



# Indigenous Community-engaged Learning (CEL): Creating Relationships and Maintaining Connections

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## Introduction

Anthropology and Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island (ANT241H) is a community-engaged learning (CEL) course facilitated by the Indigenous Action Group (IAG), an alliance between the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation with faculty and staff from UTM (Fukuzawa et al., 2020). The IAG is conducting a longitudinal mixed methods community-led research project (CLR) examining the effects of local Indigenous pedagogy on students.

*"I experienced smudging for the first time. It felt nice to be outdoors and it made me feel like part of a community."*

## Methods

Data was collected from pre- & post-course surveys, and interviews for the Fall 2019 iteration (N=67 students; 22 interviews; 4 longitudinal interviews in 2021).

Qualitative analysis was coded into NVivo software. Student responses were analyzed in terms of their academic learning, personal growth & civic activism.

## Results

In academic learning, students reflected on Indigenous pedagogy (future courses, CEL). In their personal growth, students comment on creating and participating in community, including mental health benefits of CEL. In civic activism, students commented on future engagement in Indigenous issues. Three key themes emerged from qualitative analysis: Indigenous Pedagogy, Community, Indigenous activism.

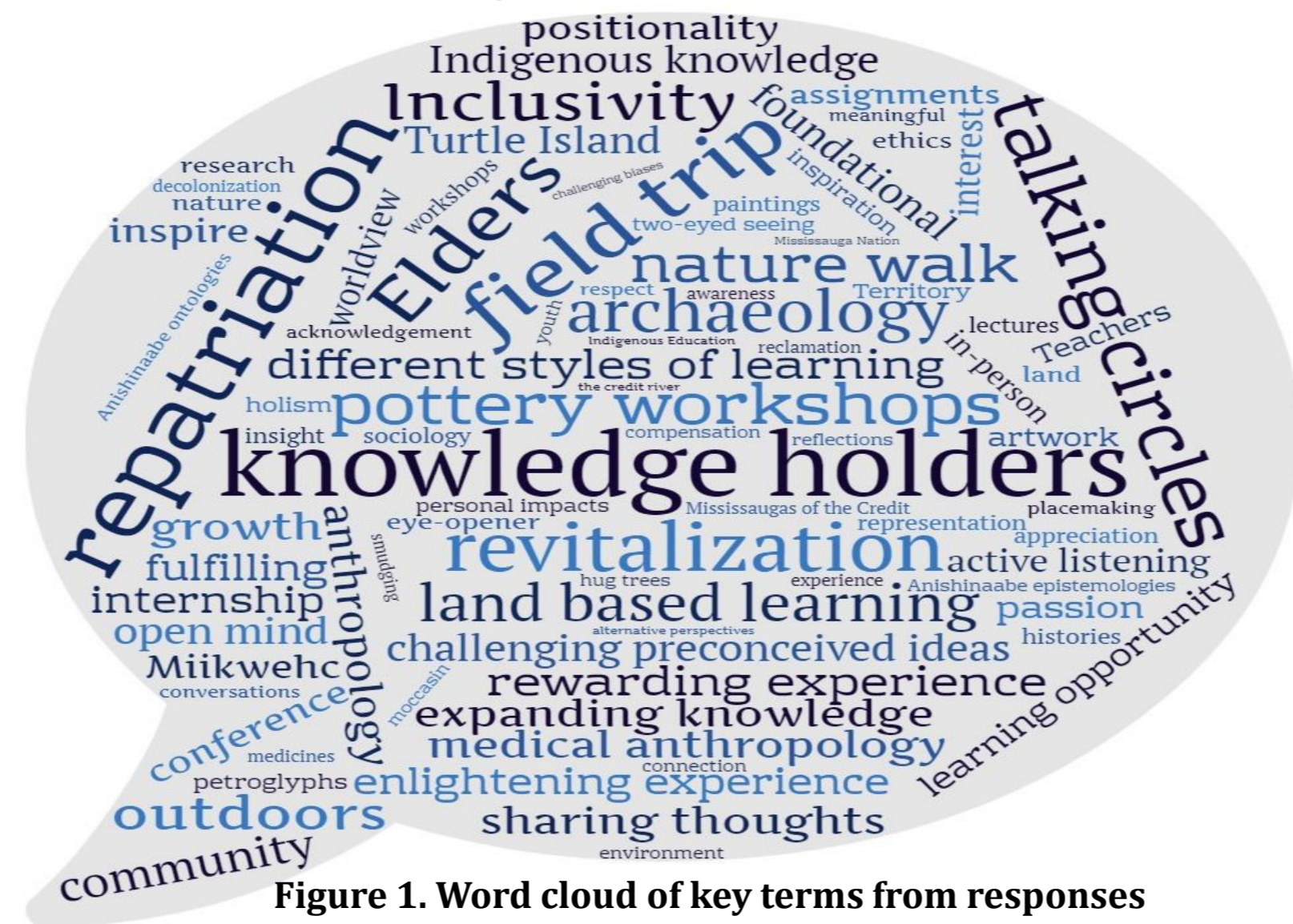


Figure 1. Word cloud of key terms from responses

*"I worked on research in an ROP this summer...with the Mississaugas of the Credit as well as youth from other Mississauga nations. We did pottery workshops, archaeology workshops along with community members... It was really cool...I got to meet youth and see them experiencing this revitalization."*

## Discussion

The CEL educational model is conducive for student learning in many ways. The inclusion of pluralistic ontologies in the Academy requires respect and autonomy for local Indigenous knowledge systems (Judge et al., 2021). Students responded positively to the reflexive methodology, and place-based pedagogy informed by the first-person relationships with the Anishinaabe scholars, knowledge keepers, elders and community members. Community-engaged learning is an experiential method that transformed student lives in terms of their understanding & appreciation for local Indigenous issues, community relationships & future activism.

*"After taking this course, my interests have broadened exponentially. I am now interested in the more cultural side of Indigenous topics and find myself genuinely wanting to learn more about topics such as storytelling, something that really stuck with me. ANT241 was able to contribute to my academic learning by showing me a side of Indigenous culture that I did not think I would be so interested in."*

## Acknowledgements

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## References

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