

**However beautiful
the strategy, you
should occasionally
look at the results.**

WINSTON CHURCHILL

Assessment

Contents

Outcomes	143
Assessment Summary	
Claudia Lampman	144
Quantitative Results	147
Qualitative Results	153
Results with Students	155

FACULTY INTENSIVE

Outcomes

We were fortunate to draw on the experience and talent of our colleague Dr. Claudia Lampman who served as our Assessment and Evaluation Coordinator. Claudia designed original assessment materials for this project, administered pre- and post-test surveys, worked with each participant to develop individualized classroom assessment strategies, and conducted follow-up interviews to gather qualitative feedback on the experience. Her findings and analysis are presented in this chapter.*

Highlights

Greater understanding of the relationship between institutional racism and student success.

Stronger skills for addressing Alaska Native issues in their classrooms.

New ideas for connecting their course material to personal experience and their outcomes to the sustainability of the planet.

Claudia's results reveal significant shifts in faculty attitudes about Alaska Native issues and their own teaching strategies. After the intensive, many agreed more strongly that institutional racism is an important explanation for why some Alaska Native students have a hard time completing college. They felt that their classrooms were now more likely to be places where students would feel comfortable talking about Alaska Native issues. They would go forward with new practices, new pacing, and new ideas about connecting course material to personal stories and to the sustainability of the planet.

Qualitative data confirmed the transformative impact the experience had on participants, both personally and professionally. "This was a perspective-shifting, life-altering experience," said one participant. "It will help me do my part in helping all students, and particularly Alaska Native students."

* As this book goes to print, we have become aware of efforts outside Alaska to articulate indigenous assessment practices. We were not aware of them at the time of our project and so proceeded to design our own.



Dr. Claudia Lampman is Professor and Chair of the Department of Psychology at the University of Alaska Anchorage. She served as Assessment and Evaluation Coordinator for Alaska's two Difficult Dialogues projects, the first of which was inspired in large part by her 2005 study on contra-power harassment. As a social psychologist, Claudia teaches about pluralism, civility, and respect for viewpoints and ways of life that differ from one's own. As a social scientist, she documents innovative ways of teaching and learning. As an Alaskan, she is committed to preservation of the land, Native peoples, and wisdom of the place where she lives.

Assessment Summary

Claudia Lampman

In essence, this project was designed as an intervention. The goal was to increase participants' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, skills, and comfort levels with Alaska Native ways of teaching, learning, and knowing. As Assessment and Evaluation Coordinator, it was my job to measure and chart this growth, to show how much and where participants were changed by this experience.

This is familiar ground for me. As a social scientist, I approach the world as one big dataset waiting to happen. But when I was asked to evaluate this particular program, initially I felt some trepidation. Libby and Ilarion were planning something I didn't quite understand. There was no written curriculum, no documentation of what was expected to happen, not even any note-taking. The intensive would be experiential and based on oral history, talking circles, and mindful listening. At first I wasn't sure my traditional methods would work here.

But when I sat down to write the questions, I found they flowed quite easily. They were interesting questions about things I'd never asked before: incorporating nature into one's classes, developing place-based learning experiences, using storytelling as a teaching strategy. I decided I needed to participate myself, to share the experience, to be a part of it in order to interpret the data I would gather.

It is clear to me as both an evaluator and a participant that the intensive delivered on the project's major goals and objectives. As a group, our participants gained new perspectives on the challenges facing Alaska Native students and faculty, including and especially institutional racism. They developed greater respect for Alaskan Native ways of learning and knowing, especially with regard to pacing, storytelling, place-based knowledge, and the wisdom of Elders. Each of us identified specific ways we could change our teaching styles to give more students a greater chance of success.

In summary, the assessment found that faculty who participated in the project changed in three fundamental ways: knowledge, comfort level, and attitude.

First, they left the intensive more knowledgeable about Alaska Native ways of teaching and learning, especially the importance of incorporating place-based learning, story-telling, non-verbal learning methods, Elders' wisdom, and periods of silence into their teaching practices.

Second, they felt more comfortable about addressing Alaska Native issues in their classrooms, and they expected their Alaska Native students to also feel more comfortable sharing ideas and opinions in their classrooms.

And third, they experienced a dramatic shift in their attitudes about course pace and cultivating student relationships and were particularly drawn to practices that would improve their teaching and benefit more of their students: 1) slowing down their teaching speed; 2) covering less information at a deeper level; 3) allowing students more time to reflect on course material; and 4) working harder to nurture relationships with and among students.

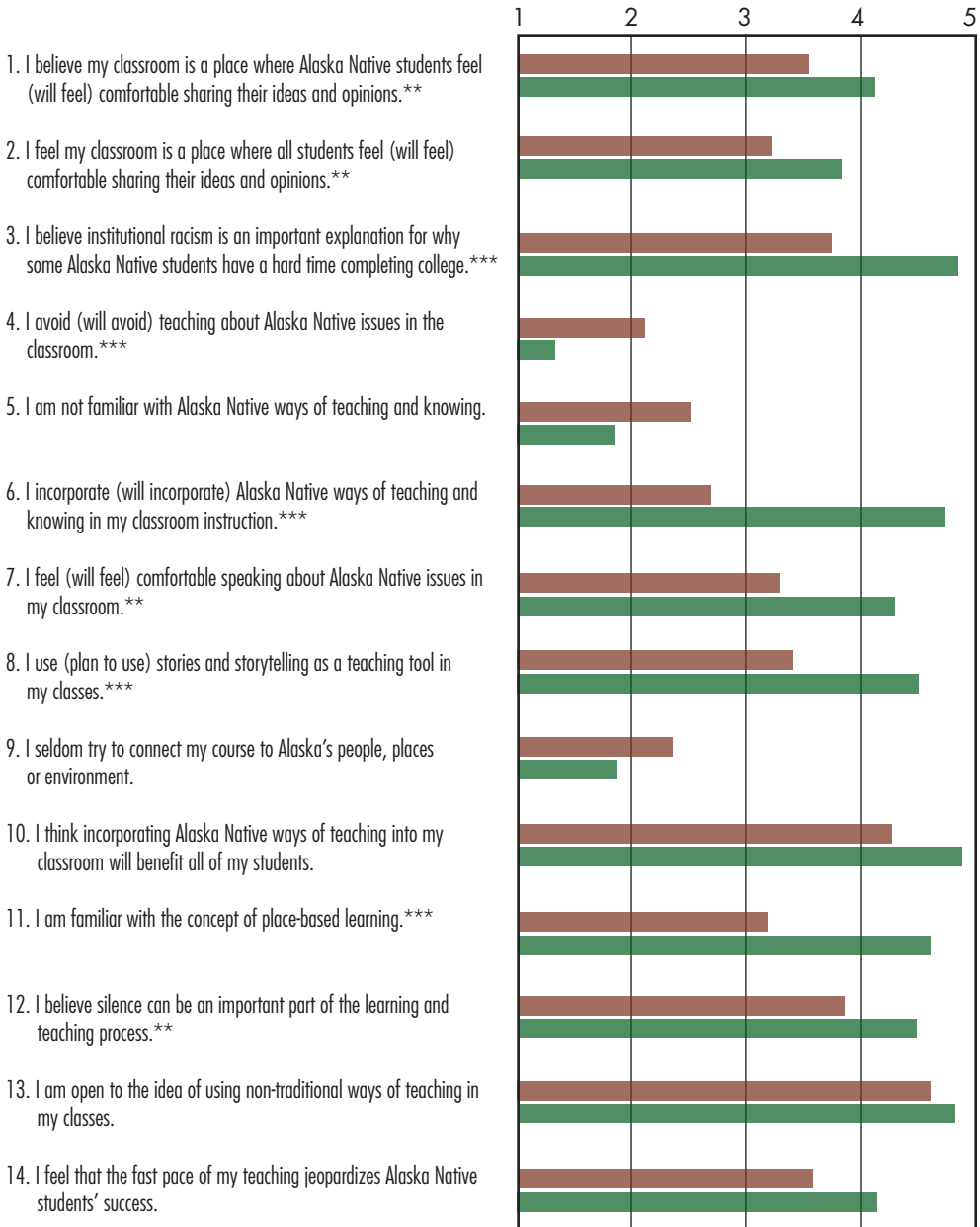
And we were all good students. The data showed a high level of interest, engagement, and commitment to the project. Although it was hard at first to put away our phones and our deadlines and to spend time just sitting and reflecting, we all seemed to adapt quickly. I actually enjoyed walking into the intensive in the morning knowing that I was not going to spend time that day stressing about all the other things I should or could be doing. I liked being given permission to free myself from other thoughts and to focus on the here and now. You'd think this might make us worry even more, but if so, it didn't last long. I think we all fell easily into the routine of no routine. As the week drew to a close, you could feel a sense of sadness. But we also felt grateful and privileged. We felt like we had spent a week of our lives in a really meaningful way. It was unlike any class I had ever attended, but it ended up doing what every professor or teacher hopes: it made us focus, pay attention, actively participate, throw our assumptions out the window, and learn something new.

As I walked through the participants' poster session at the end of the year, I was impressed anew by the passion and hope of my colleagues. I won't pretend that this was a random sample of faculty members from our two campuses; these are some of the most dedicated, respected, and innovative faculty in the whole state. Yet there is no doubt in my mind that these folks entered the intensive with open hearts and minds and left deeply moved and changed. Ironically, perhaps the most interesting thing that these energetic, fast-moving, and enthusiastic faculty members learned was to slow down, quiet their brains, and be mindful of their surroundings.

After the intensive I began teaching a course called *The Self in the 21st Century*. One of our readings concerns a "new" approach to teaching in elementary school – incorporating mindfulness and meditation into the classroom. The idea is to teach children to stop, to tune out distractions, and to be mindful of their bodies, their surroundings, and their brains' activity. As I read up on it, I couldn't help but think: this might be a new approach for elementary school teachers in the 21st century, but it is a way of teaching and learning that has been around for thousands of years. Isn't it about time we discovered it again?

Chart I: Questions on Alaska Native Issues and Students

1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree
 ■ pre-mean ■ post-mean



Quantitative Results

Charts 1 to 5 present the results from a 48-item survey designed specifically for this project.

- The survey was administered before and after the intensive to all faculty participants (n=17).
- All of the items are worded in the form of statements such as, “I believe institutional racism is an important explanation for why some Alaska Native students have a hard time completing college.”
- Participants responded to each statement using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
- Post-mean differs significantly from Pre-mean: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Alaska Native Students and Issues

Chart 1 displays changes in means for items assessing attitudes about Alaska Native issues and students. This section of the questionnaire showed the greatest gains, as these items directly tapped into core parts of the intensive.

There was a statistically significant change in the desired direction on ten of the fourteen items in this scale. From the pre-test to the post-test:

- 88% were more likely to say they would incorporate Alaska Native ways of teaching and knowing into their classroom instruction.
- 71% agreed more strongly that institutional racism is an important explanation for why some Alaska Native students have a hard time completing college.
- 65% felt their classroom was now more likely to be a place where all students would feel comfortable talking about Alaska Native issues.
- 65% indicated they were more likely to use stories and storytelling as a teaching tool in their classes.
- 65% agreed to a greater extent that incorporating Alaska Native ways of teaching into their classrooms would benefit all of their students.
- 59% were less likely to say that they would avoid teaching about Alaska Native issues in the classroom.
- 56% agreed more strongly that they were familiar with the concept of place-based learning.
- 53% showed a positive change in their beliefs that silence can be an important part of the learning and teaching process.
- 53% increased how comfortable they would feel speaking about Alaska Native issues in their classroom.
- 53% agreed more strongly that their classrooms would be a place where Alaska Native students felt comfortable sharing their ideas and opinions.

Chart 2: Questions on Earth and Nature

1. I encourage (will encourage) my students to connect with nature and their environment.***
2. I have never thought about how to incorporate nature into my curriculum.
3. I believe tying course material to the question of earth's systems is my responsibility as a teacher.**
4. Helping students understand "how to be a whole person" and encouraging them to reflect on their values, traditions, and life purpose is an important part of my job as a professor.
5. I encourage (will encourage) students to explore and examine how the way we learn and function at the university contributes to a healthy or unhealthy planet.***
6. I believe teaching content should always be actively placed within the context of the greater community and environment in which it occurs.**

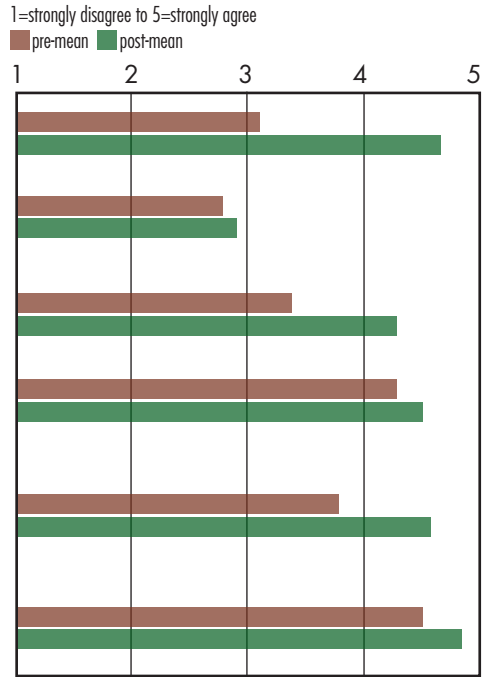
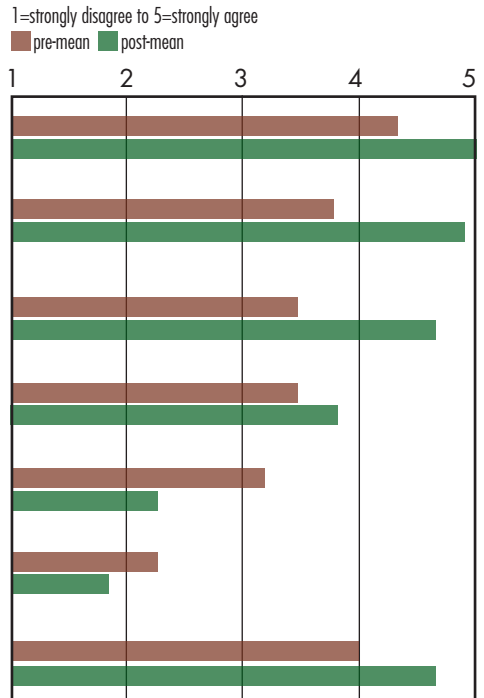


Chart 3: Questions on Course Pace

1. I think (will think) about the pace of my class when developing lectures and classroom activities.**
2. I strive (will strive) to give students time to reflect on the material I present.***
3. I believe many of my students would benefit if I were to slow down my teaching.***
4. I often find myself speeding up during the end of a class in order to fit more material into the day's class.
5. I feel that slowing down the pace at which I teach would mean students will not learn everything they need to know.*
6. I believe covering everything in my text or course content guide is the most important thing to do.
7. I think that my students would benefit if I covered less material at a deeper level.**



Connecting Curricula to Earth and Nature

Chart 2 presents changes in means on items assessing attitudes about the importance of incorporating Earth and nature into the college curriculum. These items also tapped directly into core aspects of the intensive, so the significant changes in this section are not surprising. The smaller amount of change on the item about incorporating nature into one's curriculum is not unexpected; this is a difficult thing for people in many disciplines. This intensive might have caused some people to see how little they thought about this aspect of their teaching before.

There was a statistically significant change in the desired direction on four of the six items in this scale. From the pre-test to the post-test:

- 76% said they would be more likely to encourage their students to connect with nature and their environment.
- 59% agreed more strongly that they would encourage students to explore and examine how the way we learn and function at the university contributes to a healthy or an unhealthy planet.
- 50% increased their agreement that it is their responsibility as teachers to link course materials to questions of the sustainability of earth's systems.
- 35% more respondents agreed that teaching content should always be actively placed within the context of the greater community and environment in which it occurs.

Course Pace

Chart 3 shows changes in means on items assessing attitudes about course pace. There were fairly dramatic changes here. The qualitative evaluation (described below) also suggests that the intensive had a very large impact on how participants feel about slowing down the pace of their courses. The Western model of university teaching is largely content-oriented rather than process-oriented. Most professors teach the way they were taught, with an over-arching goal of covering a specific set of material. The intensive seems to have led many of the Fellows to challenge these habits and assumptions.

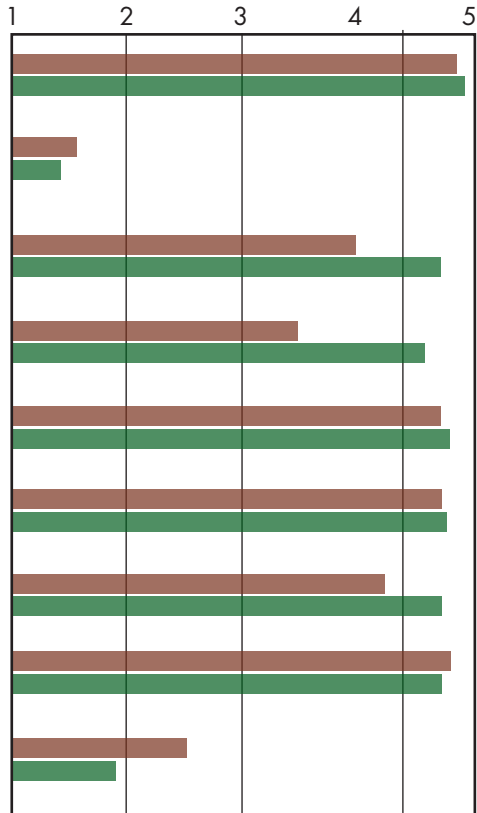
There was a statistically significant change in the desired direction on five of the seven items. From the pre-test to the post-test:

- 82% stated they would be more likely to strive to give students time to reflect on the materials they present.
- 65% agreed more strongly that many of their students would benefit if they were to slow down their teaching.
- 53% agreed more strongly that they would think about the pace of their classes when developing lectures and classroom activities.
- 50% agreed more strongly that their students would benefit more if they covered less material at a deeper level.
- 47% disagreed more strongly that slowing down the pace at which they teach would mean students would not learn everything they need to know.

Chart 4: Questions on Relationships, Experiential Learning, and the Learning Environment

1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree
 ■ pre-mean ■ post-mean

1. Learning my students' names is a teaching priority for me.
2. I don't think it is necessary or beneficial to student learning to know something about my students' lives outside of the classroom.
3. I believe that attending to relationships and emotions is a critical part of a professor's job.*
4. I need to pay more attention to cultivating relationships in (and outside of) my classes.**
5. A professor should actively try to make students feel more comfortable in his or her classroom.
6. I believe that my own values affect my students, even when I do not explicitly state what those values are.
7. I think I would be a better teacher if I paid more attention to how my own values and traditions influence my teaching.
8. I feel faculty on my campus should strive to offer students multiple ways to show they have mastered course material.
9. I feel uncomfortable when there is silence in my classroom.*



Relationships, Experiential Learning, and the Learning Environment

Chart 4 presents means on items assessing attitudes about building relationships with students, experiential learning, and the learning environment. There was less change on these questions, largely due to how strongly participants agreed with them to begin with. In the pre-test, they scored within a half point from the maximum on five of the nine items, leaving very little room for improvement. Nevertheless, significant changes in the expected direction did occur on items about paying attention to relationships and being comfortable with classroom silences.

There was a statistically significant change in the desired direction on three of the nine items in this scale. From the pre-test to the post-test:

- 59% agreed more strongly that they needed to pay more attention to cultivating relationships in (and outside of) their classes.
- 48% showed increased agreement that attending to relationships and emotions is a critical part of a professor's job.
- 41% showed a decrease in how uncomfortable they would feel when there was a silence in their classrooms.

Learning Style

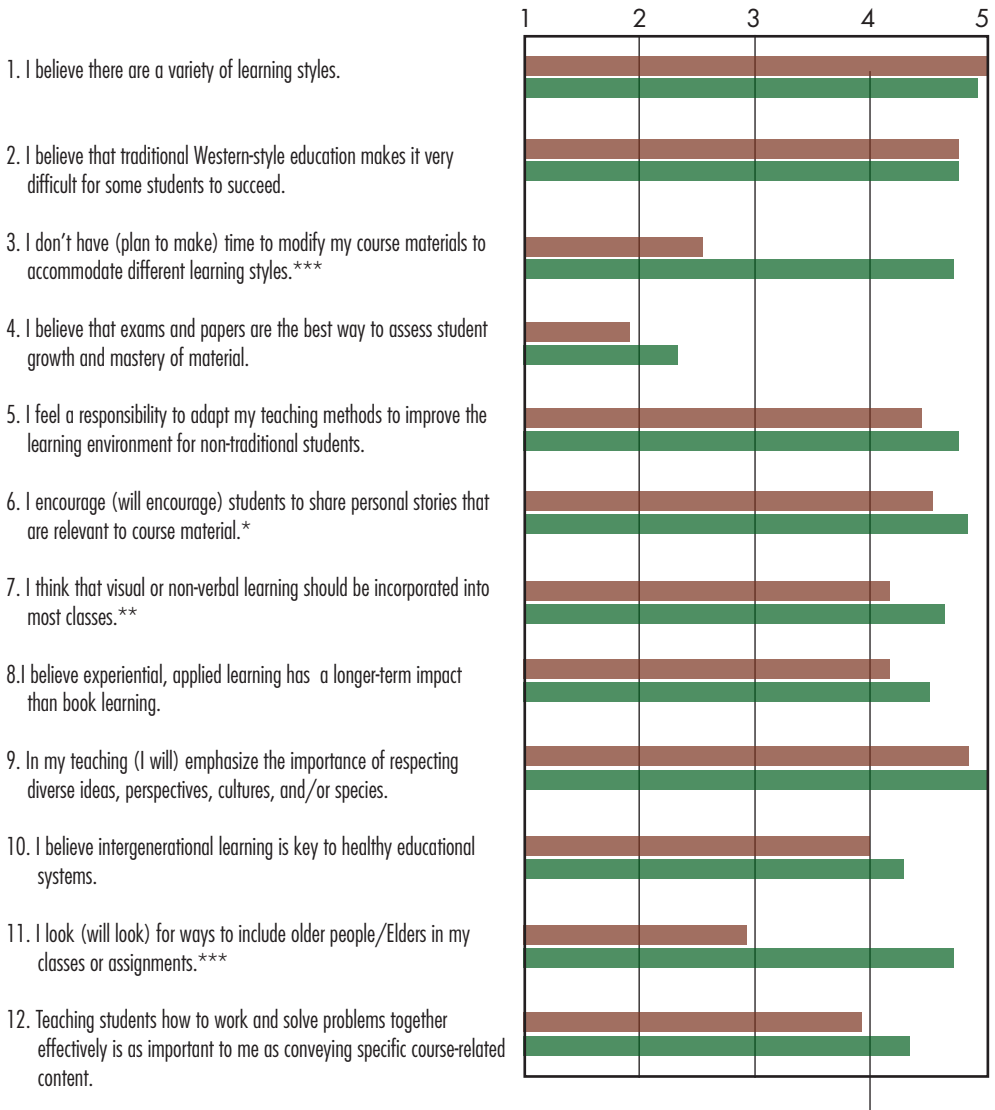
Chart 5 displays means on items assessing attitudes about learning styles. As with items on relationship, there was very little disagreement about these items to begin with. Items that had enough room for improvement to show change included those about modifying course materials and incorporating Elders or older people in classes or assignments. After the intensive, participants were significantly more likely to welcome relevant personal stories from their students and to consider non-verbal or visual learning as part of their classes. These data are underscored by responses to the qualitative evaluation completed post-intensive, and reflect some of the core parts of the intensive's aims.

There was a statistically significant change in the desired direction on four of the twelve items in this scale. From the pre-test to the post-test:

- 88% agreed more strongly that they planned to make time to modify their course materials to accommodate different learning styles.
- 87% agreed more strongly that they would look for ways to include older people/Elders in their classes or assignments.
- 47% agreed more strongly that visual or non-verbal learning should be incorporated into most classes.
- 38% agreed more strongly that they would encourage students to share personal stories that are relevant to course material.

Chart 5: Questions on Learning Styles

1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree
 ■ pre-mean ■ post-mean



Qualitative Results

At the end of the week, we also asked participants to address two open-ended questions about the gains they made in knowledge and pedagogical strategies. Responses are summarized below.

What, if anything, do you feel you know as a result of participating in this intensive that you didn't know before?

A new appreciation of the institutionalized racism and oppression experienced by Alaska Native students and faculty.

- *The degree of pain and alienation that our Native students and faculty feel as a result of institutionalized racism and years of oppression.*
- *A great deal, such as how Alaska Native people (at least those we heard from) feel about experiences within the current systems and interactions with the dominant culture.*
- *The best way for me to respond is not in terms of knowing new info but [of deepening and broadening] my understanding of the complexities, barriers, opportunities for addressing institutional racism and incorporating Alaska Native ways of knowing and learning in the classroom. I came into the intensive with prior learning that I can connect every day.*
- *I visited the local Native community in Eklutna, which I had never realized was nearby, and discovered my bank (Wells Fargo) denies them access to a local in-holding picnic ground that was once Native land.*
- *I know that I have allies and that this effort is vital, however hard it may be, and however often I may fail.*

Ideas for incorporating Alaska Native ways of knowing, teaching, and learning into our teaching arsenal.

- *I have gained both a deeper understanding of issues of pedagogy and knowledge that will impact Native students and new methods and ways of thinking about teaching and learning that I can apply next semester.*
- *I feel that I have specific strategies that I can use in the classroom to improve learning for all students, but especially Alaska Native students. I feel that I could honor and define Alaska Native ways of knowing.*
- *The improvement of protocol when approaching Alaska Native community members. Not asking direct questions or too many questions.*
- *I have developed a sense of responsibility to keep learning, incorporating, and teaching about Alaska Native issues. That, I think, is more important than any fact or concept that I have learned.*
- *I know how much knowledge that is essential to the continuation of life and culture is in danger of being lost forever.*

- *How critical slowing down the pace is to Native students and how that can benefit a number of non-Native students.*
- *A variety of teaching strategies.*
- *I believe that the strategies and information I received will assist me to help Alaska Native students become more successful in both my classes and the academic setting. I have received practical information that will help me to mentor Alaska Native students as well as other students.*
- *I know that it's not only important but CRITICAL to teach all of my classes and to conduct every aspect of my life from the context of sustainability.*

The value of Elders' wisdom and storytelling.

- *The depth and influence of Elders' knowledge in traditional and cultural traditions.*
- *From reading I learned more about respect for Elders, their stories. I learned about the consequences of wrong thinking and behavior.*
- *I better understand how the stories do their work. I also feel better about some things I already do/used to do.*

What changes might you make in your own teaching as a result of your participation in this intensive?

Change course pacing.

- *Slow the pace down to create a comfortable place for students to engage.*
- *I will change pace for sure.*
- *Pacing is going to be a big part of my change.*
- *More reflection on pace – which has been bothering me lately – and non-verbal learning.*
- *Relax deadlines; fewer surveys of lots of content.*
- *Relax the pace of the class.*
- *Slow it down. Go outside more. Attend to my students' (and my own) emotions. Contextualize everything with consideration to this amazing place and its history.*
- *I will try to slow down. I will try to model two different learning environments – fast and loud and slow and quiet.*
- *I will do my best to emphasize the importance of community, in the classroom, slowing down, storytelling, etc.*

Change my teaching.

- *I will actively think about every course I teach and make any changes I can to improve the experience of Alaska Native (and all) students) -- slow the pace/more consciously try to build relationships.*
- *I will use storytelling.*

- *I will talk less.*
- *I will highlight and explore the learning that comes from observing and listening.*
- *More time for reflection, more use of non-oral/non-written theory of expression, more use of colleagues' ideas.*
- *Use storytelling/role playing/theatre of the oppressed.*
- *I teach an oral fluency course that I would like to make more based in speaking and listening than on writing and reading. This would be more accessible to many of my students, and would emphasize the target skills more effectively.*
- *More focus on the process of teaching and learning.*
- *I will do my best to emphasize the importance of community in the classroom, slowing down, storytelling, etc.*
- *More intentional with approaches and outcomes versus spur of the moment.*

Develop place-based connections in my classes.

- *Promote a sense of place.*
- *Encourage connection to place.*
- *More emphasis on place. Find a way to get Elders involved in classes again.*
- *Slow it down. Go outside more. Attend to my students' (and my own) emotions. Contextualize everything with consideration to this amazing place and its history.*

Pay more attention to diverse students and learning styles.

- *Options for students in how they demonstrate learning.*
- *More incorporation of issues related to diversity.*
- *More personal tolerance and respect for students from diverse groups.*

Results from Students

Participants were encouraged to administer a set of similar questions at the beginning and end of classes in which they implemented new strategies. Although only three provided these data, the results suggest that both faculty (from before to after the intensive) and students (from the beginning to end of the course) agreed on the value of slowing class pace and covering less material at a deeper level; linking course material to the sustainability of earth's systems and to Alaska's people, places, and environment; and connecting class material to students' personal stories and lives.

Four faculty members also collected additional data from their students in order to assess the value of incorporating Alaska Native ways of teaching, knowing, and learning into their classes. Students in an upper-division writing class increased their beliefs about the value of devoting time in class to reflection, feeling that it improved their writing and understanding of material. Students in a lower-division course on Race, Ethnicity, and Identity felt better prepared to respond to prejudiced remarks and were more likely to say that their responses would likely have a benefit. Students in an upper division political science class showed positive change on the value of having students from different cultural backgrounds share their viewpoints and traditions.



Reflection

If you tried one or more Alaska Native ways of teaching in your learning environment, how might you document the impact?