourneysToSuccess and #Indspire on social media to share your photo and narrative of what success means to you!

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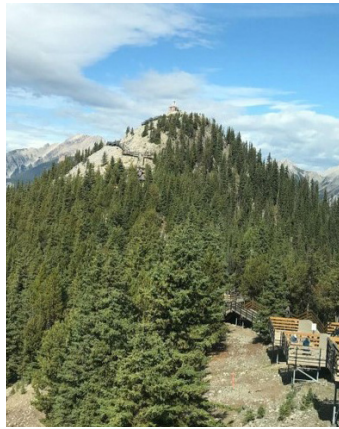
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