Review of Inclusive and Special Education in the Yukon

Final Report

Review Consultant: Nikki Yee, PhD

***Trigger Warning**ance*

Some of the stories shared through this review are disturbing. Families, students, and educators have experienced a lot of pain and hurt in relation to inclusive and special education. If you think you may find it overwhelming to read about these experiences, please make sure you have access to a counsellor, a help line, or a trusted friend when you read this report.

Dear Yukon students, residents and those interested in education in Yukon,

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Nikki Yee. I'm a neuro-typical, able-bodied settler scholar of Chinese and Mennonite ancestry, originally from Treaty 6 territory in Saskatchewan, the traditional territory of Nehiyaw Peoples, and Homeland of the Métis. I currently live on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓ílwətaʔɬ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples in Vancouver. I mention this because the experience of these places, as an able-bodied person, has helped me understand the detrimental impacts colonialism has had on all people, especially Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities, and those from other equity-seeking groups. It has shaped how I understand the significant challenges facing Canadians today, including challenges in inclusive and special education in Yukon. I thank you for taking the time to read this report, and I hope that it can help open the possibilities for a more just, healthy, and fulfilling society for all people.

I have met with many of you over the past year and a half and have read the many experiences and ideas you've submitted online. I'm very grateful for the way you have invited me into your life and shared some very personal stories of struggle and strength with inclusive and special education. I'm sorry that I was not able to meet more of you in person and learn from place, as I was grounded in Vancouver due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. However, I'm so thankful for those of you who were able to patiently work through poor connections with Zoom, or impersonal phone calls and surveys to connect with me about your concerns and ideas. I appreciate your time, energy, and commitment to creating a stronger educational system that can better meet the needs of very diverse children with a wide range of talents and learning needs. I recognize that many of you have been fighting hard in order to get the education that the UN calls a human right for all children. Your stories were often heartbreaking and inspiring.
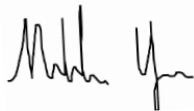
I thank you so much for trusting me with your stories of struggle. Your stories have been heard. I've heard about beautiful children who have been shamed or punished for having diverse learning needs; students who have acted out or hurt themselves because they were not able to get the supports they need in school. I've heard from former students who believe they cannot learn. I've heard from desperate and heartbroken families who have done everything to fight for supports against the system that is supposed to be helping their children. I've heard from residential school survivors who see their children or grandchildren experiencing the same "cultural genocide" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 1) they experienced in school. I've heard Yukon First Nations who devote so much of their time, energy and resources to continue resisting colonial structures in the education system. I've heard advocacy groups who are doing their best to support children in a system that is bursting with needs. I've heard educators who go home every night feeling like they've failed children because they have no support in helping kids who really need it. I've heard educational assistants worry that they have insufficient training and no support in working with the most vulnerable students. I've heard administrators who want to inspire meaningful relationships within and beyond their schools, but don't know how to get started. I've heard central administration staff who have the Herculean task of pulling together and providing services across a diverse and sweeping Territory, and are completely overwhelmed. These are just a few of the many stories I heard. I want you to know that your stories matter. Change needs to happen.

At the same time, I was energized by the passion, the innovation, and the amazing programs and collaborations that are already happening in pockets across Yukon. I heard how so many people are thoughtfully considering the ways that services in Yukon can be responsive to the specific needs

students bring to diverse settings across the Territory. I applaud you for your enthusiasm in sharing strengths, and brainstorming new possibilities for the future of inclusive and special education. From what you have described, I can see kids with all kinds of learning needs feeling capable and fitting in with their friends in a classroom. With you, I imagine families who can enjoy their time together because they trust that the system is supporting their children's learning needs. I can see your vision of Educational Summits where First Nations, communities, and schools create and figure out how to enact a shared vision of education. I imagine advocacy groups who can provide enriching support, instead of being the only support for students who are struggling. I see engaged, expert teachers who are confident in their ability to support learning and growth for all children in their class. I see qualified educational assistants who are included as part of a team approach to supporting all kinds of student needs. I see administrators who can create networks of support for students. I see central administration staff who are able to collaborate with school staff and families to meet the needs of children. Together with you, I imagine a system where the strengths of every learner are built upon to help them meet their personal goals; where community, family, and staff members work collaboratively to provide holistic supports that uplift learners and one another. I see a vision of inclusive and special education in Yukon that is world-renowned for the way it inclusively supports all students to learn and grow, academically, socially, and emotionally. That vision is possible.

What follows is a report of my observations and recommendations, based on our meetings and discussions. I don't have the space to provide a detailed account of everything people were kind enough to share with me, however, I hope you find that the essence of your experiences and ideas are represented here. You may find that more of your ideas are needed as the process of change unfolds. I hope this report can provide a jumping-off point for the Department of Education, Yukon First Nations, and diverse partners in your efforts to work as a collaborative team to create a vision of inclusive and special education that meets the unique needs of Yukon Peoples. I thank you for allowing me to play this small role in the transformation of your system, and ultimately society.

Sincerely,

Nikki Yee

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Introduction

In 2019, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada released a report that looked at the state of education in Yukon. They assessed how well the Government of Yukon's Department of Education (DOE) met its responsibilities in terms of 1) Yukon First Nations students, culture, and language; 2) inclusive and special education; and 3) urban and rural communities.

They found the DOE to have fallen short of its legislated responsibilities in all areas (Auditor General of Canada, 2019). Specifically, they found that the DOE had not undertaken significant efforts to fully understand the achievement gaps between First Nations and non-First Nations students, and between students from rural and urban communities. Furthermore, the DOE did not know whether its programs met the needs of diverse students, including students with special learning needs, as there was no monitoring of Individual Education Plan (IEP) program delivery and student outcomes. The Auditor General found that this lack of data meant the DOE had no way of knowing whether their allocation of resources was effective. Finally, the Auditor General found that the DOE had not done enough to support Yukon First Nations' culture and language.

This review has been undertaken in response to recommendations around Inclusive and Special Education. Specifically, recommendation 70, which suggested "The Department of Education should conduct a full review of its services and supports for inclusive education." The Auditor General (2019) suggested the review should help the DOE:

- evaluate whether its approach to inclusive education is working,
- determine whether services and supports are having the desired effect,
- determine whether sufficient resources are in place to support inclusive education,
- prioritize students for specialized assessments,
- assess and track specialist recommendations, and
- assess and track teachers' use of recommended strategies.

Although this review was initiated to look specifically at inclusive and special education, it is impossible to gain a complete and detailed view of these areas without understanding how they play out with First Nations students and students in rural and urban areas. There is no way to separate a student's learning needs from their identity, or to imagine that these can exist independently of the place they are being educated. Furthermore, inclusive and special education programs can impact students in multi-dimensional ways (Artiles, 2013; Baglieri, Bejoian, Broderick, Connor, & Valle, 2011; DeLuca, 2013). For this reason, although this review is primarily focused on how to support students with diverse learning needs through special and inclusive education, colonial and contextual considerations are a critical part of the discussion.

Process of Change

The review is meant to support the first step in a Spiral of Inquiry (Halbert & Kaser, 2013), undertaken by the DOE, together with Yukon First Nations governments, and education partners. To begin, the department has committed to provide an initial response to this final report in collaboration with the First Nations Education Commission and the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education, which includes representatives of the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, and First Nations Education Commission, as well as:

- Commission Scolaire Francophone du Yukon
- Yukon Teachers' Association
- Association of Yukon School Administrators
- Yukon educators
- Association for Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees
- Catholic Education Association of Yukon and Vanier Catholic Secondary School Council

- school councils
- Yukon University

The department wishes to utilize the Spiral of Inquiry together with Yukon First Nations governments and education partners to (1) determine where to focus attention first, (2) identify what aspects of the system need to change, (3) suggest what additional information might be needed, (4) determine how can educators, parents or guardians, students, and other team members can be brought into this transformative process, and (5) assess change. Although individual groups may need to discuss how this report relates to their own particular interests and capacities, I suggest that in order to model inclusivity at the highest level, people from across different groups come together to co-construct ideas and approaches in dialogue with one another, building from the strengths of diversity in a Spiral of Inquiry. This work can take place in a **Community of Inquiry**, or a group of people meeting around a shared curiosity, grounded in practical contexts like schools and communities. This report is meant to be a springboard for a Community of Inquiry to collectively explore diverse solutions, grounded in the context and expertise of Yukon people, for the good of Yukon students.

> ***Community of Inquiry:***
> In this case, a group representing the Yukon Department of Education, First Nations governments, and other education partners that engage in a Spiral of Inquiry about inclusive and special education in the Yukon, building from the strength of diverse perspectives.

The DOE, Yukon First Nations governments, and their partners may wish to begin by *extending the Community of Inquiry to include those people who they mean to help, and those people who have important experiential and cultural knowledge about inclusive and special education[1]*. Through this review, I have had the opportunity to connect with parents/guardians, students or former students, Elders, people with disabilities, and community leaders. Their insights have proven invaluable. Although one individual may not necessarily represent the views of all people in a similar position or with similar challenges, inviting their perspectives would ground the work in lived experiences within inclusive and special education, as suggested by the Auditor General (2019). Furthermore, including these additional members could help to restore trust and help a Community of Inquiry appreciate the deep impacts of their task. As an extension to this, a Community of Inquiry may consider *how to have an ongoing dialogue with the community about their work*. This could be achieved through various online tools such as a blog post that invites comments. Adopting a stance of inclusivity and transparency could help inspire confidence in the process, and provide a Community of Inquiry with immediate, 'on the ground' feedback to inform their inquiry process.

> **Questions to Consider:**
> How can a Community of Inquiry be *inclusive* of the people they mean to help, and those with experiential and culture expertise?
>
> How can a Community of Inquiry create a dialogue about its work to *build trust* and get immediate feedback?

When this review was initiated, the DOE was particularly interested in hearing the stories and voices of parents/guardians and community members. It was meant to be a process that went beyond

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[1] Throughout the document I use coloured text to highlight ideas or suggestions that might be helpful for the work of the Community of Inquiry and others interested in supporting inclusive and special education in Yukon schools.

quantitative surveys and scales to communicate the lived experiences of people. I have tried to balance what Haudenosaunee scholar David Newhouse (2008) describes as head learning and heart learning. This is to say, I have incorporated both what can be conceptually known with what might be emotionally understood. Using this method, I hope people across the Yukon can gain a better understanding of how inclusive and special education is playing out in the day-to-day lives of people.

Guiding Ideas

There are a few important ideas that have guided how this review was set up, and that might help people re-imagine the possibilities for education in Yukon (see Figure 1). In this section, I will briefly summarize these guiding ideas, including how special and inclusive education may be understood in the context of a shared colonial history, the power of story and transformative listening to support change, and possibilities for moving forward. In addition, I provide some key questions arising from these guiding ideas that could support the work of the Community of Inquiry.

Colonial Context:
Disability as a part of a colonial story that sees differences as deficits

Re-framing through transformative listening and the power of stories

New Possibilities:
A multi-dimensional view of inclusion that opens opportunities for all students

Figure 1 Guiding ideas

Colonial Context

Challenges in inclusive and special education can be understood as part of the larger colonial context (see Yee & Butler, 2020 for more details). Colonialism can be defined as a set of ongoing, culturally embedded ideas, or myths, that are physically or psychologically violent (Cote-Meek, 2014; Donald, 2009; Pidgeon, 2009). It is meant to allow a few people to become extremely wealthy (Smith, 2012). First Nations Peoples are the main focus of this violence because their land has been a significant source of wealth in colonial cultures (Cote-Meek, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Colonial myths negatively impact all people, though not to the same degree (Donald, 2009; Stoler, 1989). Residential schools can be understood as one example of violence arising from a colonial myth about the superiority of Western education. Although residential schools no longer operate in Canada, many respondents in this review saw the same underlying ideas continuing to hurt First Nations children today. Several people used the term "educational genocide" to describe the function of schools in relation to First Nations children in Yukon. Because colonial ideas become a normal part of how things are done, there is a danger that even the most passionate or committed people may be unintentionally or unknowingly enacting colonial ideas.

Specifically, people might be acting according to colonial hierarchies that may subtly or openly prioritize one person over another based on dis/ability, Indigeneity, race, gender, and class (E.g., Baglieri et al., 2011; Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group, 2016). These hierarchies create competition among people and, ultimately, divisions. The system maintains itself since those who have more privilege tend to fear losing it, while those who have less are justifiably resentful. These divisions among the majority of people mean they cannot come together to create equitable systems because they are too worried about losing what little they have. This situation is very similar to what people described to me in relation to inclusive and special education. Many parents and guardians were only able to get supports for their children after devoting great amounts of time, energy, and money. Even this did not

guarantee that children with learning challenges would get supports. Those who managed to get supports felt guilty because they believed it was at the expense of other children who did not have vocal advocates. The situation parents and guardians described to me sounded very much like a colonial competition where a privileged few were able to access the educational services children needed.

In colonial societies, people may be prioritized according to dis/ability (Baglieri et al., 2011). Although every person with a disability struggles, people with intense needs are most vulnerable to poor treatment, while those who are more independent may experience more privilege (Wehmeyer, 2020). For example, respondents shared that in some cases, students with intense needs have been punished rather than helped or have been asked to delay the start of formal schooling when they may benefit most from structured education. However, all people with disabilities experience discrimination on some level. Despite constitutional protection, many people who participated in this review reported that they or someone they know has been segregated from classmates, ignored, belittled, or have had

> **Questions to Consider:**
> How do you see colonial hierarchies affecting the learning opportunities for diverse students, including those with disabilities, in Yukon?
>
> How is the impact different for students that are diverse in many ways?

fewer learning opportunities because of a disability or other challenge that made standard education difficult for them. The situation is so bad for some students that several have thought about or attempted suicide.

Hierarchies of disability can intersect with other hierarchies (Annamma, Ferri, & Connor, 2018), like those involving Indigeneity. Disability narratives have often been applied to First Nations Peoples as a way of justifying colonial policies or ideas (Hollinsworth, 2013). For example, some respondents felt that First Nations students have been streamed into easier classes in high school, based on race rather than ability. In many cases, this means these students will not be able to enroll in post-secondary programs and have greater social and financial challenges in their lives. The intersection between the colonial narratives of disability and Indigeneity have created massive social inequities, and in many ways have compounded trauma in communities (Bailey & Betts, 2009; Hollinsworth, 2013).

Reframing

One way to begin reframing inclusive and special education is to build on the power of stories using transformative listening. Stó:lō scholar Jo-anne Archibald (2008) talks about the power of story to teach, heal, soothe, and surface experiences in a way that can transform both the teller and the listener. To create the conditions necessary for transformation, the listener needs to actively engage with the story and open themselves to the teachings embedded in the story. Settler scholar Paige Raibmon (2014) calls this process *transformative listening*. Colonial stories and hierarchies can be effectively changed when listeners open their hearts and minds to the possibilities in different stories.

This kind of reframing was important for this review and could be an important process for creating change in inclusive and special education in Yukon. Adopting this orientation to the experiences people shared helped me appreciate the depth and urgency of the challenges people were facing, and motivated many discussions on future possibilities, even when the way forward looked murky. However, in this review the stories were not often

> **Questions to Consider:**
> How could people share their stories more broadly to support healing and motivate change in Yukon?

shared among different groups of people in Yukon. It is possible that in many cases the story has not had an opportunity to completely heal the teller, and it has not had the opportunity to create the kind of transformation that is needed across many different listeners in Yukon. *The DOE, Yukon First Nations, and their partners in education may consider how to open the opportunity for people to share their stories more publicly, in diverse settings, where storytellers and listeners can enter into relationship with one another*. This approach may help to develop connections across what now appears to be an overwhelming difference.

Possibilities

Stories and transformative listening can be used to open new possibilities by challenging colonial divisions and bringing people into dialogue based on the strength of their differences. Challenging colonial divisions involves two parts: challenging our own everyday thoughts and actions, and challenging those colonial myths that keep people divided. Challenging our own thoughts can be an interesting learning process where we begin by reading, watching, listening, and engaging with new perspectives. This could include watching any of the videos or other resources listed in this report. Then we can reflect on how these resources challenge some of our basic assumptions. For example, we might assume that people with autism who cannot speak have limited higher-level thinking abilities. However,

> **Question to Consider:**
> How can we all begin to challenge our own assumptions about people?

when we watch a video and view the website https://communicationfirst.org/listen/ (2020) we may better appreciate the talent and contributions of nonspeaking people. This learning approach has been an important orientation in this review so that peoples' experiences and ideas can be appropriately understood and valued.

This kind of learning might help us appreciate that people sometimes experience a lot of discrimination because they belong to more than one group that is often denied privileges in colonial societies, or an **intersectionality** of experiences (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays, & Tomlinson, 2013). As such, the definition of inclusive and special education may need to account for different kinds of challenges and diversity. In research, definitions of inclusion tend to change from the perspective of different groups. For example, some views of inclusion focus on disability, while others are more concerned about cultural diversity or gender. However, there are some attempts to bring different ideas together (e.g., Annamma et al., 2018; Artiles, 2013; Baglieri et al., 2011; DeLuca, 2013), and these kinds of intersectional perspectives might useful for education in Yukon, given the high levels of diversity among students. *In the Interim Update, I reviewed the DOE's definition of inclusion across policy and legislative documents and recommended co-constructing a common view of inclusive and special education. This definition could be built from an intersectional understanding of inclusion that honours the complex experience of people who embody many kinds of diversity* (for example, students

who may be disabled, First Nations, and female, or students who may be disabled, immigrant, and English Language Learners). In the Yukon context, it may also be useful to build from First Nations' perspectives of inclusion and special education where disabilities (and other differences) are considered a part of normal diversity (Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, 2020; Phillips, 2010). Learners are thought to have their own strengths and challenges, and this understanding can be applied equally to people who may

> **Question to Consider:**
> How does the current definition of inclusive and special education be expanded to include many experiences of diversity?

be categorized as disabled by Western medicine (Lovern, 2008). This view was brought forward by First

Nations respondents in Yukon as well. These broader and more holistic views of inclusion have formed the basis of this review.

New possibilities can also open when people are able to work together by recognizing and building on their differences (Donald, 2012). This approach means that differences are not downplayed, but are maximized to expand learning opportunities, to explore new ways of thinking, and to strengthen possible solutions that will work for everyone. But sometimes it is difficult to work across diversity because understandings of respect and collaboration can be very different. Dwayne Donald, of Papaschase Cree descent, talks about **ethical relationality**, or looking at each other as relatives, as a way of working together (Donald, 2016). This approach helps us centre our connections to one another, and the responsibilities that flow from these connections (Donald, 2012). It includes a desire to acknowledge our histories in relation to one another, and recognize that our futures are tightly connected (Donald, 2016). Many respondents suggested closer collaborations between schools, educational consultants, Central Administration, and communities. *Establishing ethical relationships could be one way of creating respectful and equitable relationships that open opportunities for positive change.* In this review, ethical relationality has been key to working across many different ideas, perspectives, cultures, and experiences.

> **Question to Consider:**
> How can educational systems encourage ethical relationships that open opportunities for positive change?

Summary

The purpose of this section was to surface some big ideas that shaped the review and that can be used to shape the re-imagination of inclusive and special education in Yukon. Ongoing colonialism was a key factor in many of respondents' experiences. However, transformative listening to powerful stories can open new possibilities. Yukon residents have many creative and innovative ideas about how to shape inclusive and special education. These ideas could be strengthened if they sprang from a reflective understanding of diverse peoples, and the way they experience the world as an intersection of different challenges and capacities. Building on the strength of these differences, as relatives, can help very different people come together in conversation with one another, to find better ways to support all students. In the following section I outline the more specific methods that I used to work with different members of the community in putting together this review.

Methods

The review began in January 2020. I started by meeting with staff in the central administration building and school administrators, which gave me a big picture overview of how different systems were meant to work. At that point, plans to continue community engagement were abruptly halted by the COVID-19 global pandemic. In collaboration with Central Administration, we decided it would be best to release the Interim Update (Yee, 2020) as a way of informing Yukoners about the status of the review and providing some initial questions and resources that people concerned with the educational system could begin thinking about. In the fall of 2020, it became apparent that face-to-face meetings would not be possible. As such, the DOE was able to help facilitate a number of community engagement events using alternative avenues, such as Zoom. In addition, an online tool was launched to further gather the perspectives of people who were not able to attend meetings, or who wanted to provide additional insights.

Over the course of this review, I have had the pleasure of connecting with various groups, using different methods of community engagement. This information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Community Engagement

Group	Type of Engagement
Students	Participated in some of the focus group meetings as listed below Individual Interview
Parents/guardians	Focus Group Meetings (2) Individual Interviews (6)
Yukon First Nations governments and citizens – including First Nations Education Dept. staff, and in some cases Elders, students, Chiefs, Councillors, parents/guardians, Education Support Workers (ESWs), and Community Education Liaison Coordinators (CELCs).	Focus Group Meetings (14) Individual Interviews (2)
Yukon First Nations Education Commission, Yukon First Nation Education Directorate	Focus Group Meeting Individual Interview
Advocacy Groups – Yukon Teachers' Association, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, Autism Yukon, Child and Youth Advocate	Individual Interviews (5)
School Councils	Focus Group Meeting
Advisory Committee for Yukon Education[2]	Focus Group Meeting
Classroom Teachers and Aboriginal Language Teachers	Focus Group Meetings (2) Individual Interview
Educational Assistants (EAs)	Focus Group Meeting Individual Interview
Learning Assistance Teachers (LATs) and School Counsellors	Focus Group Meeting
School Administrators	Focus Group Meeting Individual Interview
Central Administration Staff – including Student Support Services, Curriculum and Assessment, First Nations Initiatives, and Superintendents	Focus Group Meetings (5) Individual Interviews (8)

Attendance at focus group meetings varied from one to approximately 75 participants. Through these meetings and interviews, I estimate that I was able to connect with 300-400 people. In addition to these meetings, people sometimes filled in written submissions and/or filled in the online tool.

The online tool collected additional information about respondents. As can be seen in Figure 2, most people who responded were parents or guardians, followed by Teachers and EAs. In addition, 23% of the stories were shared by respondents who said they lived in a rural community. 23% of the stories were shared by people who self-identified as Indigenous (with 16% shared by self-identified Yukon First Nations), and 7% of the stories were shared by French speakers. People with disabilities shared 6% of the stories collected through the online tool (See Appendix A for a full breakdown). As such, people who

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[2] The following groups were also invited to participate in this focus group meeting, although all may not have attended: Autism Yukon, Association for Yukon Communities, BYTE, Child Development Centre, Child and Youth Advocate, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon (FASSY), Heath and Social Services – Disability Services, Health and Social Services – Mental Wellness and Substance Use Supports, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon (LDAY), Yukon Learn.

responded to the online tool roughly reflect the population breakdown in Yukon, although fewer than expected people with disabilities responded.
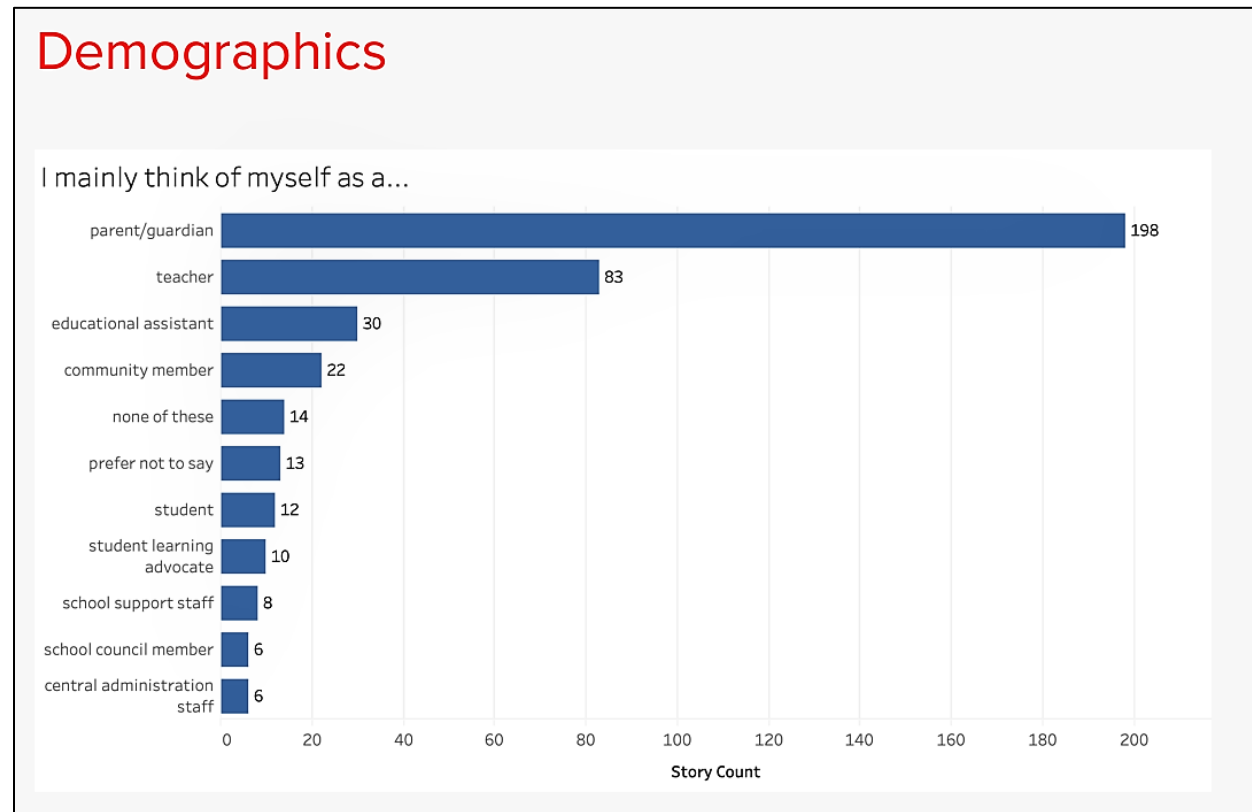
Demographics

I mainly think of myself as a...

Category	Story Count
parent/guardian	198
teacher	83
educational assistant	30
community member	22
none of these	14
prefer not to say	13
student	12
student learning advocate	10
school support staff	8
school council member	6
central administration staff	6

Figure 2 Demographics for the online tool

To compile this report, I reviewed meeting notes from a total of 31 focus groups and 26 individual interviews, plus 73 written submissions, numerous past reports and documents, and have read more than 500 stories and comments shared through the online tool. Data from these sources were mainly analyzed using a qualitative thematic analysis. This means that as I read through each of the data sources (such as interview notes, for example), I would highlight key points or novel ideas related to the big picture of inclusive and special education in Yukon. I summarized the ideas into short points and made a list of all the ideas in an Excel database. I began to sort these ideas into larger categories based on their relationship to one another. About halfway through, I reached saturation, which means that ideas began to repeat and I stopped adding to the lists unless an idea stood out as particularly new or significant to the issue at hand. In addition, I looked at the important themes respondents identified in the online tool, which can be found in Appendix B.

An additional process occurred with the experiences that were collected through the online tool, courtesy of Onfoot Consulting (comprised of Barrett Horne and Laurie Webster). A small group of local people representing diverse perspectives were invited to discuss their concerns around inclusive and special education in Yukon. This provided a foundation for developing the online tool. The tool was then made available across Yukon for about six weeks, collecting experiences related to inclusive and special education. After it closed, another group of concerned parties was brought together to explore the results. The full set of community interpretations is available in Appendix C. I provided input during this process, but the process itself was facilitated by Onfoot Consulting. I understand that some people found the online tool a bit cumbersome, but the way this research was conducted provided opportunities for not only respondents, but for community members to be involved in the

interpretation of the information shared. At the end of the process, Onfoot Consulting turned their results over to me, which I have integrated into the findings of this report.

The large number of diverse people who participated in the review altogether provided a detailed and multidimensional picture of how inclusive and special education has been experienced in Yukon. Themes that were repeatedly discussed became critical to understanding experiences in general, while unique themes and ideas provided insights into what is possible. In addition to a critique, many people provided insights into what has worked, or what might work, given the Yukon context.

In this report, sharing people's stories is balanced with their right to privacy. The information shared with me directly through meetings, interviews, and written e-mailed submissions is held in confidence. Confidentiality ensures that people can honestly share their stories without fear of punishment. I present the data here in summary form, or use a direct quote only when people cannot be identified from the quotation, and it represents many experiences I heard throughout the course of the review. In this way, I hope that people's stories and ideas are able to be heard (at least in a limited way) without compromising their privacy and trust.

Findings

This review was not intended to be a quantitative audit of spending or services, but an opportunity for Yukon families, educators, communities, and advocates to share their perspectives on how the DOE is or is not meeting the diverse needs of students. As such, I do not provide a numerical assessment, but rather have written this report as an interpretation of those perspectives shared with me. This report is the story of inclusive and special education in the Yukon, as experienced by people in the system, with some additional suggestions and literature that can be used as a springboard for contextually-based solutions going forward. In this section I discuss:

1. How the DOE currently conceptualizes students' needs and services to support them, and why this model did not seem to serve respondents, and
2. A more systemic and holistic approach to understanding the needs of students, based on experiences and ideas shared with me.

In this section, I continue to provide prompts for thinking, but later add ideas that respondents shared, along with connections to literature.

Current Conceptions of Students' Needs and Services to Support Them

In my Interim Update, I discussed the Response to Intervention (RtI) model currently used by the DOE Student Support Services (SSS) unit as a model of inclusive and special education. To briefly summarize, the RtI model suggests that most students (80%) will learn important academic skills and curricular content from teaching methods proven to be effective in published research. About 15% of students will need more intense instruction, such as
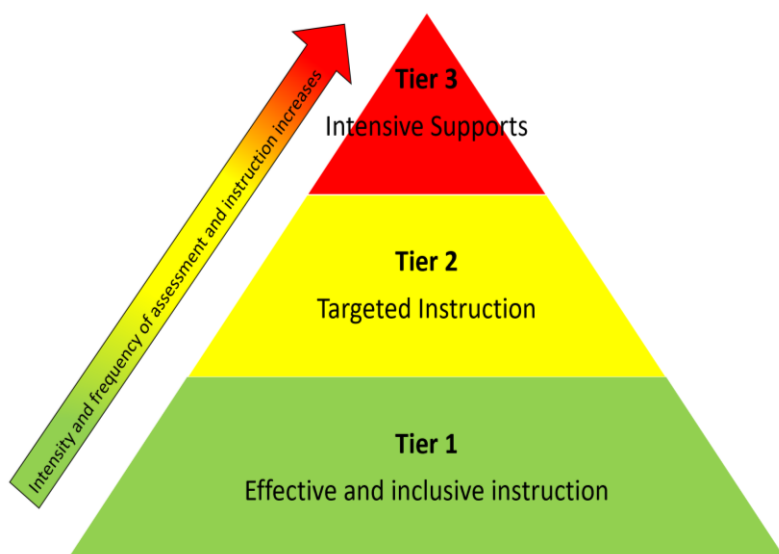

Figure 3 RTI Model

small group work or teaching focused on a specific skill. Lastly, 3-5% of students are thought to require very intense supports, such as one-to-one instruction (McIntosh et al., 2011). Assessments help educators understand why students are not responding to instruction and how to tailor programs for students who require something more. The RtI model is often thought of as a triangle (or, in the Yukon's case, a pyramid) that represents (1) student needs, and (2) how educators and systems can respond to those needs (See Figure 3).

The primary finding of this review, consistent with the findings of the Auditor General, is that *in many cases, students' learning needs are not being met, with devastating consequences for students*. Students, former students, and families reported case after case where students' learning needs were ignored at various points throughout the system, or where recommendations for supports were not implemented on a practical level. Some respondents suggested that this may be happening because services are not being provided as described by the RtI model. For example, educators may need to expand their understanding of different high-quality teaching approaches, suitable for students in Yukon. Many respondents, including teachers themselves, discussed the need for greater professional development especially in the area of literacy. Respondents also reported that LATs and EAs may not have the time in their day or specialized knowledge to adequately help students who require more intensive learning supports. As non-enrolling teachers, LATs are often pulled away from their duties with the most vulnerable students to provide coverage for missing teachers or to complete paperwork. LATs and EAs are not generally required to have any specialized training. EAs furthermore may not have access to professional development funds if they would like to build up their skills and abilities. In addition, families and educators often reported that students waited several years for an assessment from SSS (one respondent reported waiting eight years) to help schools shape appropriate learning environments. Certainly, these challenges hinder the ability of educational staff in the Yukon to deliver services consistent with an RtI model of instruction.

However, there may be a larger problem if the intensity of student learning needs do not match the percentages set out in the RtI model, as these may provide a framework for providing supports. For example, if there were more than 3-5% of students with intensive learning needs, but only 3-5% of resources were allocated for supports, then students may not be receiving the support they need. Schools and parents would be perpetually competing for resources that are just a fraction of what is actually needed to address the learning needs of the most vulnerable students. Based on the perception of educators, parents/guardians, Yukon First Nations, and advocates, it appears that student needs in Yukon far exceed the resources being allocated. These groups consistently and independently described how a constant fight for student supports consumed all of their available time, energy, and resources, but noted that children would not receive supports without this aggressive advocacy. A mismatch between how student learning needs are *understood* through an RtI model, and how they are *experienced* may account for this finding. In one of the focus group meetings, an educator suggested that student needs in Yukon are almost like an "inverted triangle", where the greatest number of students require intensive support, and the smallest percentage of students are able to learn from classroom instruction. It may be true that students with intensive needs exceed the 3-5% noted in the model, however it is difficult to know for certain,

> **Questions to Consider:**
> How well does the Pyramid of Intervention represent student learning needs in Yukon?
>
> How does the Pyramid of Intervention provide a blueprint for services?

from the data I have collected[3]. Furthermore, I cannot say to what degree resources are governed by the model. Similar to the question I raised in the Interim Update, *the DOE and its partners may consider how well the RtI model represents student learning needs in the Yukon and if it provides a suitable blueprint for services*.

However, the RtI model has other characteristics that make it a questionable choice for use in Yukon. First, it focuses almost entirely on the academic needs of students. In addition to academic needs, many respondents talked about the importance of intensive holistic supports for both students and families. This was noted as especially important for families struggling with intergenerational trauma caused by residential schools. RtI's narrow focus on academic supports for students may need to be expanded to include the kind of holistic supports identified by respondents as critical to student learning.

In addition, the RtI model does not include outside or environmental factors that might be causing major challenges for students (See Artiles, Bal, & Thorius, 2010 for a full critique). One of the most common themes people discussed in this review was the ongoing discriminatory and colonial myths and structures that are embedded in the Yukon education system. Respondents reported that students experienced racist comments from their teachers, the racism of low expectations, and the effects of routines and procedures that generally divide students and limit the opportunities for some, while privileging others. For example, respondents reported that students with exceptional learning needs have sometimes been isolated from their peers as part of their daily learning routine, actively ignored in response to requests for help, or even punished for being unable to meet expectations. Others raised instances where First Nations students have advanced through the grades without the necessary instruction to learn basic academic skills, like reading. In the long run, these learning environments can intensify students' needs and actually create barriers for meaningful learning and career trajectories. Research-based interventions highlighted by the RtI model, that focus on fixing the child rather than the learning environment, would do little to support student learning in this case.

> **Questions to Consider:**
> How might the Pyramid of Intervention be changed to better reflect the needs in Yukon?
> OR
> What model might fit better with the unique context of Yukon?

Perhaps most importantly, the RtI model does not help to highlight student strengths as a way to build skills and positive relationships between people. Many Yukon students come from diverse First Nations, French-Canadian, and immigrant families with ties to local and global cultures, languages, and lands. Families and communities are passionate in their support of student learning. There are many rich strengths, interests, talents, and ways of knowing that students can draw from in order to build their skills in areas that do not come so easily. Inclusive or special education models that direct energy into student strengths can create positive academic change for students, while supporting their sense of belonging, ability to act in the world, and feeling of

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[3] This question does not have a straightforward answer. The DoE does not collect data on medical diagnoses, so it is difficult to know if rates of disability are higher or lower than the general population. The number of IEPs may provide a rough estimate of rates of students with intense needs, but these seem to range significantly from year to year (12% of students in 2016-2017, but only 6% of students in 2020-21 had an IEP). The more recent figure may be a low estimate of needs, because during this time there was much confusion around whether or not students on IEPs would be able to graduate with a dogwood diploma. Five schools in 2020-21 did not report having any IEPs, perhaps as a result of this confusion. 19% of children were on some type of learning plan, including IEPs, Student Support Plans (SSPs), and Behavioural Support Plans (BSPs). However, it is unclear as to which plans would require intensive supports. In the end, the evidence is inconclusive. If the Community of Inquiry determines that the DOE should continue using the RtI model, this issue should be examined more closely.

accomplishment. RtI focuses more heavily on what students lack. As such, the service delivery model suggested by the RtI pyramid of interventions may not be helpful for educators, consultants, and systems to support and uplift students using a strengths-based model.

In summary, the SSS Unit of the Yukon DOE currently uses a Pyramid of Interventions, based on a RtI model, to understand student needs in inclusive and special education. Although this model has been demonstrated to be useful in other jurisdictions, there is no evidence to suggest that it is a useful way of framing inclusive and special education in Yukon. *Either more evidence is required, along with significant modifications to the Pyramid of Interventions model, or alternative frameworks could be explored or created.*

A Broader View of Student Needs and Potential Supports

Because of the potential pitfalls of the RtI model, it may be helpful to develop a broader view of student needs and how they might be supported. In this report, I use a metaphor of a tree, as a part of a forest, to reflect the experiences of inclusive and special education and ideas people shared with me. The DOE and their partners may want to create their own representation of student needs and potential supports that is tied more strongly to the Yukon cultural and geographic context (e.g., Nunavut Department of Education uses a metaphor of an iglu, Nunavut Department of Education, 2008). However, I offer this suggestion as a starting point for what may be possible or helpful in provoking further discussion.

Using the tree metaphor can more fully account for the different factors within inclusive and special education that impact students' learning needs and the corresponding supports that may be put into place (See Figure 4). At the top of the tree are diverse and varied student learning needs, represented as individual leaves on the tree. The branches might represent specific choices and structures that teachers put in place to support students' individual learning needs. The trunk of the tree provides a foundation for these branches, and may be thought of as those classroom practices that would solidly support all students in an inclusive education approach (e.g.,

Figure 4 Inclusive and special education in Yukon

an inquiry approach or skills-based curriculum). In this metaphor, the DOE systems and procedures serve as the roots that provide the foundation that enables the tree to grow. The roots of the tree draw nutrients from the soil. The broader social context may be thought of as the soil where the tree is rooted. This view of inclusive and special education places a larger emphasis on how the social context, educational systems, and instruction impact student needs. Furthermore, all student needs are portrayed as somewhat different, but equally important, and always changing. Understanding inclusive and special education as a living thing that can change and respond to its own needs and to the
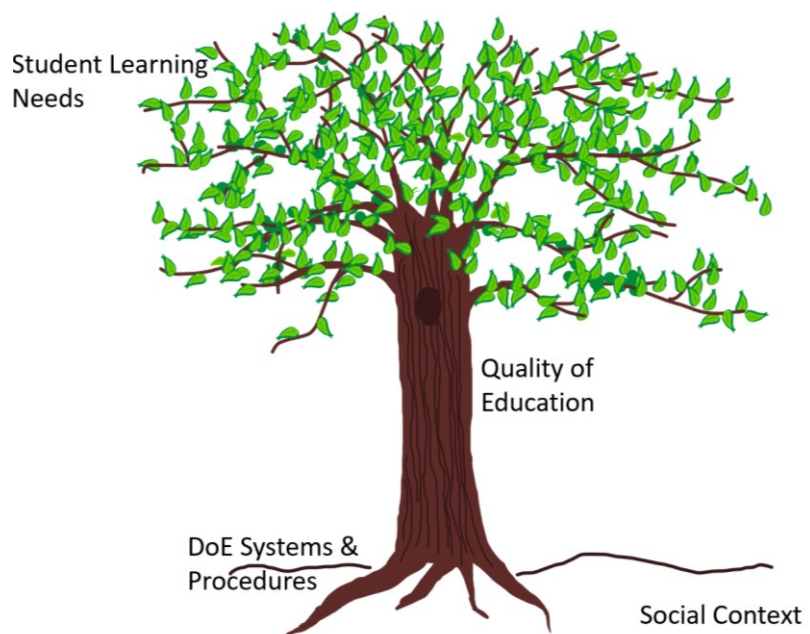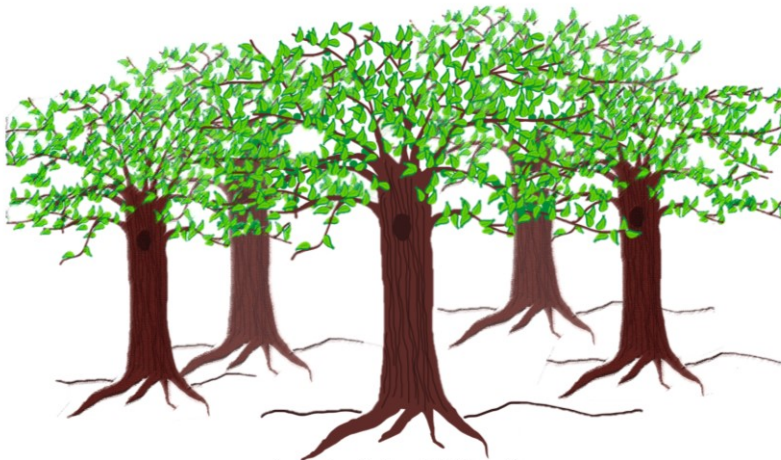
environment may open the possibilities for thinking about how to create a responsive educational system.

   External Supports. Although trees can grow individually in domestic gardens, trees do best in the forest where they are supported both through root systems and the branches and leaves of neighbouring trees. This support is not only vital to the health of the leaves, but the tree overall. In this metaphor, neighbouring trees represent other support systems that are vital to the health of inclusive and special education (see Figure 5). In the Yukon context, I found that families, tutors, Yukon First Nations, advocacy groups, and other governmental departments and programs provided invaluable support to individual students, and to the system as a whole. In a strong and healthy forest, there may be interdependent relationships where systems of support are helping one another and students. For example, families may help teachers to support their students, but teachers may also help families support their children. A network of strategic and specific supports could help students to really thrive.

Inclusive & Special Education

Figure 5 Inclusive and special education in Yukon in relation to other support structures

   Although the tree representing Yukon's inclusive and special education in Figure 5 appears to be strong and healthy, it may be more accurate to depict the tree as in need of purposeful, creative, and collaborative revitalization. Based on what respondents shared with me, it appears at present the educational system cannot adequately support students, so other systems have moved in to provide as much support as possible. For example, one family shared that they no longer depend on the education system to teach their children, but instead expect all learning to occur after school, with private tutors. Individual students are thus sometimes able to rise towards their goals with help from their families, particular educators, or intersecting systems (e.g., Yukon First Nations programs, Jordan's Principle, LDAY tutoring, or Heath and Social Services). In some cases, it appears that the Yukon Government even provides grants for external agencies to do the work that the education system is not able to do.

   However, external supports cannot do the work of the education system. A tree must be able to support its own canopy. As such, *revitalization of inclusive and special education is needed so that the needs of all students are being adequately supported by the system, and additional supports can take a more supplementary role in enhancing the learning of students.* Adequately supporting all students' learning needs might depend on collaboration with external systems or even a blurring of boundaries. *To create significant change, the Community of Inquiry will need to consider how students' needs can be met by the*

Questions to Consider:
How can students' needs be met by the DoE in relationship with different support structures?

How can these relationships become more coordinated, generative, and synergistic?

13

DOE in relationship with different support structures, and how these relationships can become more coordinated, generative, and synergistic.

Like the trees in the forest, the educational system is also much more robust when it emerges from local contexts, surrounded by the support available in a particular place. As such, there is no one model of education that can be transplanted into the Yukon. This review of inclusive and special education is rather intended to provide more information about the social context and health of the system, based on peoples' experiences and interactions with that system. Building from local expertise and resources, this information can then be used to *purposefully* co-construct a system of inclusive and special education that better supports student needs.

I return now to the primary tree that represents inclusive and special education in Yukon. In the following sections I go through each part of the tree in greater detail to reflect some of the main ideas that surfaced through this review, and to bring forward some of the suggestions respondents passed along. Unfortunately, I do not have the space to explain all of the suggestions respondents generated, but highlight specific ideas that may address multiple and/or urgent concerns, and that are consistent with the transformative potential of story and notions of intersectional inclusion and ethical relationality described earlier.

Student Needs. The findings of this review can be matched to the different areas of the tree, with several themes running throughout. The leaves of the tree represent the many, diverse, and ever-changing student needs. Respondents suggested that diversity in Yukon classrooms is exceptionally high, where skill levels ranging from kindergarten to grade seven might be represented in one grade seven classroom, for example. Despite perceived challenges this diversity may bring, all students have the right, under the *Yukon Education Act*, to be educated in school with the appropriate learning supports. However, students, especially those with challenges or disabilities, need more than academic support. Based on what respondents shared, students in Yukon need learning supports, and holistic supports, including the benefit of First Nations' culture and language.
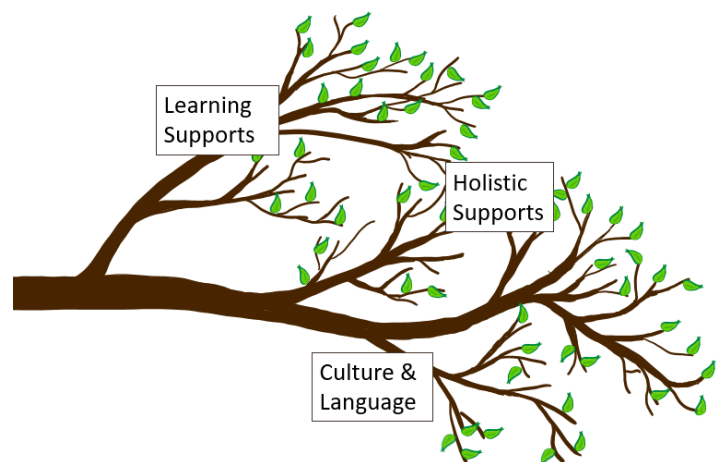
Many of the experiences shared centred on how students' learning needs have not been met by the educational system. Specifically, respondents

Figure 6 Student needs

suggested that the educational system was falling short in the areas of literacy and math, and failing to connect academic skills to tangible life skills that children will need to independently navigate the world as adults. Respondents suggested that needs are not being met for all students, but even more so for students who have learning challenges but not behavioural challenges, and those students who have high needs. For example, one respondent noted, "I have had it happen several times that students who are lovely to work with, hardworking but struggling with speech for example, simply don't get the additional support they need". In many cases, it appears that students with extreme behaviours or needs are drawing most of a school's resources. However, since staff have little specialized expertise and support, they are not able to effectively meet these needs. There is little time or energy remaining for students who have less severe needs, and so they "fall through the cracks". In some cases, support

for student learning was actively denied, IEPs were not read or understood, or student learning needs were ignored. Several student and former students reported that as a result of internalizing their struggles in school, they thought of themselves as "stupid", and sometimes left school or turned to drugs and alcohol. *In several cases, parents/guardians noted that students had suicidal thoughts or attempted suicide as young as grade 1, which they saw as being connected to unmet learning needs in school. In other cases, parents/guardians and former students connected later struggles with addictions and homelessness with the educational system's inability to meet their learning needs.* One parent described her child's struggle:

> He currently dislikes school so much he'll find any reason at all not to go. There are tears with emotional breakdowns in the morning and after school. He is a kind-hearted gentle kid that does not have behavioural issues. He deserves better than this. He deserves a well-rounded opportunity to build the foundations of his learning in a way that allows him to freely learn and succeed..."

This was a scenario repeated many times over. Figure 7 suggests the kind of despair that respondents were feeling in relation to inclusive and special education.
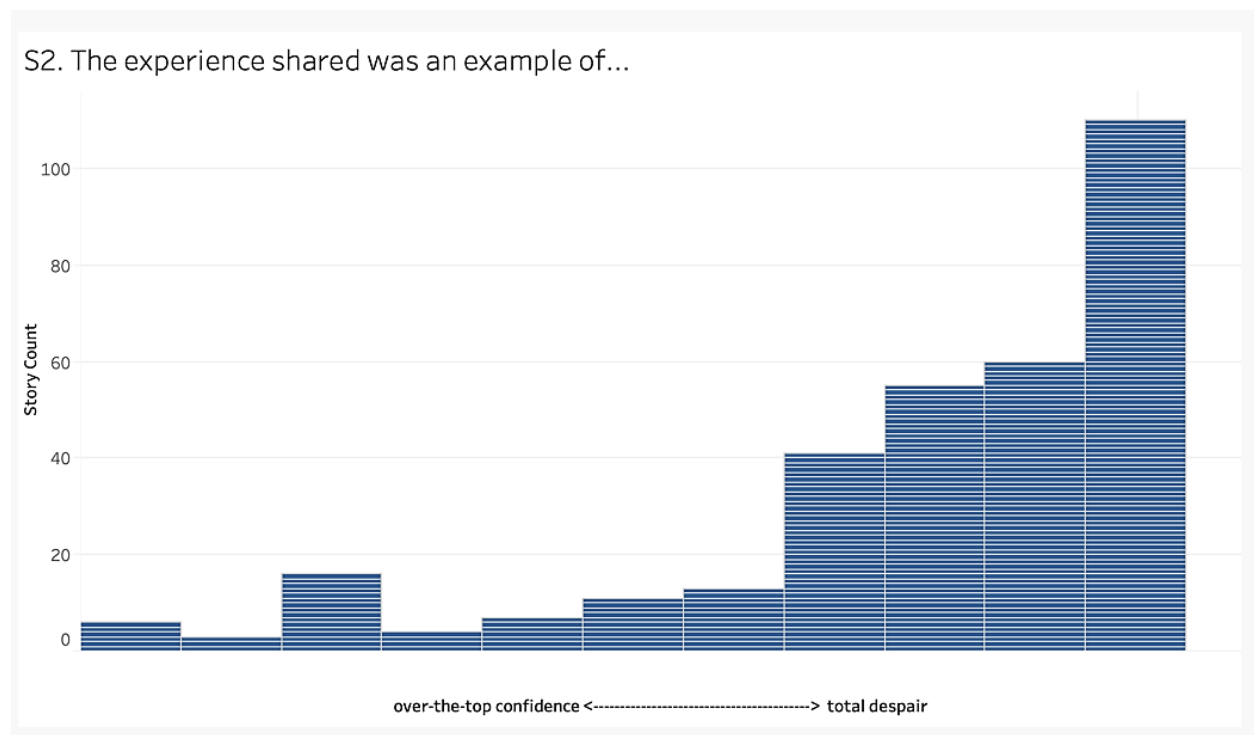

Figure 7 Feelings of despair

The education system's inability to meet the learning needs of students is having serious, long-term impacts on students, communities, and society. As such, *it is critical that the Community of Inquiry transform inclusive and special education in a way that creates a significant, immediate, and positive impacts for students, families, and educators.*

Respondents also suggested that students required more holistic support. In the online data, most respondents went beyond academic considerations to discuss how students and other people are holistically impacted by inclusive and special education (see Figure 8).
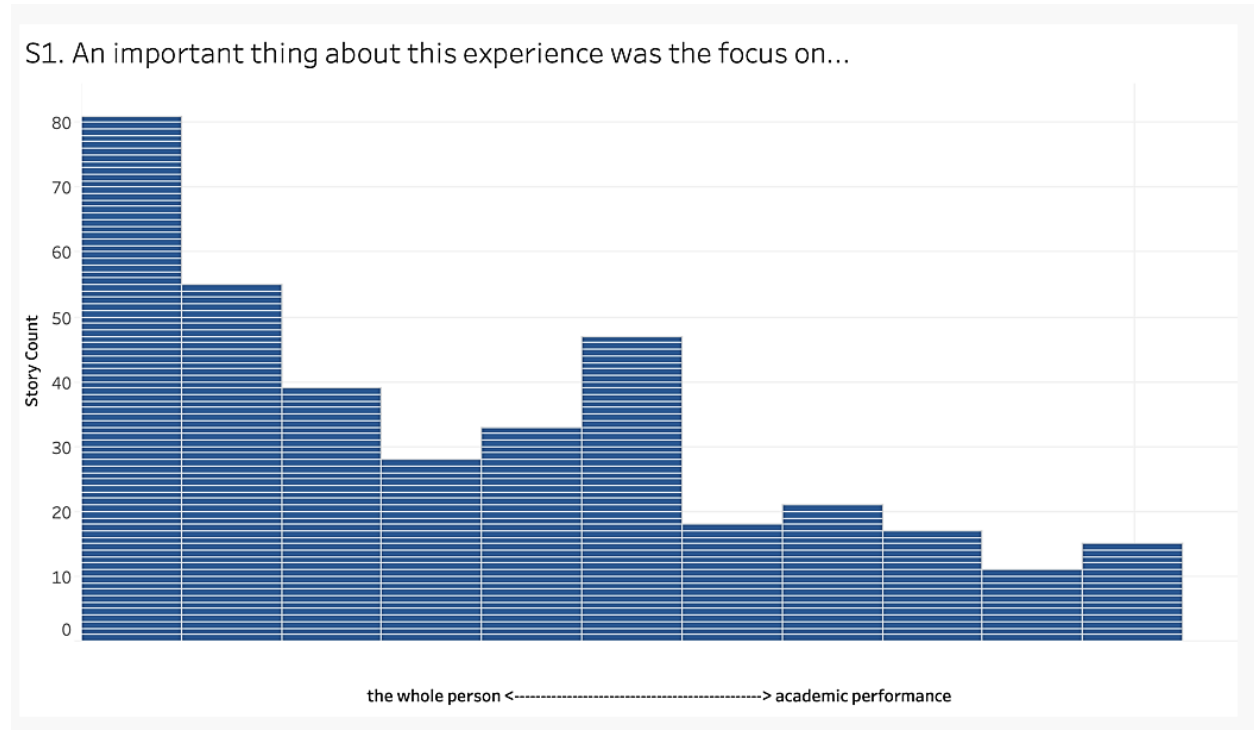

Figure 8 Beyond academic impacts

This approach reflects social emotional and First Nations' understandings of learning and development (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009; Noddings, 2015). Children may be holistically impacted by learning struggles, or may have other kinds of struggles (e.g., trauma, anxiety) that impact their learning. In addition, many students and families have, and continue to experience the trauma of residential schools and discriminatory or racist attitudes and actions. Much research has shown the way that residential schools have directly disrupted the health and culture of generations of people and communities (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Students of these families continue to experience intergenerational trauma that does not have a simple fix (O'Neill, Fraser, Kitchenham, & McDonald, 2018). Clearly, the challenge extends beyond the educational system, but because of the impacts on students' needs while they are in school, *the Community of Inquiry might consider how it can holistically support students and coordinate efforts to support families and communities working through these impacts.*

Learning about First Nations' culture and language is not only a part of all Canadians' responsibility towards reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), but could potentially be used as an inclusive teaching approach that meets the needs of diverse children with learning challenges, and all students. As one self-identified "White" parent/guardian noted, "my daughter is happier than she has ever been with going to school and it is due to the amazing teachers and the FN [First Nations] influence…". Furthermore, re-establishing links to culture, land, and language may do much to address trauma in communities. Respondents talked about the central importance of maintaining culture as a key piece of identity. One former student stated, "losing your identity is like losing your soul." As such, it is disheartening to hear that many students have limited access to First

Nations culture and language programming, or that student supports are sometimes withdrawn during classes that focus on this important cultural learning (e.g., EAs may not be present in Aboriginal language class). Furthermore, respondents said that students are penalized when they leave school to establish cultural connections that are not available through school (i.e., marked absent). Several First Nations reported difficulty in working with the educational system in Yukon, and schools sometimes also reported struggling to create connections with local First Nations. Respondents reported systemic barriers such as a lack of interest on the part of the DOE to accredit cultural courses, and an inability to connect Elders with schools because they are not recognized as teachers. *Given the promise and potential of First Nations cultural and language teachings, the Community of Inquiry may consider how to systemically facilitate the development of this approach in schools.*

These challenges are not insurmountable. Several students and former students shared that they were able to learn and go on to successful careers in life, given the right supports (e.g., teacher's interest and encouragement, accommodations, or IEPs). Many of the learning supports and accommodations could be easily accessible within Yukon (e.g., iPad, relationships, diverse literacy programs). Some families reported that students with disabilities were able to feel a sense of belonging in their classrooms. Furthermore, there are already many programs (e.g., cultural camps, outdoor education programs, Elders in school) that could be expanded to include more students, and many people throughout and beyond the educational system that are hard-working and passionate about supporting students. These are some great strengths that can be used to generate and implement new ideas about how to support students in schools.

The Community of Inquiry may wish to consider the many suggestions respondents provided to help meet students' needs. Respondents had several ideas to ensure students are supported in their learning. Competency-based IEPs that involve student input were seen as a critical support. However, these documents need to be more consistent, user-friendly, and tied to specific actions, with direct avenues of appeal if supports are not implemented. Many respondents saw additional EA support as an answer for particular students; however, this view was not uniform. As one respondent noted, EAs seem to be a tangible support that parents/guardians and advocates can ask for, and so they often do. However, EAs are not the only support, and in some cases may not be the most effective support. Learning needs can be met in a number of different ways.

If diverse supports could be better implemented and communicated to support team members, coordination across contexts could be improved. Ideally, the education system could use software that allowed students, families, external agencies, teachers, EAs, and other team members to come together around student needs. If concerned parties could submit and view the kinds of supports a student needs and receives across contexts, services could be more easily coordinated. This kind of system could provide ongoing assessment, accountability, and direct connections to IEP goals, which could be used to set new goals for the following year. In addition, this software could provide a way of documenting innovation and assessing which supports are highly effective in particular contexts across the territory. Data could be further used to ensure the system of inclusive and special education is working well, or pinpoint more challenging areas early on.

Respondents suggested that students' holistic needs could be better met through a small shift towards the social and emotional needs of students. Many respondents spoke about the need for counsellors who are experienced in helping students work through trauma. People in this position could support teachers to co-construct mental health coping strategies with students, and have conversations about disabilities and/or learning needs. Respondents also noted how important it is for students to have opportunities to participate in activities that promote health and well-being, like sports. Two-week rotating sports or occupational camps were suggested, but this could be expanded to include other activities like the arts or music.

Furthermore, respondents suggested that many schools could do more to incorporate First Nations culture and language. They recommended more cultural symbols in schools, and using cultural perspectives to shape curriculum, testing, teaching (e.g., land-based learning as connected to First Nations worldviews), and operational procedures (e.g., observe cultural protocols when determining the school calendar). One respondent suggested hiring Elders to work full-time in schools as a way of providing mental health support and incorporating First Nations culture. This is another example of how special education supports might be innovatively re-imagined to address intersectional student needs. More First Nations staff could be hired within schools and throughout the system by building capacity within communities, or developing ways to recognize or work from the expertise that is already there.

The suggestions respondents offered provide many innovative starting points for developing inclusive and special education programs and practices that meet the diverse and dynamic needs of students in Yukon. *The Community of Inquiry may need to consider how to structure opportunities for student support teams, within the education system and beyond, to build and coordinate supports that can better meet students' learning and holistic needs.* Table 2 provides an overview of critical challenges and questions, along with ideas to use as a springboard for further thinking about specific ways to support students' diverse needs.

Table 2 Student Needs

Critical challenges	**Students are often denied access to learning supports or their needs are ignored. This leads to anxiety, depression, and suicide attempts.** **Students' needs extend beyond academics.** **Students' access to culture and language is often limited.**
Questions to think about	How can the transformation of inclusive and special education be carried out in a way that creates an immediate and positive impact for students, families, and educators? How might the Community of Inquiry imagine coordinating efforts to support families and communities working through the impacts and trauma of colonial policies? What systems and procedures might facilitate the development of First Nations cultural and language teachings in schools? How can student support teams come together to build and coordinate supports that meet students' needs?
Ideas to work from	*Short-term:* Explore how it might be possible to extend existing outdoor, experiential learning programs, cultural camps, and other hands-on activities as a way of teaching students with learning challenges. Encourage schools in their efforts to reflect student diversity. Strike partnerships with Yukon First Nations, and other government departments to systemically create coordinated and holistic supports for students and families. *Medium-term:* Find or develop software that allows for easy communication across student support team members. Implement consistent competency-based IEP templates that incorporate student voice, and create accountability structures around IEPs. Create opportunities for student support teams to build up and coordinate supports for students. *Long-term:* Provide culturally appropriate mental health counselling services, directly to students and families, and in support of teachers' instructional

| | efforts. Prioritize based not on student numbers, but on how communities are experiencing trauma.
Hire Elders or knowledge keepers to work full-time in schools. |
|---|---|
| **Sample Resources** | Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre. (2020). *Honouring the voices of elders: Indigenous perspectives of disability education.* 2 hours https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88-jr9Sypmk&list=PLfsZfmqKh7Wn4CsaJOn1KdvyACs2vC7Rb&index=4

Moore, S. (2019 – 2021) *5 Moore Minutes Library*. https://fivemooreminutes.com/inclusion-library/

Craig Goodall (2020) Inclusion is a feeling, not a place: a qualitative study exploring Autistic young people's conceptualisations of inclusion, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24:12, 1285-1320. |

Figure 9 Quality of education

Quality of Education. The tree trunk and branches represent the quality of education that students with and without disabilities receive in the educational system. As discussed in the previous section, the education system in Yukon is experiencing multiple challenges in delivering the high-quality inclusive and special education needed to support student learning. High levels of diversity demand a kind of teaching approach that is markedly different from what most of us have experienced, but approaches that build from the strengths of diversity can effectively support and motivate deep learning among all students. In some cases, the basic level of support provided through inclusive education practices has been portrayed as miserably inadequate, and the choices or structures for individualized learning as non-existent. For example, many students who graduate, and especially First Nations students, are not able to gain the skills (e.g., literacy) and credentials (e.g., academic math) needed to enroll in post-secondary institutions. From multiple perspectives, respondents described a deteriorating lack of confidence in the ability of the education system to educate students.

This low-quality education may arise from challenges in the educational context and from the struggles of educational staff. At the school level, many respondents talked about the learning environment as chaotic, disjointed, and sometimes violent. For example, violent student behaviours sometimes caused injury to educators and created anxiety among students. However, toxic work environments were also cited at various other points throughout the system, including central administration. Furthermore, respondents noted that transitions between schools (e.g., when students must move to Whitehorse to attend high school) created impossible barriers for many learners, especially those with any kind of exceptional needs. Structures meant to provide supports for students with exceptionalities, like School-Based Teams (SBT), were inconsistently implemented, depending on the expertise and commitment of individuals filling specific roles. Given the vast diversity within Yukon, it is understandable that many schools would have the autonomy to decide what is best in their particular context. However, autonomy without structure is chaos (as discussed in the classroom context by Reeve, 2006). The Community of Inquiry might consider *how to create structures that provide a secure sense of consistency across the educational system, while respecting the autonomy of schools and communities.*

Beyond this educational context, many educational staff members expressed frustration about their lack of time and capacity to support students. Responses suggested that educational staff may not know how to effectively facilitate inclusive and special education. Educators, including Classroom Teachers, LATs, and EAs, are frequently stressed and overwhelmed by the task set before them. Furthermore, teachers with more expertise are not consistently offered collaborative opportunities to further develop their pedagogy or mentor novice educators. A key question for the Community of Inquiry is to consider *how to leverage educational expertise within and beyond the system so that all educators are better prepared to meet diverse student needs.*

Despite this rather dismal assessment, there are many strengths and much expertise within Yukon that can be used to build high-quality educational experiences for diverse students with and without disabilities. Respondents cited exceptional teachers, LATs, EAs, and administrators that facilitated meaningful learning for students and especially students with exceptional learning needs. Some inclusive SBTs and IEPs provided exceptional supports in collaboration with families and external support personnel. One school implemented a system whereby an Elder chooses students to learn from the land with them. Upon their return, the Elder checks off the curricular objectives met, creating a bridge between diverse pedagogies and worldviews. *Through this review, respondents have highlighted many exemplary school environments that the Community of Inquiry could draw from to create structures that encourage a warm and inclusive school environment for all students and staff.*

Furthermore, respondents highlighted many effective ways to build educator capacity. As one respondent noted, "Teachers' superpower is instruction", and I heard from many teachers who have innovative ideas about how to implement the student-based inquiry approaches that literature suggests can support diverse learning needs in inclusive classrooms (e.g., Perry, Mazabel, & Yee, 2020). Respondents also talked about the need for specialized professional development opportunities for EAs and LATs, the importance of extended professional development for all educators, and the potential of collaborative inquiry (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Furthermore, there appears to be much expertise in families and communities around land-based and experiential education programs that can be used to meet curricular objectives. Importantly, the educators I spoke to were interested, engaged, and passionate about meeting student needs. *The Community of Inquiry can consider how to build from extended inquiry-based professional development programs to provide more opportunities for educators to explore high-quality teaching approaches in collaborative grade/subject-specific or diverse groups.*

There are also many great resources already present in Yukon that can strengthen the branches, or expand the capacity of educators to create learning opportunities that will provide options to support students' diverse needs. For example, diverse literacy approaches could be easily built up within the Yukon context. From what respondents shared with me, one-to-one Reading Recovery pull-out interventions are used as the main support for children who are struggling to read, and have been used successfully in a number of instances. However, no one approach works with all students, and some respondents reported that Reading Recovery wasted valuable early intervention opportunities for some children. If many teachers developed expertise in diverse approaches, they could altogether ensure that all students are able to build their literacy skills. Expertise could be developed through LDAY, who could provide training on the Wilson approach to reading, and Speech and Language Pathologists within central administration have discussed the importance of phonological awareness and phonics as key instructional approaches. Some First Nations students with diagnosed communication disorders have made more observable gains in Aboriginal languages as opposed to English. All of these approaches have research literature to back up their efficacy[4]. The Community of Inquiry may wish to establish

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[4] I have not encountered research that specifically examines the relationship between communication skills and the language under study. However, research on second languages suggests that students can learn English

minimum standards, such as dedicated professional development and resources to all K-3 teachers on the five components of literacy as set out in the National Reading Panel's Report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). It is possible that different educational staff could provide different options for literacy instruction (e.g., phonics in the classroom, Aboriginal language classes, Reading Recovery in pull-out), but ultimately, it is the individual student's needs that should drive the approach used, rather than dedication to a specific program. Supports like these need to be suited to the student, readily available, and culturally appropriate where possible, as suggested by respondents in the online tool (see Figure 10).

Figure 10 Student supports
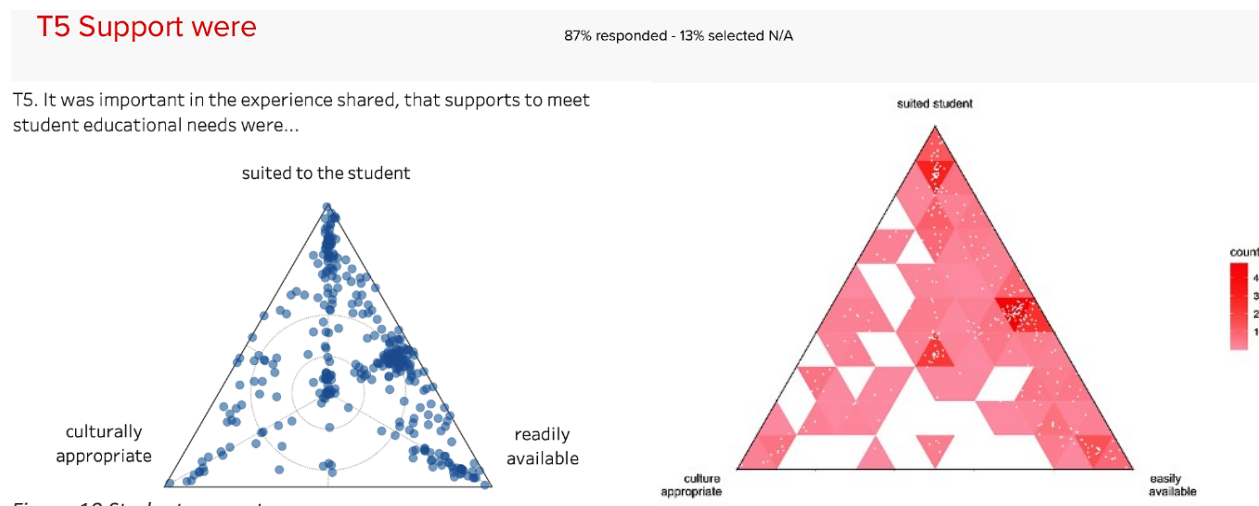
Building on these resources within the educational system and the community could help to support the skills of students with exceptional learning needs, but could also provide better support for all students as they learn important skills and develop key understandings. *The Community of Inquiry might consider how it can support all educators in developing expertise across a number of instructional options that can specifically support students with exceptional learning needs, to the benefit of all students.* Table 3 summarizes both the critical challenges and the possibilities that the Community of Inquiry could use to begin improving the quality of education in Yukon.

Table 3 Quality of Education

Critical challenges	Educational environments are chaotic and disjointed. Educational staff struggle to provide high quality educational approaches and options that allow students to individualize their learning.
Questions to think about	What structures might be created to both provide a secure sense of consistency, while respecting the autonomy of schools and communities? What can be done to cultivate expertise within the system so that educators are better prepared to provide high-quality inclusive education AND options for students to individualize learning to meet their needs? What can be learned from exemplary inclusive school environments and programs already operating in Yukon?

more easily if their heritage languages are maintained. An interesting research question could certainly be formed around possible correlations between communication skills and Aboriginal languages, especially in relation to First Nations students with diagnosed communication disorders.

	How can inquiry-based professional development programs provide opportunities for educators to explore high-quality teaching approaches in collaborative grade/subject specific or diverse groups? How can all educators be supported in developing expertise across a number of instructional options that can specifically support students with exceptional learning needs?
Ideas to work from	*Short-term:* Expand opportunities for collaborative professional development. Explore professional development opportunities where educators can learn how to structure a variety of learning options that will benefit students with exceptional learning needs. Explore exemplary practices in Yukon schools or other educational settings. *Medium-term:* Create a specific focus (e.g., self-regulated learning, place-based learning) and provide professional development over an extended period of time. Support creative teacher mentorship opportunities (e.g., put expert teachers in LAT positions to collaborate with teachers around inclusive and special education approaches) *Long-term:* Develop and maintain focused professional development for educators at all levels throughout the education system – from EAs to Student Support Consultants. Create or partner with a learning institution to provide professional development courses (e.g., EA preparation, Special Education Diploma, or Master's programs for practicing teachers)
Sample Resources	Delta School District. *Delta Learns Website* https://deltalearns.ca/ Downing, J. E. (2010). *Teaching Students with Moderate and Severe Intellectual Disabilities: Academic Instruction in Inclusive Classrooms*. Corwin Press. Finkelstein, S., Sharma, U. & Furlonger, B. (2021) The inclusive practices of classroom teachers: a scoping review and thematic analysis, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 25:6, 735-762, DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2019.1572232 SK Learning (2004). *Teaching Students with Reading Difficulties and Disabilities*. Government of Saskatchewan (Compilation of literacy assessments and activities to strengthen specific areas) https://pubsaskdev.blob.core.windows.net/pubsask-prod/40207/40207-Reading-Difficulties-Disabilities.pdf

DOE Systems and Procedures. The DOE systems and procedures form the roots of the tree. It is these systems and procedures that should provide the stability and structure from which the tree can grow. Similarly, the DOE systems and procedures can create a structure for intentional and purposeful cultivation of inclusive and special education. Based on what respondents shared with me, it seems that inclusive and special education systems are a patchwork of good intentioned policies that represent the efforts of individuals
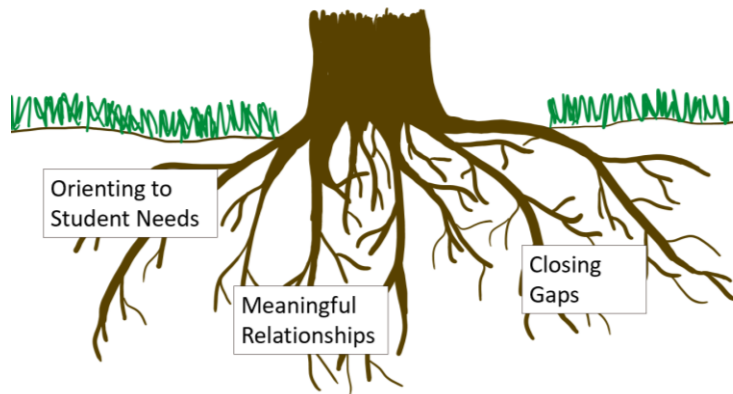

Figure 11 DoE Systems and procedures

to address specific concerns that have been raised, as opposed to a *collaborative, coordinated, purpose-driven systemic design*. I have discussed a lack of vision previously, but wish to highlight that respondents did not have a unified vision of inclusive and special education in Yukon. They did not know who was meant to be leading this vision, did not understand how their roles and responsibilities fit into it, and did not know what could be expected from others. For example, one parent said, "The education system feels like a black box where parents fumble and fall[,] leaving their kids in schools and classes where they're bullied, left behind, frustrated, hurt, emotional and alone." Without a vision of inclusive and special education, how can policymakers create coordinated and purposeful policies? How can schools, hard-working staff, and advocates direct their efforts? ***One of the first priorities of the Community of Inquiry may be to engage with the community co-construct a vision of inclusive and special education that can direct their work.***

Perhaps as a result of this lack of direction and patchwork policies, respondents noted that the system is not structured to serve student needs. They highlighted considerable and critical gaps in the inclusive and special education system, including assessment, services, communication, and accountability. Student learning needs are sometimes addressed through external programs (e.g., Jordan's Principle) or agencies (e.g., tutoring services provided by Yukon First Nations or LDAY), but often the needs of students are simply not met. Respondents also noted how this patchwork has created a system that passively maintains patronizing colonial relationships, within and beyond the educational system, rather than actively exploring decolonizing and inclusive possibilities. As such, the Community of Inquiry may wish to address questions such as: ***how can structures and procedures be deliberately designed to support diverse student needs within Yukon's co-constructed vision of inclusive and special education? What structures can be created to open decolonizing and inclusive possibilities?***

Fortunately, there are many strengths to build upon. However, re-imagining relationships between the DOE, First Nations governments, and education partners is central to effectively building on these strengths. The Community of Inquiry might first consider what needs to be done to establish decolonizing and inclusive relationships at the level of governments and key partners. ***Specifically, how could ideas like ethical relationality be enacted on a systemic level? How could policies and structures be built to facilitate positive and meaningful relationships between those people willing to take that step?*** Respondents suggested that the DOE act by prioritizing resources and services for First Nations and disabled students, and educators, students, and families in rural communities. This kind of action is a step in the right direction, but without systemic structures in place, may be doomed to one-time events rather than re-imagined relationships.

From there, the Community of Inquiry can build from the strengths that already exist within the system. For example, several respondents thought that there are likely enough resources in the system (and provided by external agencies) to adequately support all students, but that the allocation of resources needs to be examined to ensure they match with student needs. Figure 11 further demonstrates that financial resources may be helpful in some situations, but do not offer a complete solution. This pattern of responses might look very different in systems that are severely deprived of resources. As such, resource allocation may be examined to ensure resources are used effectively, but additional resources may not be as crucial as other changes at this point in time.
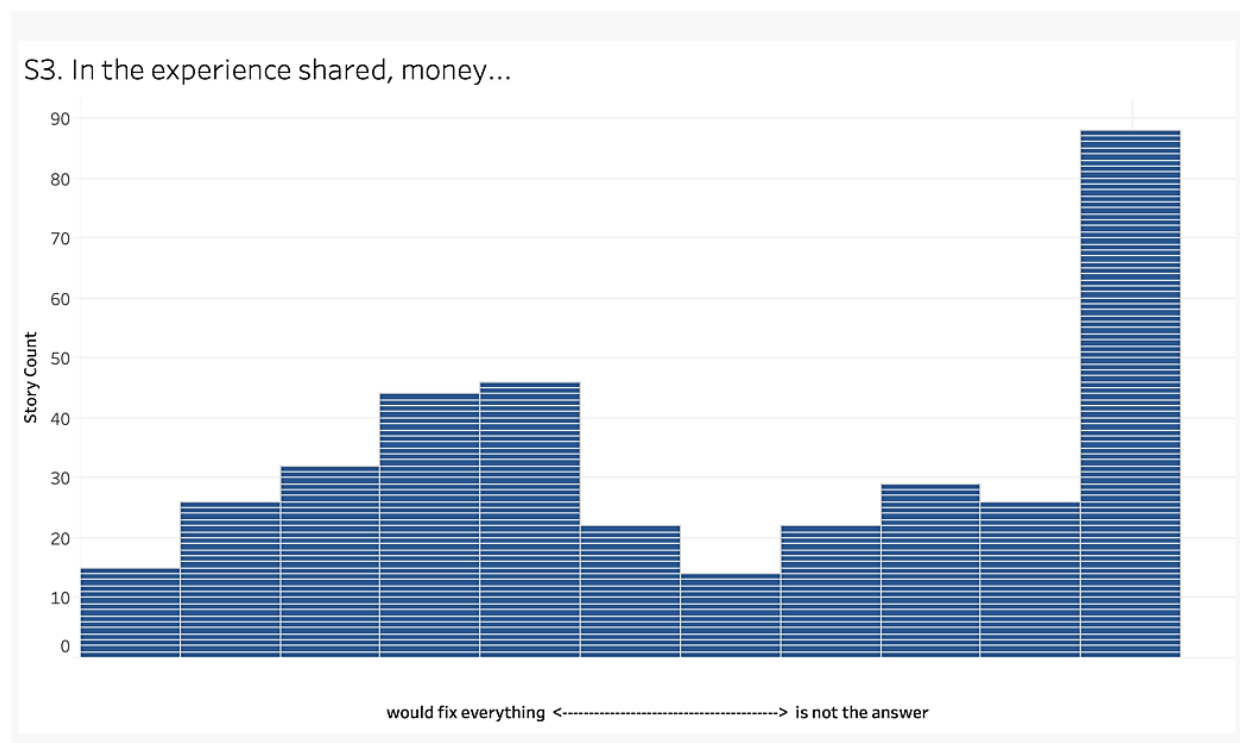
Figure 12 Financial resources in relation to educational challenges

Furthermore, respondents noted many systemic structures that are working to provide supports for students (e.g., the Individual Learning Centre, IEPs, SBTs). Several respondents emphasized the importance of the Individual Learning Centre for students who struggled in high school. However, supports like these need to be strengthened, integrated into inclusive and special education on a systemic level, and made accessible to any student who would like to explore different educational environments. Once coordinated and seamless structures and policies are in place across the school system, the DOE can cultivate trust among families and communities by clearly communicating policies and corresponding roles and responsibilities in relation to inclusive and special education. Student plans, such as competency-based IEPs can be considered as an integral part of these policies. Table 4 summarizes the critical challenges in this area, and some questions and ideas the Community of Inquiry could use to begin shaping a system that supports inclusive education in a coordinated and structured fashion.

Table 4 DOE Systems and Procedures

Critical challenges	Lack of cohesive vision of inclusive and special education
	System not structured to support students
	Significant and critical gaps

|	**System passively maintains colonial relationships**
Questions to think about	What needs to be done to establish decolonizing and inclusive relationships between the DOE, Yukon First Nations governments, and key partners? How can the Community of Inquiry engage with the community to co-construct a vision of inclusive and special education? How can structures and procedures be deliberately designed to support diverse student needs within Yukon's co-constructed vision of inclusive and special education? How could ideas like ethical relationality be enacted on a systemic level? How can these policies be clearly communicated to families and communities? How the DOE coordinate communication about the supports students can and do receive?
Ideas to work from	*Short-term:* Establish norms for engaging across difference and use these to shape the workplace culture at the DOE. Engage with the community to co-construct a vision of inclusive and special education. Examine budgets to determine how funding can be better aligned with student needs. Specifically look at how funding allocations might support inclusivity in intersectional ways (e.g., Aboriginal language programs or cultural activities as providing key supports for students with exceptional needs). *Medium-term:* Compile and collaboratively review policies that relate to inclusive and special education. Purposefully and collaboratively coordinate policies to facilitate Yukon's vision of inclusive and special education. *Long-term:* Clearly and transparently communicate policies to families and communities.
Sample Resources	Ainscow, M. , Dyson, A., Goldrick, S. & West, M. (2012) Making schools effective for all: rethinking the task, *School Leadership & Management*, 32:3, 197-213. Donald, D. (2016). From what does ethical relationality flow? An Indian act in three artifacts. In J. Seidel, & D. W. Jardine (Eds.), *The ecological heart of teaching: Radical tales of refuge and renewal for classrooms and communities* (pp. 10-16). Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang. Schuelka, M.J. (2018). Implementing inclusive education. *K4D Helpdesk Report*. Institute of Development Studies[5]

Social Context. I have located social context as the soil for the tree. From the experiences shared by respondents, the social context of inclusive and special education seems to be one of colonialism and social inequity. Respondents described deliberate acts of discrimination against students with disabilities. In addition, First Nations people cited many examples of outright racism, as well as more covert discrimination. This inequity appears to be made worse within the educational system by the close connections between educational services and political debates and decisions.
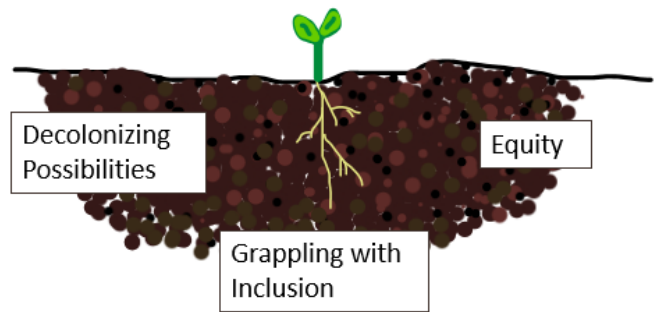
To counteract these challenging conditions, respondents quite consistently talked about coming together to open lines of communication and develop respectful relationships that shape important educational decisions. Respondents often wanted to work together across the educational system, communities, and families to share ideas, perspectives, and cultural worldviews. For example, respondents talked about the possibility of an Educational Summit between schools and First Nations communities where school staff and Elders or knowledge keepers, parents/guardians, and even students could go on a retreat together spanning several days. The group could develop a school-specific vision of inclusive and special education that falls within the larger vision co-constructed through the Community of Inquiry. Then knowledge keepers and front-line staff such as teachers and educational assistants could work together to discuss how to enact this vision through classroom activities. Such partnerships have resulted in integrated curricula and support materials which could be used as an inspirational example (e.g., FNESC & FNSA, 2016; Lipka et al., 2005). This kind of approach could not only support an integrated curriculum in schools with high First Nations student populations, but could also create trust and connection across colonial divides. On a smaller scale, the school and community could arrange joint events focused around cultural activities, music, food, and relaxed conversation to support the development of positive relationships. One respondent exclaimed "feed those people!" as a suggestion for building relationships. Although respondents did not specifically mention the attendance of people with disabilities at such activities, it would be critical to include many kinds of diversity in order to build a highly inclusive community overall. *How might the Community of Inquiry build from these kinds of approaches to create new inclusive narratives in partnership with people with disabilities, First Nations, and other equity seeking groups?*

Respondents had many ideas to begin opening decolonizing possibilities, and some of these ideas have been detailed in previous reports (e.g., MacDonald, 2003; Yukon First Nations, 2014). All of the important work completed in the past can provide a critical springboard for this Community of Inquiry, and provides further evidence to demonstrate the level of expertise that is readily available in local contexts. *There were few ideas about how to create some distance from destabilizing political forces, however, this is a critical question that the Community of Inquiry might consider.* Table 5 summarizes these critical challenges and lists some of the more specific questions and suggestions that might be taken up by the Community of Inquiry.

Table 5 Social Context

Critical challenges	Colonialism and racism Ignoring or denying supports Connection between politics and education
Questions to think about	How can people come in dialogue across differences to begin working together in support of education?

	What actions that can be undertaken to create new inclusive narratives in partnership with people with disabilities, First Nations, and other equity seeking groups? How can distance be created between politics and education?
Ideas to work from	*Short-term:* Use transformative listening to engage with diverse ideas, perspectives, and cultural worldviews. Work with Human Resources to explore ways of creating distance between Central Administration and political influences. *Medium-term:* Hold Educational Summits to cultivate connections across diversity *Long-term:* Create meaningful relationships among diverse peoples, co-construct curricula and teaching activities
Sample Resources	Baglieri, S., Bejoian, L. M., Broderick, A. A., Connor, D. J., & Valle, J. (2011). [Re]claiming "inclusive education" toward cohesion in educational reform: Disability studies unravels the myth of the normal child. *Teachers College Record*, 113(10), 2122-2154. Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit.* Purich Publishing. Kunc, N. (2016). *The Right to be Disabled*. 11 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QM6epVgyPFo Conversations that Matter (Paid database of over 100 short videos with the leading voices in community living and disability rights – useful for personal/professional development purposes) https://conversationsthatmatter.org/

Limitations

There are a few important limitations that may impact how this review is understood. I very much regret that due to the pandemic, much of the more informal connections were not able to take place, especially with students. I have heard or read about some very moving and critical experiences shared by students and former students, but they did not contribute as much to this review as I had hoped. In addition, I was not able to connect with many people who identified as having a disability. Although I spoke to advocates and families who described the experience of people with disabilities, this is not the same as hearing from people themselves. Lastly, there were many stories, experiences, and ideas shared with me as a part of this review. Since changes in inclusive and special education in Yukon are needed so urgently, there was not sufficient time to present the ideas shared with me in greater detail. These limitations must be kept in mind when considering the results of this review.

Conclusions

This review of inclusive and special education was undertaken in response to the Auditor General's report that suggested the Yukon DOE required in-depth information on how students, families, and communities experienced inclusive and special education services. In this review, I was able to connect with approximately 400-500 people, and read an additional 500 online submissions and comments. Using this data, I pulled out a number of themes based on how many people surfaced an idea, and how critical the idea may have been to understanding inclusive and special education. In addition, I have pulled out multiple suggestions that respondents provided, and that connect to research, in order to

give the DOE, Yukon First Nations governments, and their education partners a solid starting point for change. I have posed some critical questions around the RtI model (the Pyramid of Intervention) that the DOE currently uses to understand and address student needs in Yukon. I suggested that this model could either be changed to better reflect the realities of students in Yukon, or that a new model could be created, based on the context of students in place. I offered a metaphor of a tree to describe how student needs in Yukon might be conceptualized, along with those contexts that impact student learning.

Overall, respondents suggested that inclusive and special education programs and services in Yukon are not currently supporting vastly diverse and dynamic student needs. Throughout their school careers, students are sometimes denied services or their needs are ignored, as more immediate and intense needs are ineffectively addressed. Generally, students experience low-quality education based on chaotic and disjointed structures in schools and across the educational system, and based on under-developed capacity among educators. Rather than support educators and students, DOE systems are a patchwork of policy that lack direction and purpose, and that are shaped by colonial assumptions. This system is rooted in a social context that continues to enable colonial relationships, especially discrimination against students with disabilities and racism towards First Nations students and Peoples.

However, I also found that there are tremendous strengths that currently exist within the educational system, and that there are many more ideas and suggestions for what is possible within inclusive and special education. In particular, change within inclusive and special education might be built upon pockets of highly effective programs that are currently operated within and beyond the system. Furthermore, major transformation could occur from a strong desire to collaborate and coordinate services in support of students. The system might leverage these strengths to build up competency-based IEPs, increase collaboration and communication structures, expand opportunities for professional inquiry, co-construct a vision of inclusive and special education, and work in ethical relationality across difference to challenge narratives of inequity. In particular, the Community of Inquiry may consider focusing their efforts on intersectional inclusive education by looking at how First Nations cultural programming might support diverse students including those with disabilities and/or students who struggle, are gifted, and/or are First Nations, and all students. These kinds of intersectional approaches could potentially create the immediate and positive transformation that is necessary in Yukon.

As can be seen from the summary provided, respondents shared so much more ideas, experiences, and insights than requested by the Auditor General. However, in Table 6 I have arranged findings in relation to those items that were to be examined according to the Auditor General's recommendations.

Table 6 Findings in relation to the Auditor General's recommendations

Recommendations	Findings
Evaluate whether the DOE's approach to inclusive education is working.	**No**, the vast majority of respondents, including students, families, educators, and First Nations struggled to identify the DOE's vision of inclusive education, and did **not** believe diverse students were being adequately supported in schools.
Determine whether services and supports are having the desired effect.	**No**. Assuming the 'desired effect' to be equitable access to learning opportunities, this review found that services and supports are largely reinforcing inequity within the system.
Determine whether sufficient resources are in place to support inclusive education.	**Perhaps**. Several respondents thought it was possible that there were sufficient financial resources, however, systems and structures may

	be limiting students' *access* to adequate supports. Resource allocation needs to be more closely examined by a Community of Inquiry.
Prioritize students for specialized assessments.	**Needed**. The Community of Inquiry may need to come up with localized criteria around prioritizing assessments. However, respondents stressed that it may be more important to help educators address students' learning needs as they surface in day-to-day classroom activities, as assessed by curriculum-based measures or other assessment measures.
Assess and track specialist recommendations.	**Needed**. Increased communication and collaboration are required by families, teachers, EAs, LATs and other members of a student's support team. This could be achieved through software and/or locally determined procedures that necessitate ongoing communication.
Assess and track teachers' use of recommended strategies.	**Needed**. All parties involved in supporting students need to be able to communicate and collaborate about what supports are provided.

The Yukon educational system has a lot of work to do. But everything needed to create a high-quality, responsive, effective system that can meet all the needs of a very diverse student population is already present in local communities and schools. I look forward to a future when Yukon education can be studied as an example of a locally constructed model of inclusive and special education to inspire the world.
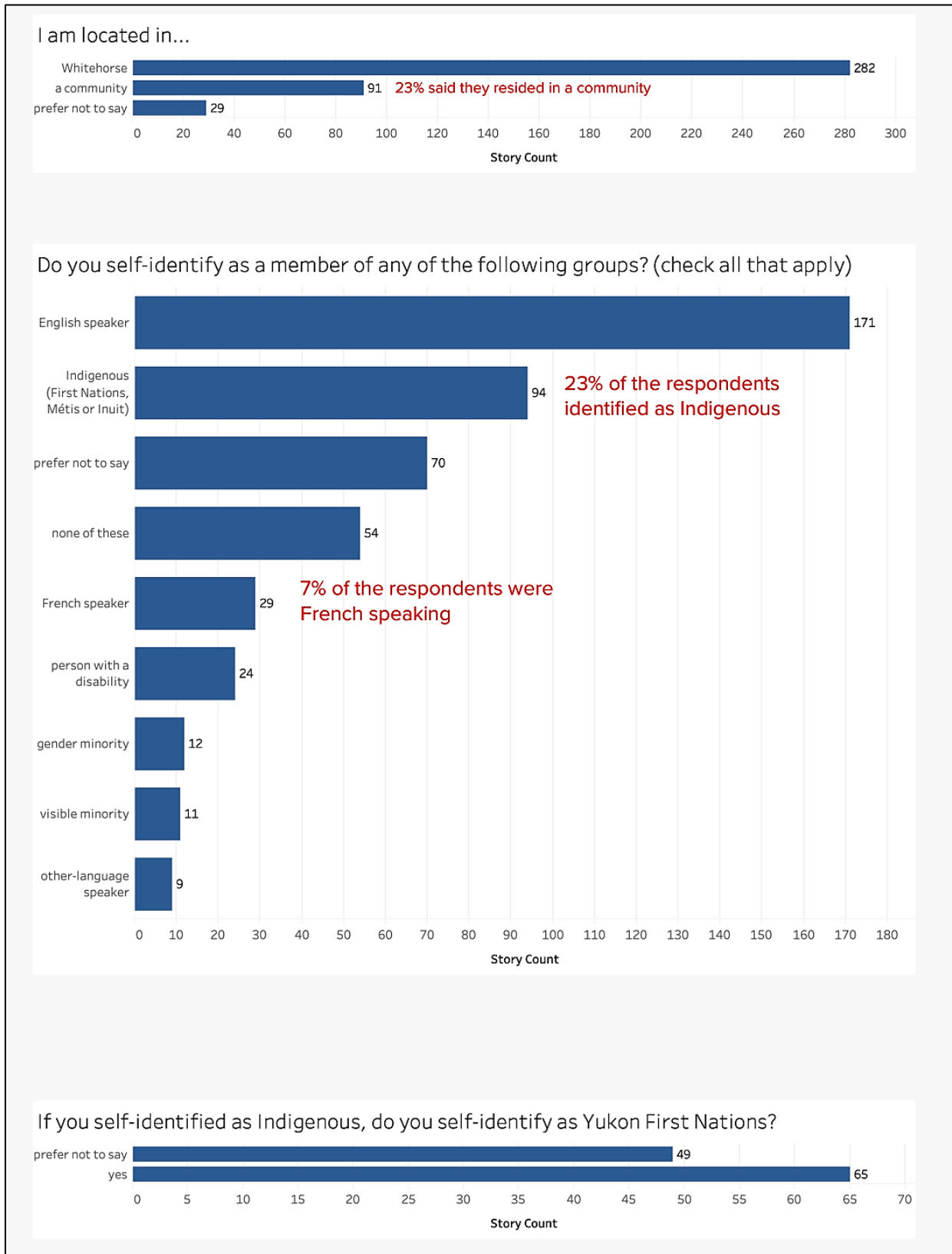
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Appendix A: Full Demographics of Online Respondents

I am located in...

Location	Story Count
Whitehorse	282
a community	91
prefer not to say	29

23% said they resided in a community

Do you self-identify as a member of any of the following groups? (check all that apply)

Group	Story Count
English speaker	171
Indigenous (First Nations, Métis or Inuit)	94
prefer not to say	70
none of these	54
French speaker	29
person with a disability	24
gender minority	12
visible minority	11
other-language speaker	9

23% of the respondents identified as Indigenous

7% of the respondents were French speaking

If you self-identified as Indigenous, do you self-identify as Yukon First Nations?

	Story Count
prefer not to say	49
yes	65

Multi-choice questions

The people who played the most important role in my experience were... (select up to 3 choices)
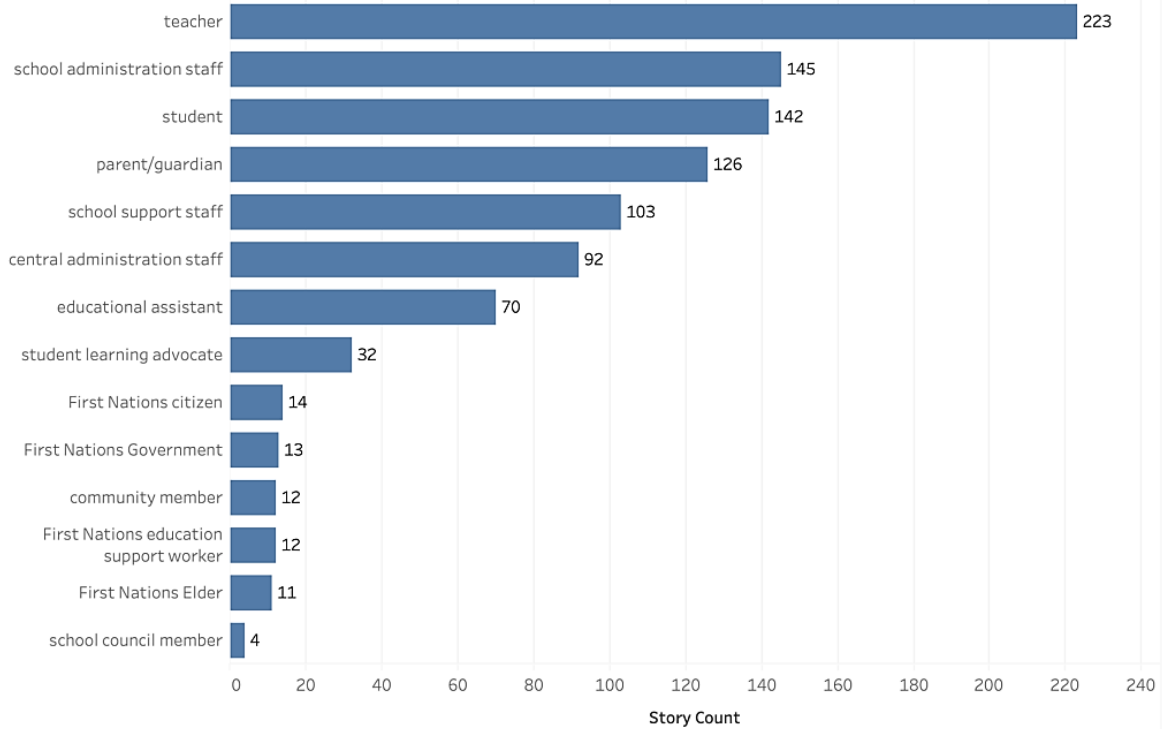
In the experience, what was important? (Select up to 2)

Category	Story Count
student needs	257
teacher skills	91
individual educational plan (IEP)	74
other student support services	67
parental/family involvement	41
funding	40
other school staff support	37
relevant curriculum	30
racism	22
connection with First Nations context	22
cultural strength	19
family trauma	16
community support services	7
community involvement	4
class size	4

Story Count

Appendix C: Community Interpretation of Experiences Shared Through Online Tool

Discoveries — Insights, Eye-openers, Surprises

We found out that …

We see that…

It surprised us to learn…

Barrett Group

Current system of student supports is funded by both public & private funds	Respondents see teachers as the primary resource for students	YFNs are shouldering significant resourcing burden for cultural programming	it surprised us to learn the types of barriers that families face	We felt that communication was an underlying roadblock
There is little positivity in regards to Special education	Systemic structures are creating significant barriers for students ⭐	There is a lot of work, energy, and enthusiasm going into education, with little positive results for students.	We found that many felt the resources were lacking	Processes for accessing help for students need to be clear

We were surprised by the uncertain access to FN programming

Teacher training is vital

Laurie Group

IEP have been written, but not updated	special ed resources must be plentiful at elementary level	some/many students fall through the cracks? why?	★ there are not qualified staff at all Yukon schools	YE is not properly allocating their resources
Interesting that students needs were understood but not acted upon ⭐	parents see a gap in communication from school to home	what we are doing right now isn't working - every stakeholder group has a different perception of what should be happening	Parents having to advocate so hard for their children to the point that the child would fail if they didnt	

Opportunities   Options, Possibilities, Paths

The issue of ... might be worth exploring in a future project

It looks like attention to ... might pay off

Why not explore...

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| IEP criteria ★ | why not explore more longitudinal data? | Systemic change to address reoccurring issues within the auditor generals report | it looks like attention to funding equity between city and rural settings might pay off | Always opportunities to provide more/better training to teachers |

| ★ YG has an opportunity to work with FN on curriculum and resources for language teachers | I think there needs to be an opportunity for people to come together and hear each other's stories. | Greater attention to student perspectives | It looks like attention to sufficient specialists in SSS is necessary | ★ It might be worth examining in what area are parents accessing private resources, e.g. reading disabilities ★ |

| Build more partnerships with YukonU around PD for teachers | Partner with Yukon U to support upgrading to enter into school. |

Laurie Group

| Important to have consistent processes that are understood by all stakeholders (and followed) | regular SBT meetings in schools | dedicated staff who with school personnel write and imp[lement IEP's. | more trained counsellors | ★ More professional development for school staff around special and inclusive education |

| specific assigned roles with advocates | the survey findings offer an opportunity for transparency with the community | Closer monitoring and review of schools and their administrators | training administrator in special education process | data informed decision making around staffing allocation |

a go to person for IEP's
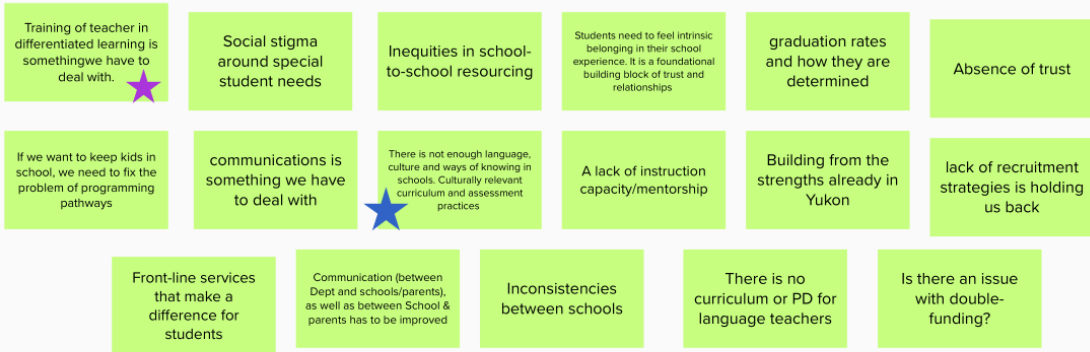
Issues	Problems, Obstacles, Difficulties	... is something we have to deal with
		If we want to do...., we need to fix...
		... is holding us back

Barrett Group

Training of teacher in differentiated learning is something we have to deal with. ⭐

Social stigma around special student needs

Inequities in school-to-school resourcing

Students need to feel intrinsic belonging in their school experience. It is a foundational building block of trust and relationships

graduation rates and how they are determined

Absence of trust

If we want to keep kids in school, we need to fix the problem of programming pathways

communications is something we have to deal with

There is not enough language, culture and ways of knowing in schools. Culturally relevant curriculum and assessment practices ⭐

A lack of instruction capacity/mentorship

Building from the strengths already in Yukon

lack of recruitment strategies is holding us back

Front-line services that make a difference for students

Communication (between Dept and schools/parents), as well as between School & parents has to be improved

Inconsistencies between schools

There is no curriculum or PD for language teachers

Is there an issue with double-funding?

Laurie Group

EA allotment should be a collaborative process, not admin based ⭐

lack of trained LAT's

accountability

training for both LATs and Classroom teachers ⭐

communication is all top down...there needs to be a better process to capture schools, FAMILIES and STUDENTS

we need to acknowledge what we are doing right as well as what isn't working

transparency regarding the allocation of resources

Implementing effective training for consistency of intervention processes

If we want students to succeed, we need to put more staffing resources in place

Parents involvement in students education. Example: student being pulled off an IEP without informing the parent..this should never happen

lack of trained Educational Assistants ⭐

Ideas | Thoughts, Hunches, Brainstorms | How about trying to… We could…! One idea we had was to…

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- involve parents more in SBT work through regular communication

- Review method of school-to-school funding allocation

- Fund and actively engage knowledge keepers within the school on a regular and on-going basis

- Build partnerships with YukonU/YNTEP around teacher PD

- If system will continue to lead parents to private support, create more tax credits to offset cost of tutoring, assessments, etc.?

- Create school-based literacy and numeracy coaches/ experts

- Use software that allows all members of a SBT, including the student, parents, SSS, and external agencies to record interventions and see what supports have been provided

- One idea shared was to create a visual (map) for schools and parents of supports and services

- Dept could offer PD specific to differentiated as well as & systematic, explicit instruction - jointly from SSS & Curriculum ★

- Might be necessary to increase the number of specialists to keep up with demands

Laurie Group

- start from scratch- ditch it all and reach for the moon - make the procedure reflect Yukon context

- better trained LAT's

- more focus on what a 'good' IEP should look like

- monitor IEP implementatin and delivery

- increase assessment services at the elementary level

- clear, consistent communication regarding supports for students - updated handbook

- More cultural supports, help FN students to feel a sense of belonging in their classroom/school ★

- more staff in student services at the department so that they are better able to support schools ★

- focused special ed workshops for administration in schools so that informed approaches can be designed

Recommendations | Suggestions, Proposals, Trial balloons | We think ... is worth keeping in mind

We would like the community to consider...

Barrett Group

- Meaningfully and Authentically add more FN language culture and knowledge keepers "localized curriculum"
- Look at strategic system changes within K-12
- Focus on what we want/need to do not what we can't
- considering forming school boards might free up control

- Provide more PD in areas of differentiation
- Make access to FN resources consistent across schools
- how people might bridge distrust, increase communication, come together in support of students
- Hire and retain specialists in both schools as well as Dept
- More opportunities for YFN to take the lead in inclusive and SPED for the DoE

Laurie Group

- From the results it was evident that students needs were understood however not acted on. We need evaluate why 'not being acted on' and put processes in place to ensure appropriate intervention
- mandate cultural inclusion activities in all schools, do not leave to the discretion of classroom teachers
- that even though there are many negative stories told here there are also many positive ones that didn't get heard.
- Success of students doesn't come from an assessment - that's only a tool

- without the right inclusive mindset inclusion will always been seen as a specialist problem or job
- Inclusion might require a shift in thinking from 'problem' to a critically important opportunity for growth and extension of generative possibilities

Perspectives   Point of view, Outlooks, View points   These people see ... as ... and these people see it as...

There are different ways of looking at...

Barrett Group

Lack of communication means a divide between perspectives of each party involved in a challenge

graduation data...there has to be an agreed upon manner in which to deal with how this is determined.

there are different ways of looking at funding

It seems to me that in Yukon there is a kind of 'superdiversity', so it will be important to adopt an inclusive approach to building community in and outside of school

Some people see this as a need for more EAs, whereas others see it as a need for teacher training

Many parents view their child needing an assessment whereas, schools feel the child is 'doing okay' and will be fine

Are parents' expectations of the system outstripping the system's ability to provide services?

Laurie Group

There are different ways of looking at special education, need to move away from the one fits all approach

Where is the Indigenous Worldview in the process?

the role of an EA

Often YE talks the talk but doesn't walk the walk. Implementation is key to success in any area. Accountability needs to be held on them to follow through.

Families need to be far more involved in the decision making process around student supports

Dilemmas Decisions, Quandaries, Paradoxes Much depends on the way ... turns out

... seems like a pivotal point for this issue

Barrett Group

What level of responsibility does YG need to take for assessments and resources for special needs?	In the near term, budget pressure stemming from COVID will likely continue to limit possibilities	The creation of student-oriented systemic structures	Tangible differences for students	Criteria for determining IEP and. graduation pathway seems pivotal for this issue	Tension between systemic structures and localization
Is YE wary of taking lead on FN cultural programming under the assumption it would be neo-colonial? ⭐	Are there legitimate reasons parents are sometimes not involved in SBT planning - which could at least be better communicated to parents?	How diverse people will be able to come together.	EAs are generally the least qualified people in the system to work with children with special needs, YET much of a students academic teaching is being provided by them ⭐	Is it that we need more EAs or better teacher training?	Is it that we need more EAs or more teachers with smaller class sizes

Laurie Group

how to increase communication with parents/families when their child has special needs	private assessments!!	System needs to be proactive in approach - foresee future student needs and adjust supports as needed (or problem of not adequate resources)	the government interprets and distributes the results of this inquiry
	funding seems like a pivotal point for this issue. YE nees to get and provide more funding	how to increase the feeling of inclusivity for all	