

**Participation and Persistence of Basic Adult Education Participants at a Small College
Satellite Campus on Manitoulin Island**

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Abstract

Research related to the participation and persistence of adult basic education students in Northern and rural Canada was virtually non-existent in the available literature. Furthermore, research pertaining to the participation and persistence of adult basic education students in rural Northern Ontario was absent from the available literature. Consequently, an explanatory sequential mixed methods study of the participation and persistence of Academic Upgrading students at Cambrian College's satellite campus on Manitoulin Island was conducted. The study occurred in two phases. In the first phase, past and current students were recruited to complete questionnaires. In the second phase, individual interviews were conducted with past and current students who completed questionnaires, and individual interviews were conducted with past and current employees of the campus. Using thematic analysis and triangulation, six themes were elucidated from the participants' responses: a) a positive and supportive environment, b) support of the professor, c) situational hardship, d) friends, friendliness and community, e) Indigenous and f) the Upgrading Program. Situational hardships were shown to directly affect the participation and persistence of students. Furthermore, a positive, supportive environment and professor support were inferred to affect the participation and persistence of students while friends, community and program flexibility were inferred to affect student persistence in the Upgrading program.

General Summary

Research was conducted with respect to the participation and persistence of adult students in Cambrian College's Academic Upgrading program on Manitoulin Island. In total, 11 past and current students partook in the research by participating in questionnaires and interviews; as well, one past employee and one current employee participated in the interviews. Results of the study indicate that the life circumstances of students, the campus environment and the support of the Upgrading professor affected the participation and persistence of Upgrading students. Additionally, the development of campus relationships and the flexibility of the Academic Upgrading program related to student persistence. To improve the Academic Upgrading program, participants suggested continued development of Indigenous cultural inclusion at the campus through relevant courses, activities and supports.

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Chapter One: Introduction

For many years, Cambrian College's satellite campus in Little Current, Ontario has been experiencing less than ideal student participation and persistence in its Academic Upgrading program. A formal study has never been conducted to learn more about these phenomena at the campus. Drawing upon adult education, adult basic education and rural education literature, an explanatory sequential mixed methods study into the perspectives of stakeholders was conducted at the campus. Data was collected using questionnaires and individual interviews, and the resultant quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using frequency distributions and thematic analysis. Additionally, the relevance of Cambrian College programming to the local context was explored. The results of the study can help the campus administration, faculty and support staff to better understand the factors which affect student participation and persistence in the Upgrading program. The literacy and numeracy rates of the surrounding communities can benefit from the development of successful future programming, derived from the results of the study. This study adds to the limited literature pertaining to adult basic education students residing in rural Canadian areas, specifically Northern Ontario.

Rationale

The Survey of Adult Skills was conducted in 39 countries between the years of 2011 and 2018 as a component of the First Cycle of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, n.d.). In the first round of the first cycle, 24 countries, including Canada, were surveyed, and a significant proportion of the adults surveyed in these participating countries were found to possess low literacy and numeracy skills (Windisch, 2016). In a knowledge-based economy, the literacy and numeracy levels of a country's citizenry are important to the economic and social

success of a country (Myers & de Broucker, 2006). At the individual level, higher literacy and education levels are correlated with better economic and life outcomes (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009; Myers & de Broucker, 2006). More specifically, “[s]trong links have been found between literacy levels and wages, political efficacy, volunteerism, employment, and health” (Cathexis, 2016, p. 20).

The Need for Literacy Services in Canada

Internationally, a literacy level of 2 or below is considered to be “inadequate for full participation of society” (Jamieson, 2006). A literacy level of at least 3 is considered to be the minimum level acceptable for citizens to adequately participate in society; individuals with literacy levels of 4 or 5 are considered to have higher order information processing skills. According to Statistics Canada (2015), “Canada ranks below the OECD average in numeracy, and the proportion of Canadians at the lower level is greater than the OECD average”. Furthermore, although Canada ranks at the OECD average in literacy, it has a larger proportion of adults at the lower levels of proficiency than the higher levels of proficiency (Statistics Canada, 2015).

Alarmingly, 48.5 % of adult Canadians, between the ages of 16 and 65, as measured by the Survey of Adult Skills, have literacy levels of 2 or below, and 54.7 % of adult Canadians measured by the Survey of Adult Skills have numeracy levels of 2 or below (Statistics Canada, 2012a). Based on these statistics, one can infer that approximately half of the Canadian population may not have the literacy and numeracy skills to fully participate in society. Consequently, low literacy and numeracy are, potentially, significant problems in Canada.

Unfortunately, literacy programs across Canada have been struggling with fulfilling their mandates to increase the literacy of the nation’s citizenry. ABC Canada (2008) estimates that

between 5-10% of the Canadian population with low literacy skills enrolls in literacy programs, and approximately one-third of this group drops out (as cited by Flynn, Brown, Johnson & Rodger, 2011). As a result, although publicly funded literacy programs are available, 90-95% Canadians that need to upgrade their literacy skills do not enroll, and 33% of Canadians that do enroll are not persisting in these literacy programs. Thus, there is a strong need to assist approximately 50% of Canadians in increasing their literacy and numeracy skills, so they can increase their chances of fully participating in Canadian society. It is also reasonable to infer that many underfunded and under-promoted Canadian literacy programs are in dire need of increased government assistance to help increase the participation and persistence of suitable participants in these programs.

The Need for Literacy Services in Ontario

There is a significant need for adult literacy programming in Ontario. Similar to the literacy and numeracy findings in the Canadian population, approximately half of adult Ontarians (46.8%), between the ages of 16 and 65, as measured by the Survey of Adult Skills, have low literacy levels at an international level of 2 or below while over half of adult Ontarians (53.9%) have low numeracy skills (Statistics Canada, 2012b). A report funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD), since renamed to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU), identified that there is a need for literacy programming in Ontario (Cathexis, 2016). Based on findings from the 2012 Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), overseen by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, “over four million adults in Ontario have levels of literacy that could make it difficult for them to participate fully in an information-rich world” (Cathexis 2016, p. 21). Putting this into perspective, in 2016, the same year as the *Evaluation of the Literacy and*

Basic Skills (LBS) Program: Final Report, the adult population of Ontario, between the ages 15-64, was approximately 9,374,552 million people (Statistics Canada, 2016).

The Literacy Gap between Rural and Urban Canadians

There is a strong need to improve the literacy skills and the educational attainment of rural Canadians. In contrast to their urban counterparts, residents of rural areas have lower levels of literacy and educational attainment. In fact, the high school dropout rate for rural Canadians between the ages of 20 and 24 is significantly higher than the dropout rate of urban Canadians, 14.9% and 8.3% respectively (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009). Relatedly, lower levels of educational attainment are significantly associated with lower literacy skills (Canadian Council on Learning, 2008). As the Canadian Council on Learning (2008) has noted, “the available evidence indicates that there is a significant literacy gap between rural and urban Canadians”, and “among adults, the gap is entirely mediated by educational attainment” (Canadian Council on Learning, 2008, p. 9). It can be postulated that rural Ontarians can potentially increase their literacy levels by participating in the educational opportunities available in their communities, such as the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program, which is fully funded by the provincial Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD).

The Barriers to Participation in Adult Education

In an effort to understand the factors which affect the participation and persistence of adult learners, models have been developed by prominent educational researchers, such as Cross’s (1981) framework on the participation of adult learners and Tinto’s (1975) *Conceptual Schema for Dropout from College*. However, these models consist of gaps in their theoretical frameworks because they may not adequately address the diversity of adult populations.

Adult basic education (ABE) students tend to confront more barriers to education than traditional adult learners, who often attend college or university after graduating from secondary school. As an example, ABE learners are more likely to have lower literacy levels.

Unfortunately, a low level of literacy has been shown to significantly affect an adult's likeliness to participate in education (Flynn et al., 2011; Hayes; 1988). Additionally, this population of low-literate ABE learners is more likely to be from a lower socioeconomic stratum and to have parents with lower levels of education, which are both major determinants of adult participation in education. Furthermore, ABE learners in rural areas can face additional barriers to education, such as the lack of access to public transportation, childcare (Leis, 1994) and residential stability (Schafft and Prins, 2009).

Manitoulin Island

Manitoulin Island is the largest freshwater island in the world. Located in the northern waters of Lake Huron, the Island is 2,766 square kilometers in area (Wikipedia contributors, 2019). Manitoulin Island is approximately a 175 km drive from the nearest urban center, Sudbury, Ontario. This long distance from an urban center classifies Manitoulin Island as a relatively isolated rural area. In the summer, the Island can be accessed via two routes: a land crossing over a swing bridge on the northeastern side of the Island and a ferry on the southeastern side of the Island. From mid-fall to late spring, public access to Manitoulin Island is reduced because the ferry discontinues service during this time. According to the 2016 Census, Manitoulin Island has a population of 13,255 people and a population density of 4.3 people per square kilometer (Statistics Canada, 2017a); however, during the summer months the population approximately doubles due to an influx of cottagers and tourists.

Approximately 59.3% of the island's full-time residents are between the ages of 15 and 64, and 86.4% of the population has lived on the Island for three or more generations. Additionally, 41% of the population identifies with a North American Aboriginal origin, with the majority of the remaining population identifying as being from European descent.

The 2016 Census found that the island had an unemployment rate of 13.4%, and that 24.3% of the population did not have an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), a high school equivalency or any other certificate, diploma or degree (Statistics Canada, 2017a). These percentages are significantly higher than both Ontario's unemployment rate and rate of persons without any form of certificate, diploma or degree, 7.4% and 17.5% respectively (Statistics Canada, 2017c). Some major occupations on the island are sales and service, trades, healthcare, social services and education. At the time of this research, no public transportation was available on the Island, so residents needed to arrange alternative means of motor transport, such as personal motor vehicles, carpooling, taxis and hitchhiking, to traverse the lengthy distances between adjacent towns and hamlets on Manitoulin Island.

Little Current

Cambrian College's main campus is in Sudbury, Ontario. The college runs two satellite campuses. One satellite campus is in Espanola, Ontario while the other is in Little Current, Ontario. It is important to note that given the distinct cultural, economic and geographic character of Manitoulin Island, both the main campus and the Espanola campus were not a focus of this study.

Little Current is a town in the municipality of Northeastern Manitoulin and the Islands (NEMI), which is located on Manitoulin Island. The municipality has slightly different demographics than the Island as a whole. The 2016 census provides the following information:

population 2712, unemployment rate 8.5%, 19.9% of the population without an OSSD or high school equivalency, 16.2% of the population from North American Aboriginal descent (Statistics Canada, 2017b). It is important to note that Little Current is the closest town to the swing bridge, which provides year-round access to the Island. Also, Little Current is the business and tourist center of the Island. As a result, incomes in NEMI tend to be higher, and unemployment rates are lower than the Island as a whole. However, since Little Current's economy relies heavily on tourism, many residents are precariously employed in seasonal or part-time capacities.

Cambrian College's Academic Upgrading Program

Cambrian College's campus in Little Current runs an Employment Options (EO) office which offers, among other services, an LBS Program. In partnership with MLTSD, Cambrian College provides employment and LBS services to Little Current and the surrounding area. EO provides a wide range of employment services throughout portions of Northern Ontario, and the program is funded by MLTSD. The LBS program is delivered through EO programs and services (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2016), and the LBS program is funded by MLTSD through LBS funding. The term Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) refers to all ministry funded LBS programs in Ontario. Cambrian College's satellite campus in Little Current delivers an Academic Upgrading program using LBS funding and services; at the campus, the Academic Upgrading program is synonymously referred to as the LBS program.

LBS services are intended for residents of Ontario who are 19 years of age and older, although there is a mechanism to grant eligibility exception to younger participants in the program. As well, services are intended for participants who are assessed as having skills lower than Level 4 on the PIAAC's Survey of Adult Skills, formally the International Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, or lower than the final Level 3 competencies on the Ontario Adult

Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2016). LBS services across Ontario are provided in either English, French, or American Sign Language (ASL).

The Upgrading program in Little Current runs from early September to mid-June, and the hours of service in the classroom are Monday to Thursday from 9 am to 2:30 pm. With the assistance of an administrative assistant, the program is facilitated in English by one full-time professor, but other professors are hired occasionally under temporary contract to deliver boutique courses, such as Basic Computer Training (BCT). There is one classroom, and it has a seating capacity of 16. Students can attend on a full-time or part-time basis. Under the *LBS Service Provider Program Guidelines*, there are 5 pathways in the LBS program that students can select from to reach their goals: employment, apprenticeship, post-secondary education, independence, and secondary school credit (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2016). However, the Little Current campus does not offer the last pathway option in the previous list.

The curriculum at the campus is mostly designed by full-time and part-time Academic Upgrading professors at Cambrian College's main campus in Sudbury, Ontario. Students can choose from multiple math, science, and English courses to upgrade their skills; and computer and self-management courses are also available. To earn a high school equivalency, students can participate in the Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) program. ACE is provided by all 24 of Ontario's public colleges and one publicly funded organization named ACE Distance Delivery. A large proportion of the graduates from the ACE program normally transition to college or employment.

To note, prior to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, ACE was delivered in a face-to-face environment at most, if not all, Ontario Colleges while online English language delivery was provided by ACE Distance Delivery. Consequently, at the time of this research, all Ontario Colleges had restructured their Upgrading programs to offer online delivery due to the resulting physical distancing restrictions.

Students who enroll in the Little Current Upgrading class are from varied cultures and backgrounds. While many students are from Little Current, others commute long distances from surrounding communities on Manitoulin Island in order to access the Upgrading services provided by Cambrian College. For example, it is not uncommon for several students to commute a total of 100km a day from Wikwemikong First Nations, unseeded territory, to access Upgrading services.

Many students who enroll in the Upgrading program have backgrounds of interrupted schooling. Along with the barriers to education associated with being adult learners, many students in the Upgrading program also experience the compounding cultural, economic, and geographical barriers related to residing in a rural area.

Although the Upgrading program's classroom has a seating capacity of 16, it is rare to have a full classroom daily. In the author's experience, day to day class sizes, on average, can vary from 3 to 10 students despite the enrolment number of up to 25 students at times. Additionally, the program experiences a high turnover of participants. Due to barriers and life circumstances, many students stop-out early in the program. However, some eventually return, but stop-out again. This is a reoccurring cycle of behavior for many participants. From purely an observational perspective, it is difficult to gauge how many students that stop-out eventually persist to achieve their goals since this pattern tends to occur over many years, and each time a

student re-enrolls a new learning plan is opened for the individual. The researcher of this study is uncertain whether Ministry bureaucrats can use the Employment Ontario Information System-Case Management System (EIOS-CaMS) to determine the persistence rate of students who stop-out of an Upgrading program since this is not a metric used by the Ministry to monitor the effectiveness of individual LBS programs.

It should be noted that issues of participation and persistence are not isolated to Cambrian College's Academic Upgrading program in Little Current. Insufficient community participation and the likelihood of program participants stopping-out numerous times, over many years, are common at many other LBS sites across Ontario (Cathexis, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

Less than ideal student participation and student persistence in LBS programs are a problem for the program participants, the institution delivering the services and its employees, the community, the province, and the nation. The purpose of this case study is to discover some of the factors affecting student participation and persistence in the Academic Upgrading program at Cambrian College's satellite campus in Little Current. A secondary purpose of the study is to determine the relevance of the Upgrading program to the communities and/or cultures of the Upgrading participants.

Significance of the Study

A documented and academic approach to exploring participation and persistence has never been conducted for the Little Current Academic Upgrading program. While in 2016 Toronto-based Cathexis Consulting published an independent evaluation of the province-wide LBS Program in Ontario, the report provides little insight or data pertaining to Northern Ontario

and rural areas in particular, and the report does not contain any information with respect to the LBS program in Little Current specifically.

This study adds to the limited literature available, regarding the participation and persistence of adult basic education students in rural Canada, rural Ontario, and, more specifically, rural Northern Ontario. Additionally, understanding the factors that affect the participation and persistence of students in Cambrian College's Academic Upgrading program in Little Current can help the satellite campus design more effective policies, strategies, programming, and curriculum. Increasing the participation and persistence of Academic Upgrading participants can benefit individual students and their communities. Higher rates of literacy and educational attainment could contribute to better health, economic and life outcomes for residents of Little Current, of NEMI and of Manitoulin Island as a whole.

Research Questions

The research questions regarding participation and persistence were founded upon the classroom experience of the researcher at the satellite campus. The researcher observed that student attendance was frequently less than desirable and many students stopped-out at least once during their participation in the program. In contrast to his previous teaching experience, these were patterns that he had not observed before his employment in the Upgrading program in Little Current.

The research question pertaining to place-based education was formulated through the researcher's observation that the Upgrading program did not seem to incorporate an adequate amount of local and/or Indigenous content or knowledge; community and culturally relevant resources appeared to be absent from the curriculum. Furthermore, the literature pertaining to the participation and persistence of rural students in formal education showed the importance of

place-based learning in supporting the educational needs of rural communities. Thus, a combination of the researcher's observations and a review of the available rural education literature illustrated the importance of formulating the research question focused on the community and cultural relevance of the Upgrading program.

The research questions apply to all Academic Upgrading students who participated in the program at the satellite campus in Little Current for any amount of time over a seven-year period, January 2013 to January 2020. The research questions also apply to all support staff, faculty and administrators at the campus who worked at the campus for any amount of time between January 2013 and January 2020. A seven-year period was chosen because campus and government policies require records to be retained at the campus for seven years. All records are securely disposed of after seven years.

To answer the research questions, an explanatory mixed methods study was conducted. The study consisted of two phases whereby in phase one, questionnaires were used to acquire data from past and current students, and in phase two, semi-structured interviews were used to elicit data from past and current student and past and current employees.

The following research questions were addressed in the study:

1. What factors affected student participation from January 2013 to January 2020?
2. What factors affected student persistence from January 2013 to January 2020?
3. From the perspective of the study participants, is the Upgrading program culturally and/or community relevant?

Limitations

This study focused on AU participants at Cambrian College's satellite campus in Little Current. Over the course of the research, many limitations were encountered.

Firstly, the researcher of the study is the sole Upgrading professor at the campus, so the researcher was familiar with many of the participants. The Memorial University ethics committee deemed it of utmost importance to this study to mitigate the potential power imbalance between the researcher and the participants. The Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) was particularly concerned about the risk of the researcher coercing students into participating in the study. In order to limit this concern, the ICEHR imposed numerous restrictions on the research. Ethics approval for this research was given after an initial Application for Ethics Review and three resubmissions to the Committee. More detail about the ethics review of this study can be found in the “Ethics” section of this thesis. To note, involving another researcher in the study was not feasible due to lack of funding and to the distantness from other graduate students at Memorial University.

Secondly, response rates on the study questionnaire were low. One-hundred and twenty-one past and current students were invited to participate in the study, but only eleven individuals responded; this is a response rate of 9.1%. As a comparison, when surveying in-person LBS learners across all sites in Ontario, Cathexis (2016) achieved a response rate of 9.9% for past learners. Thus, while low, the response rate for this study approximated the response rate achieved during a Ministry funded evaluation of the entire LBS program across Ontario, conducted by an independent consulting company. Furthermore, after four years of experience in the Upgrading program, the researcher anticipated a low response rate since response rates for past students of LBS services at the campus have been generally lower than desired. As an example, the MLTSD requires all LBS sites to conduct three-month, six-month, and one-year follow-ups of students that have exited the program. Across all LBS sites in Ontario, “between 58% and 64% of learners are followed up with at three and six months, and about half of learners are followed up with at 12

months” (Cathexis, 2016, p.60). Cautions must be taken when interpreting these statistics as larger programs located in large urban areas, such as Toronto may cause a skewed distribution. Consequently, these follow-up averages may not be representative of many LBS sites, especially those in smaller rural areas.

Employees who are tasked with conducting the follow-ups at the satellite campus in Little Current report that it is difficult to conduct follow-ups with past students because past students become unreachable. Also, more often than desired, voicemails and emails are not responded to by past learners. In fact, for many LBS sites in Ontario, “[t]he most common challenge for follow-up is transient learners who become unreachable” (Cathexis, 2016, p. 60). There are many reasons why LBS students may become unreachable, such as residential mobility, changes in phone number, or limited finances to consistently pay for telephone service, internet connectivity, etc.

Response rates in rural areas can be significantly lower due to the additional barriers that rural students may encounter, such as lack of technology, limited access to the internet, and residential instability. The consequences of residential instability are exacerbated in some rural areas due to the lack of rental properties, to the lack of subsidized housing and to the lack of public transportation (Schafft & Prins, 2009).

In the case of this study, it is highly likely that the current contact information of many past students did not coincide with the records of contact information held by the campus. From the perspective of the researcher, the contact information of many enrolled students tends to regularly change too. Furthermore, some past and current students do not check their emails consistently, so they may have not seen the invite to participate in the research or the reminder of the invite to participate, which were both sent to their email inboxes.

Another factor that may have impacted participation in the study is the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in the months immediately preceding the periods of recruitment and data collection. Participant recruitment and data collection began in the midst of the pandemic, April 2020. The researcher did not have the opportunity to promote the study within a brick and mortar setting at the campus. As a result, the research was not promoted in an ideal fashion. The campus was closed abruptly in order to mitigate the transmission of the virus to the employees, clients, and students. Consequently, students encountered additional barriers to their education, which exacerbated the already existing barriers that many ABE students in rural areas already encounter. Many students discontinued their studies for varying reasons. Some students did not have the required technology at home to continue to progress in their studies. For example, two students in the program could not access internet services because they resided in remote areas where internet services are not available. Other students simply did not have a computer at home. One student chose to discontinue his schooling in order to focus on his family during the crisis. Another student found it difficult to study at home while his children were home, so he withdrew from the Upgrading program. Several other students progressed in their studies at home, but the pandemic slowed the academic progress of many. Generally speaking, student motivation, morale and mental health were considerably impacted by the restrictions associated with the pandemic. Thus, if the pandemic negatively affected the participation and persistence of current Upgrading students, it is plausible to suggest that the pandemic may have also impacted student participation in this study. It is possible that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected the possible participation of past LBS students as well, but the researcher could not confirm this through direct observation.

Next, past and current employee participation rates were lower than anticipated. Five current employees and nine past employees were contacted and invited to participate in the

interviews. However, only two individuals volunteered to participate. This low employee participation rate may have been related to the pandemic. Additionally, employees may have been worried about their anonymity and confidentiality since the principle researcher of this study is their colleague at a small campus in a small town.

As well, face-to-face interviews were not an option due to COVID-19 protocols. Consequently, interviews were conducted at a distance by Zoom or by telephone. Unfortunately, data collection may have been impacted during the interviews because the researcher could not observe the body language of the interviewees. The inability to read body language or facial expressions during the interviews may have impacted the researcher's judgement of when to probe deeper into an interviewee's response to a question and when to move on to another question. The researcher had difficulty gauging the comfort level of the participants during Zoom interviews because the researcher asked the interviewees to shut-off their cameras. The researcher did not seek ICEHR permission to video record interviews.

Lastly, random assignment was not applicable to this study, so inferring causation from the results is not possible. As well, since sampling could not be randomized, results of the study cannot be generalized to other populations or contexts. Furthermore, due to a small number of participants, the results of the study cannot be generalized to the experiences of past and current students who did not participate in the study. However, the data obtained from the participants is valuable nonetheless, and it will add to the literature pertaining to the participation and persistence of rural Canadian ABE students.

The Researcher

The researcher of this study acquired a broad array of life, education and employment experiences before his employment as an Academic Upgrading professor at Cambrian College's

satellite campus in Little Current. To begin with, he was raised in Azilda, Ontario; Azilda is a small village in Northern, Ontario where the primary industry is agriculture. Thus, before his employment on Manitoulin Island, the researcher was familiar with the advantages and disadvantages of living in a small Northern Ontario community.

After graduating from secondary school, he attended the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) where he earned an undergraduate degree in Chemical and Materials Engineering. Following his graduation from RMC, he served as a junior officer in the Royal Canadian Navy. After nine years in the Canadian Forces (CF), he honourably released, so he could pursue other life, academic and career interests.

Following his release from the CF, the researcher worked as a retail sales associate, a busser and a cook, earned a culinary certificate at the Northwest Culinary Academy of Vancouver, and earned his journeyman's certificate in cooking, also known as the interprovincial Red Seal. During his culinary apprenticeship, he concurrently worked full-time as a line cook, attended Vancouver Community College (VCC) for formal apprenticeship training, and participated in the Farm Practicum in Sustainable Agriculture at the University of British Columbia's (UBC) organic farm in 2008.

Following the attainment of his culinary Red Seal, the researcher enrolled at the University of Victoria (UVic) and pursued another undergraduate degree, a combined honours degree in Biology and Psychology. During this time, he was also employed in a part-time capacity as a cook at a local restaurant, volunteered as a research assistant and volunteered at two hospitals in Victoria.

After graduating from UVic, with first class honours, he returned to Ontario and established residence in Sudbury. While residing in Sudbury, the researcher was employed at

four part-time jobs: a short order cook, a developmental services worker, a tutor and a professor. During his employment at Cambrian College in Sudbury, he taught in the Pre-Health and General Arts and Science programs, and he tutored Cambrian students in math and sciences at the Learning Centre. In 2016, he secured full-time employment as an Academic Upgrading Professor at Cambrian College's satellite campus in Little Current, Ontario. At the time of this research, the researcher was employed as a full-time Academic Upgrading Professor, and he continued to work, casually, as a developmental services worker for two different community agencies.

The researcher believes his varied academic, employment and life experiences are an asset to his employment as an educator at the satellite campus because he has been educated at the apprenticeship, college and university levels of education, and he has been employed in numerous industries as a frontline worker, manager and a leader. The researcher believes his combined experiences help him to effectively advise students in academic, apprenticeship and employment pathways. Additionally, he believes residing in a small northern community for both his childhood and adolescence helped to prepare him for the pleasures and challenges of living and working in a rural northern area.

However, despite the perceived value that his experiences contributed to his role as an Academic Upgrading professor, after beginning his employment at the satellite campus, the researcher slowly realized he had embarked upon a journey that he was not completely prepared to undertake. The researcher was confronted with three primary challenges: navigating the culture of Manitoulin Island, the cultures of six different Anishinaabe First Nations that are indigenous to Manitoulin Island and the diversity of barriers to participation and persistence for many students who enroll in Cambrian College's Academic Upgrading program on Manitoulin

Island. In the process of planning and conducting this research, the researcher learned more about the diversity of cultures on the Island and the perspectives of Upgrading students regarding various aspects of the Upgrading program, including the campus, the employees and the curriculum. This newly acquired knowledge did not provide all the information required to help the researcher overcome the aforementioned navigational challenges, but the data did provide a foundation for the researcher to build upon.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Limited research has been conducted on the participation and persistence of participants in rural Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs. Of the rural ABE studies that were conducted, most of the research available studied larger rural campuses and/or online/distance delivery programs. Research investigating the participation and persistence of in-class ABE learners at small Northern Ontario rural/remote campuses was non-existent. Since research has not been conducted in a similar context to the Little Current satellite campus, the literature review contains relevant adult education, adult basic education and rural education literature pertaining to barriers, to participation and to persistence in education. The rural segment of the review contains research conducted with rural elementary schools, secondary schools, colleges, universities, ABE and General Education Development (GED) programs. Furthermore, the rural segment of the review contains literature relevant to place-based education in rural areas since the absence of place-based education in rural areas has been shown to negatively affect the relationship between rural communities and the educational institutions in those communities, which could affect the educational participation and persistence of rural residents. The literature included in this review provided lenses to explore the participation and persistence of ABE learners at Cambrian College's campus in Little Current. Also, the literature helped to provide a theoretical foundation to analyze the data collected during this study.

Adult Education

To begin with, an influential scholarly contribution that should be considered specifically when studying student participation is Cross's (1981) work on the participation of adult learners. Her framework identifies three categories of barriers that affect an adult's participation in learning: dispositional barriers, situational barriers and institutional barriers. Prior to

participating in education and throughout an adult's entire educational journey, these three categories of potential barriers can influence a student's participation in education. The number of barriers encountered by an individual can combine to hinder the educational progress of an adult learner, resulting in the decision to drop-out, stop-out or not begin an academic pursuit altogether. The consideration of Cross's framework provides a useful lens to elucidate the potential supports that may be required to help a student accomplish their academic goals.

However, it is important to mention that Cross's framework has drawn some criticism.

According to McCann (1995), "Cross's framework does not address cultural and systemic issues such as sexism, ageism, and the politics of education, yet these may constitute major barriers for adult learners" (as cited by Sloane-Seale, 2011, p. 20). As a consequence, some caution should be exercised when applying Cross's framework to determine and analyze the barriers to participation of adult learners who may encounter systemic discrimination.

In any discussion of the persistence of adults in education, Tinto's (1975) *Conceptual Schema for Dropout from College* should be mentioned because the model has influenced the work of many educational professionals, researchers and academics. The model suggests that there are six categories to consider, with a total of 13 factors which interact to affect an adult student's decision to persist in or drop-out from an institute of higher education: a) a student's pre-entry characteristics of family background, b) a student's individual attributes and pre-college schooling, c) a student's initial goal and institutional commitments, d) a student's experience within the academic and social systems of the institution, e) a student's academic and social integration within the institution, and f) a student's developing career goal and institutional commitments while attending the institution. Despite the model's prominence in education, caution should be exercised when applying the model to all scenarios that concern student

retention and persistence. For example, Tinto focused on traditional college students in the United States of America (USA) who, in general, have similar demographics and college experiences such as full-time enrollment, 2-4 year college degrees, lived in residence while studying at college, white, middle class, and between 18-24 years of age (Sloane-Seale, 2016). Also, Tinto's definition of dropping-out did not incorporate voluntary withdrawals from the degree programs (Sloane-Seale, 2016). However, Tinto's model should not be faulted for the absence of consideration regarding non-traditional adult learners. The proportion of non-traditional adult learners attending post-secondary education has dramatically increased since the development of Tinto's initial model. While Tinto's model provides a useful template to analyze the persistence of traditional adult learners in a college setting, one must use caution when applying his model in an attempt to understand the retention and persistence of non-traditional adult learners who participate at various types of educational institutions.

It is important to mention, not all adult learners face barriers to education. Due to varying backgrounds and experiences, the barriers that adult learners face in education are diverse (Windisch, 2016). As a result, the type and number of barriers that an adult learner faces varies from individual to individual, and certain disadvantaged groups of adult learners may face numerous barriers which may compound to create increasingly negative educational outcomes for these learners. Kerka (2005) notes, "[d]isadvantaged adult learners experience a combination of barriers that hinders completion from educational programs" (as cited by Petty & Thomas, 2014, p. 474). While considering the barriers that can hinder the educational persistence of some adult learners, Petty and Thomas (2014) conducted a literature review to compile potentially effective approaches to a successful adult education program. Components of successful adult education programs included motivating students, employing well trained and prepared

instructors who make a commitment to student retention, providing career development programs for students, partnering with literacy programs, providing student orientation, and helping students to develop goals.

A relevant study pertaining to adult persistence and retention in education in a Canadian context was conducted by Sloane-Seale (2011) at the University of Manitoba. In her exploratory case study of adult continuing education learners, Sloane-Seale studied their “motivation[s], goals, barriers to participation, including their perception of and satisfaction with their classroom and educational experiences, and identified recommendations for improvement” (p. 21). Students stopped-out due to barriers that could be categorized under Cross’s barriers to adult participation: situational, dispositional and institutional barriers. Additionally, with respect to the continuing education learners who participated in the study, “[t]he findings suggest that understanding the nature of these adult learners is critical for retention and persistence” (Sloane-Seale, 2011, p. 15).

Adult Basic Education

ABE learners can encounter more barriers and undesirable educational outcomes than more advanced adult learners. To learn more about the deterrents to participation in ABE, Hayes (1988) obtained information from 160 low-literate ABE learners, across seven urban ABE programs, using the Deterrents to Participation Scale-Form LL. The scale was developed specifically for the study to address the distinctive nature of low-literate ABE learners. Five factors on the scale were found to best represent the deterrents to participation in ABE for the learners in this sample population: low self-confidence, social disapproval of education, situational barriers to education defined by Cross’ framework of participation, negative attitudes toward school, and low personal priority toward school. Additionally, through disjoint cluster

analysis of the data derived from the five most meaningful factors on the scale, 6 types of low-literate adults were identified.

Flynn et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative study of 10 potential adult learners from a skill development and placement center in London, Ontario. At the time of the research, all participants in the study had not participated in the adult education program due to illiteracy. A summary of the findings suggests:

For the participants of this study, the factors that most affected their educational attainment as children, adolescents, and adults were often related to circumstances beyond their control. Family values, socioeconomic status, parental educational level, culture, race, and gender were all major determinants of academic interest and achievement. (p.55)

This study captured the perceptions of individuals who did not participate in ABE due to the barrier of illiteracy. Plausibly, their low literacy levels were directly related to their individual levels of educational attainment which were impeded by various situational, dispositional, cultural and racial factors, etc. In contrast to the Flynn et al. (2011) study, many of the studies in the reviewed literature focus primarily on the persistent adult learner who participated in ABE, which may be due to difficulty identifying individuals who want to participate in ABE but who do not participate because of the associated barriers to education. Consequently, including these individuals in research regarding participation and persistence is a challenging endeavour.

In regard to student persistence, Comings et al. (1999) studied 150 pre-GED students at 15 ABE sites across five New England states: eight of the sites serviced students from rural areas while seven of the sites serviced students from urban areas. Data was collected using one-on-one interviews. It is important to mention that participants were sampled from a diverse array of ABE

sites including homeless shelters to mitigate bias in sampling and the findings, but the researchers cautioned that the findings are not representative of the entire national population or the specific sub-populations, not represented or underrepresented in the sample. From the data, the researchers identified four pillars that aid adult students in persisting in pre-GED classes: managing positive and negative forces, providing staff assistance in raising student self-efficacy, setting achievable goals and assessing goal progression.

Additionally, in a study of 105 English as a Second Language (ESL) students across 25 adult learning centers in the USA, Zacharakis et al. (2011) found that ABE learners faced many personal, institutional and program barriers that affected their participation in education. The researchers found, the relationship between a student and a teacher is a significant contributor to student persistence. Teacher patience, encouragement, hope, inspiration, academic assistance, caring attitude and belief in a student's abilities were important to a student's perception of having the ability to persist. Furthermore, the researcher identified four assets that the ABE and ESL programs offered the participants:

(a) teachers who are dedicated and passionate about helping their students achieve their goals and become productive citizens, (b) the positive consequences of forming new friendships and support networks, (c) reinforcement of the participants' tenacity, and (d) a sense of empowerment from participating in and building on their adult education success. (p. 93)

Thus, employing supportive teachers, fostering positive relationships with teachers and peers and instilling student self-efficacy were important to promoting student participation and persistence in ABE.

In their qualitative study of adult high school learners from two different programs in a local district schoolboard in Eastern Ontario, Taylor and Trumpower (2014) used Wlodkowski's motivational framework for culturally responsive teaching to explore the intrinsic motivating conditions for basic education learners in two academic upgrading programs. Wlodkowski's framework has four essential conditions to intrinsic motivation: establishing inclusion in the classroom, developing a positive attitude toward learning, enhancing meaning of learning by incorporating kinesthetic learning and the diversity of student life experiences in the classroom, and engendering competence by increasing the students' beliefs in their abilities and chances of success. Findings of the study supported the four essential conditions of Wlodkowski's framework. Also, researchers discovered an extrinsic motivating factor for ABE learners in this setting: identification of employment goal. Given that Wlodkowski's framework considers culture and diversity, the framework may be a useful tool to employ in diverse ABE classrooms.

Rural Education

Many rural ABE learners must confront the combined barriers associated with being an adult learner and being an ABE learner. Furthermore, these barriers can be compounded by additional rural barriers that urban ABE participants have a lower risk of encountering. A paper written in 1994, titled "Distinct Needs of Rural Literacy Programs" identified and defined the barriers relevant to teaching and learning in the rural communities of Northern Ontario: "isolation; increased expenses due to travel, long distance and reduced numbers; limited supporting services; negative connotation of 'literacy'; limited relevant materials; and minimal research into the problems and literacy programs of rural Ontario" (Leis, 1994, p. 29). In her report, Leis explained that rural communities and rural literacy programs in Northern Ontario have distinct needs from urban communities and urban literacy programs throughout Ontario.

From her perspective, in order to meet the distinct needs of rural communities and their literacy programs, the barriers, which are unique to rural regions, needed to be addressed through appropriate government policies and funding.

In the context of primary and secondary education, recent studies have confirmed the existence of similar barriers in the current era of rural education. In primary and secondary schools, potential barriers to education are geographical isolation, poverty, out-migration/declining enrolment, and irrelevant curriculum (Stelmach, 2011). It can be inferred that the same barriers are likely to arise in the lives of rural adult learners too.

Ryan (2014) evaluated the inclusiveness of a rural Vermont postsecondary education program for students with intellectual disabilities. Based on the findings of the evaluation, the researcher posited that lack of transportation and lack of employment opportunities were challenges for the program. Additionally, Howley et al. (2013) interviewed 11 students at a rural community college in North Carolina in order to determine how rurality influences retention, from the perspectives of the students. Participants communicated that staff and faculty responsiveness, institutional flexibility, and limits positively affected their retention.

In a study of learners and staff in ABE and GED programs at a rural technical college in Georgia, USA, learner persistence was investigated. In her doctoral research, Spivey (2016) discovered four themes related to learner persistence: “situational hardships, personal investment: motivation, time management, and technology-based instruction” (p. 90). The researcher discovered, “disadvantaged learners often have family members, friends, and communities who fail to value education” (p. 64). Family support, community support, low self-esteem, stress and poverty affected learner success. As well, balancing academics and personal matters was a barrier for many participants. Although, participants communicated that the

patience and the encouragement from instructors helped them persist, and some participants felt that family motivated them to persist. Additionally, from the perspective of the students, instructor attitude and enthusiasm played a vital role in student persistence while instructors perceived that motivation played a significant role in student persistence. One surprising finding to the study was transportation and childcare were not significant barriers to the participants. However, it is important to note that students who did not persist were not sampled for the study, and perhaps transportation and daycare were responsible for stop-out or the absence of enrolment for this population.

Using Cross's (1981) framework as a guide, Steel and Fahy (2011) concluded that dispositional, situational and institutional barriers inhibited rural/remote Northern Alberta participants from participating in postsecondary education. The researchers suggested that attracting students to programs could be increased by improving logistical supports, such as transportation and daycare, providing institutional supports, and conveniently offering services in appropriate locations. To improve student retention, the researchers proposed that institutions should incorporate flexible programming to accommodate students who stop-out, predictable and easily accessible logistical supports, and tutorial/technical support.

Another relevant barrier to rural education is residential mobility. Schafft and Prins (2009), posited that residential mobility contributes to low student persistence in family literacy programs. Furthermore, high residential mobility is associated with low income adults in rural areas. In contrast, this barrier is mitigated in urban areas due to the accessibility of public transportation.

Place-Based Education

Ritchey (2008) argued that the “literature on adult education...has paid relatively little attention to the issues important to rural places and the educative needs of rural residents” (p. 8). Howley (2009) emphasized that rural knowledge is frequently devalued by mainstream society. As a result, the importance and consequences of rural ways of life and knowing are often omitted from educational programming (Howley, 2009). Instead, in rural regions, middle-class, professional ways of knowing and values are taught to children (Howley, 2009). Unfortunately, mainstream educational policies and programming do not acknowledge that the realities of rural individuals are different from individuals in urban settings. There is a lack of recognition that “rural communities have unique, multidimensional cultures and material realities” (Bracken, 2008, p. 91). Often, educational institutions in rural areas are compelled to implement broadly designed educational policies and programming that are created and enforced by governmental bureaucrats, who are far removed from the distinct contexts and practical realities of the communities in which rural schools are located.

Moreover, a rural community may frown upon education because the educational culture and programming does not align with the community’s knowledge and values (Marchant & Taylor, 2014). Educational institutions may be able to earn the trust of rural citizens by incorporating rural knowledge and values into rural educational programming. As Howley and Harmon (2001) found, “a large plurality of rural superintendents...understood that the continuing existence of their schools depended on the strength of community-engagement” (as cited by Howley, 2009, p. 556).

As an example, the direct relationship between rural knowledge in school programming and community perception of the educational system is illustrated by research conducted in a

coastal rural community of Nova Scotia. In his book “Learning to Leave: The Irony of Schooling on a Coastal Community”, Michael Corbett (2007) describes his experience as a teacher, temporary community member and researcher in the community of Digby Neck. While exploring the experiences of four generational cohorts, 1963-1998, of Digby Neck community members, the author found there was indeed a palpable phenomenon of historical disconnectedness from education, likely inculcated by the local educational system’s rejection of the community’s ways of knowing. For decades, the primary industry in Digby Neck was fishing. Despite the historically fluctuating economic prosperity of the fishing industry, experienced through recurrent boom and bust cycles, fishing persisted to be a critical component of community and individual identity in Digby Neck. Historically, many members in the community perceived education to be for the rich and for those who could not tolerate the rough and dangerous occupation of fishing on the treacherous and frigid Atlantic Ocean. To many Digby Neckers, primary and secondary school curricula were useless knowledge that did not translate well to the occupation of fishing. As a result, many young, usually male, Digby Neckers would drop out of school, at an early age, to work in the fishing industry; sitting in school was considered to be a waste of time and money since one could make a good living without a high school diploma. In addition, there was a prevailing notion within the community that the opportunities provided by an education could strip talented young persons from Digby Neck. Educated residents would have to leave Digby neck to pursue higher education, and educated residents were more likely to leave the community to find gainful employment elsewhere. The research conducted by Corbett, captured the failure and disinterest of the educational system to meet the pragmatic and cultural needs of the community in Digby Neck. This conflict contributed to the community’s negative perception of education.

To many rural residents, education is perceived as a threat because higher education is all too often associated with young persons leaving rural communities to pursue education in an urban setting (Corbett, 2007; Howley, 2009). For various reasons, many parents do not want their children leaving their home communities to pursue higher education, and many young adults wish to remain in the familiar rural areas of their births (Burnell, 2003; Howley, 2009). In many instances “the out-migration of younger residents also disrupts the social networks that older residents rely on for informal help to obtain health care and other important services and, potentially for a more organic sense of connection to others in the community” (Erickson et al., 2012, p. 409). Consequently, individual decisions concerning education in rural areas are known to be strongly influenced by trusted peers and family members (Goto et al., 2009). Individuals in rural communities may also feel social pressure to avoid further education (Marchant & Taylor, 2014). As a result, the fear of social exclusion can deter some rural residents from pursuing education (Marchant & Taylor, 2014). Possibly, this fear of isolation is compounded by the geographical isolation of individuals in rural settings.

Additionally, limited regional opportunities for work and education in rural regions may “lessen the perceived long-term benefits of schooling” (Irvin et al., 2009, p. 31). The research of Peshkin (1997), Hektner (1995), Howley (1996) and Jensen (2002) associate education with the availability of local opportunities in rural areas (as cited by Wright, 2012). Rural residents are less likely to pursue further education if it does not align with local needs. In her research, Wright (2012) found that for many of the rural community college students she interviewed in central Appalachia “a commitment to place informs and shapes rural students’ decisions around post-secondary education” (p. 1). These students valued education for other positive outcomes

rather than solely employability. Many students related furthering their education to providing them with the means to improve the lives of their families and communities.

Townsend and Delves (2009) analyzed the perspectives of adult learners and adult education facilitators, from adult community education programs in rural Australia in regard to the influence of adult education on social network development. Among other findings, the researchers discovered that personal connections within school and the community played a role in student persistence.

Place-based education is recommended for reform in rural schools since efforts to make class activities and work meaningful and relevant to rural students' interests and attachment to place may increase motivation and engagement and thereby improve outcomes" (Irvin et al., 2009, p. 31). With respect to adult education, an Australian study conducted with the purpose of determining how to better provide both school-age and adult online learning services to rural and remote communities in Australia recommended that courses be designed specifically for the needs of those communities (Twyford et al., 2009). Wright (2012) contended that rural community college teachers should strive to learn more about local cultures and communities. This is important since, as Adie & Barton (2012) described, "working in a rural school involves a relationship with the community that includes the physical locations as well as explicit and implicit norms and practicalities" (p. 113). Furthermore, it has also been argued that communities be involved in the design of adult education programs and curriculum in order to improve their effectiveness (Ziegler & Davis, 2008). Relationships, community, and place are all important to rural residents (Irvin et al., 2009). These variables are interrelated, and they can affect the participation and persistence of rural students in education.

To summarize, minimal relevant research has been conducted on the participation and persistence of ABE participants in rural areas, and research pertaining to the participation and persistence of rural ABE participants from a Canadian context and more specifically from a Northern Ontario context were absent from the available literature. Additionally, the role of place-based education in rural adult education, specifically rural ABE contexts, has not been sufficiently researched. However, the available literature on adult education, adult basic education, and rural education provided multiple lenses to study the participation and persistence of rural ABE learners. Furthermore, from the compilation of literature in this literature review, it is apparent rural ABE learners face many more barriers to education than traditional adult learners and ABE learners in urban areas.

Definition of Key Terms

Completion – a student accomplishing their AU goals, includes completing the Academic and Career Entrance Certificate (ACE), completing a pre-requisite course/s for college entry or apprenticeship, completing a course/s for independence, entry into a postsecondary program, entry into a apprenticeship or trade, obtaining employment related to their goal.

Literacy and Numeracy – the reading, writing, speaking, numeracy and digital skills required by individuals to participate in society.

Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) - consists of literacy, numeracy, soft and technology skills

Participation- learner enrolment and attendance in the upgrading program.

Persistence - participants returning to the program after stopping-out or accomplishing their goals in the program.

Place-based curriculum - incorporating local ways of knowing and culture into the content, structure and delivery of the traditional curriculum at an educational institution, including the

development of curriculum that prepares students for relevant employment, volunteer and entrepreneurship opportunities within their communities.

Place-based education- educational programming, delivery, curriculum, and resources that are developed for and relevant to the cultural and economic needs of a community.

Residential Mobility - "...the frequent, often short distance residential movement among resource limited families within, into, and across already distressed communities and neighborhoods..." Schafft & Prins, 2009, p. 3).

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Research Design

Research on the topic of ABE student participation and persistence in rural areas of Northern Ontario is absent from the current research literature. The research detailed in this paper consisted of an explanatory sequential mixed methods design.

A mixed methods design uses both quantitative and qualitative data to investigate a research problem (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The collection of both types of data enables a researcher to develop a more thorough understanding of a research problem than the analysis of solely quantitative or qualitative data would normally allow. There are three basic mixed methods designs: convergent, explanatory sequential, and exploratory sequential. An explanatory sequential design consists of two main phases. The first phase involves the collection and analysis of quantitative data. The results of the quantitative data can provide insight into the research problem while also providing data that can be further elucidated by qualitative data collection and analysis. The second phase involves the collection and analysis of qualitative data. It is important to mention, the quantitative results can inform the measures and procedures of the qualitative step. Since the qualitative portion of the study design can be influenced by the quantitative data, the qualitative data not only provides more depth of insight into the research problem, but the qualitative data can assist in further understanding the quantitative data. In fact, the quantitative data and qualitative data can be compared to better understand the results of both phases of the design and, ultimately, to better understand the research problem.

In this study, the participation and persistence of ABE learners at Cambrian College's satellite campus in Little Current, Ontario were studied, using an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. Participation or persistence could be considered two different problems, but the

researcher believes it is important to study both issues in relation to each other rather than as separate issues. One primary reason for this belief is many students stop-out numerous times while participating in the Upgrading program, so participation and persistence combine to form a reoccurring cycle or phenomenon for many participants in the Upgrading program.

Given its profound importance in the rural education literature, the theme of place-based education was also studied. Moreover, the rural education literature, reviewed in this paper, conveys a strong relationship between place-based education and the participation and persistence of rural citizens in education, which is a relevant relationship to consider at Cambrian College's satellite campus. Specific questions were included in both the questionnaires and interviews in order to learn about the participants' perspectives regarding the local relevance of the Academic Upgrading program's structure, delivery, courses, resources and activities.

The research consisted of two phases. In the first phase, past and current students were recruited to participate in an online questionnaire. The online questionnaire consisted of questions which provided the researcher with quantitative and qualitative data to analyze. In the second phase, all past and current students who completed the questionnaire and consented to be contacted for an interview were contacted for individual interviews. Also, in the second phase of the study, past and current employees were recruited to participate in individual interviews. During the interviews qualitative data was collected. Results from the quantitative data in the first phase of the study informed the development of the interview questions in the second phase of the study.

The literature on participation and persistence in education is broad and contains varied results and conclusions. The factors affecting student participation and persistence vary widely between contexts, groups and individuals. Thus, the researcher used the literature to form closed-

ended questionnaire questions that would help identify common themes related to the participation and persistence of various groups of adult learners. The closed-ended questions were analyzed using frequency distributions. The questionnaire was also designed with open-ended questions to enable the participants to elaborate on their experiences. This strategy was effective in extracting text-based data from some of the participants who chose not to interview. Information gathered from the questionnaires aided the researcher to formulate more focused open-ended interview questions than what would have been possible to formulate without the responses provided on the questionnaires.

To note, a pilot of the questionnaire was not undertaken. Given the constraints imposed on this study by the study's timeline and novel COVID-19 restrictions, conducting a pilot of the questionnaire was not feasible. Consequently, the questionnaire underwent an informal validation process rather than a formal validation process. Before the questionnaire was implemented in the study, the questionnaire underwent numerous levels of review, including a review by a thesis supervisor and two reviews conducted by two different ethics committees. Additionally, the questionnaire was designed to include questions pertaining to the topics of participation, persistence and place-based education that also appeared to be of significance in the peer reviewed literature available to the researcher. The usage of multiple questionnaire reviews, credible sources to design questions and the researcher's intimate knowledge of the college, the Upgrading program, the students, the staff and the local area contributes a degree of validity to the questionnaire.

To increase the credibility of the study, sampling multiple stakeholders at the campus was attempted, such as current and past students, support staff, administrative staff, and professors.

However, recruitment proved to be difficult during the pandemic. Nevertheless, triangulation of the data was possible by recruiting past and current students and employees.

Ethics

Ethics approval for this research was obtained from Cambrian College's Research Ethics Committee and Memorial University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR). Obtaining ethics approval from Cambrian College was conveniently streamlined and an uneventful process. However, the process of obtaining ethics approval from the ICEHR appeared to be more burdensome in comparison. In fact, eventually, letters were drafted by both the researcher and the researcher's supervisor to address their concerns with the committee's recommended constraints. As a result of this dialogue, the committee acknowledged some of the research team's concerns and eased some of the constraints previously imposed upon the proposed research methodology.

The initial submission for ethics review by the ICEHR was submitted in December of 2019. After three resubmissions, the research was given ethics approval on the 10th of March, 2020. Approval of the research happened, unfortunately, to coincide with the emergence of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the associated physical distancing restrictions which were beginning to be implemented at educational institutions and other public and private facilities across Canada. As a consequence, the ICEHR suspended in-person human research in mid-April. Amendments were submitted to the ICEHR in May in order gain permission to conduct phone interviews and Zoom interviews, in lieu of face-to-face interviews. The amendment received approval at the end of May.

The ICEHR's adherence to the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)* was stringent. From the researcher's perspective, in

executing this duty the ICEHR may have inadvertently influenced participant recruitment and, subsequently, the overall outcome of the research. The ICEHR's main ethical concern with the research was rooted in Article 3.1 of the TCPS2 which mandates that consent shall be given voluntarily by research participants. Since the researcher is the sole professor in the program from which the participants were recruited, the committee was concerned with undue influence. To elaborate, the university ethics committee was concerned that a power imbalance between the professor and the students would effectively contribute to students involuntarily participating in the research. Consequently, the ICEHR required the researcher to conduct the research in an "arm's length manner". Three primary constraints evolved from this requirement. One, the researcher could not directly recruit participants rather someone other than the researcher had to be tasked with recruitment. To accommodate this restriction, the researcher recruited an administrative support clerk at the campus, who volunteered for the task. Two, questionnaires had to be completed anonymously. In response, the researcher designed a blind process, so only the support staff was aware of the identities of the questionnaire participants. Three, interviews with current students could not be conducted until after course grades/semester grades were submitted. After the final submission of grades, the researcher was made aware of the students who consented to interview.

These constraints to the research process can be supported, with reservations, by the committee's interpretation of Article 3.1. To begin, the committee further imposed excessive constraints on the research using Article 3.1 as their justification. As an example, after the first resubmission of the ethics proposal, the committee assessed that in order to limit the risk of undue influence to participate it would be necessary for participant recruitment to be conducted solely by email; phone recruitment was not permitted. When the committee was informed of the

technological barriers faced by the rural participants of this study, it removed the constraint. This was a reasonable and welcomed concession since some participants in this research did not have access to any form of electronic communication.

However, one must question, would it still be necessary to impose this constraint if the entire sample population in this study had adequate access to technology? The answer is most certainly no. If the ICEHR's requirements were founded on ostensibly preventing undue influence to participate, it does not follow that the ICEHR would remove the constraint for a more 'barriered' population. Additionally, in its interpretation of the TCPS2, the ethics committee appeared to conclude that email conversation is less invasive than telephone conversation with regard to balancing the combined goals of mitigating undue influence and participant recruitment.

Additionally, the ICEHR was concerned with the researcher unduly influencing his students to participate in the study. Therefore, the researcher could not directly recruit student participants or employees. The ICEHR's interpretation of this situation was that the researcher-professor held more power than the potential student participants, which is normally a reasonable assumption. While by conventional human research ethics standards this assumption is understandable, perhaps there is a more progressive way to approach this form of dilemma, such as an approach that recognizes the power that rural research participants bring to the research- an approach that does not have the effect of potentially further oppressing participants (Dufty, 2008). Often, in the case of researcher-participant relationships, power is perceived as being exerted in a one-way direction whereby the researcher is the oppressor. As Duffy (2008) noted, "the problem with this situation is that when constructing research participants as individuals that need to be protected from the researcher, university ethics procedures also serve to maintain the

construction of the powerful/powerless dichotomy of the research relationship” (p. 134). In reality, research participants play an active role in shaping the research, and they should be recognized as such for their important contributions in this role.

Next, it did not appear that the ICEHR was effectively balancing the values of the institution with the values of the rural community where the research was conducted; a more nuanced approach should have been favoured. A reasonable and measured interpretation of TCPS2 based on the distinct contexts of where the research will be conducted, who will be the participants and who will conduct the research, is required. Prioritizing the dilemma of undue influence may have not been feasible in the case of this study since relationships within rural schools are complex and cannot be distilled to a simple professor/student power dynamic. This contrasts with urban schools where the educational professional does not tend to forge anything other than a professor/student relationship. University ethics committees tend to impose urban, upper middle-class values in their reviews of research proposals, specifically in northern, rural and remote communities:

Ethics review ascribes moral values of “right and “wrong” to research activities based on current cultural norms. As part of the sociological *gemeinschaft*, communities have shared values and morals related to research that often deviates from that of academia, the *gesellschaft*. (Lightfoot et al., 2008, p. 509)

Ethics committees are composed of individuals who may have difficulty in properly considering the cultural values of rural communities because their judgements are clouded by their own subjective perspectives, values, and norms. While adherence to the TCPS2 is expected to reduce subjectivity and increase objectivity regarding human research, interpretation on the TCPS2 is conducted by human beings who are naturally imperfect and biased.

From the perspective of a researcher who lives in a rural community, the ICEHR did not fully consider the rural cultural context where the research would be conducted or the power that the rural research participants held in shaping the research. Firstly, the success of participant recruitment and survey response rates in rural and remote communities significantly depends on the relationships the researcher/research team has with the communities (Lewis et al., 2016; Lightfoot et al., 2008). In the ICEHR's effort to limit researcher interaction with the population of potential participants, it may have inadvertently affected participant recruitment. By imposing an 'arm's length' approach on the researcher, the ethics committee effectively reduced the recruiting effects of the dichotomy of researcher-rural community relationships, which could have served to recruit more participants from this population. It is known that strong researcher-community relationships are needed for 'buy-in' in rural, northern and remote communities. Secondly, the ethics committee's insistence on a high level of formality toward research protocol and relationships may have negatively impacted participant recruitment. Speaking, writing and behaving in a way that is foreign to local customs is often not well received in rural or remote communities. As an example, the consent form provided as a template by Memorial University may be too formal for many rural communities. In fact, one participant mentioned in her interview that correspondence involving the research was too formal for the local context: "Even this interview email that was sent. I think that the way emails are conducted are way too formal in a sense. The way that one is approached that's just not the way people speak on Manitoulin." Thus, straying from engrained local customs of communication may have deterred more individuals from participating in the research.

To summarize, ethics committees are necessary and important governing bodies that ensure human research is conducted in an ethical manner. Ethics committees mitigate the risk to

participants and support researchers in the preparation and conduct of ethical research. Furthermore, the process of proposal and review helps the researcher logistically sequence the events of the research well before the research is conducted. However, in their interpretations of the TCPS2, ethics committees may be reaching beyond their institutional and professional responsibilities to impose more stringent than necessary constraints on researchers. In the case of this study, the ICEHR prioritized their rationalization of undue influence over the values of a rural community and the empowerment of learners at a rural educational institution. The potential consequences to this decision are two-fold: a lower than desired number of participants and the continued omission of the voices of rural Canadian, and more specifically rural Northern Ontarian ABE learners from the literature.

The researcher was fortunate enough to have a supervisor who empowered him to challenge the ICEHR. As a result, the integrity of the research was mostly maintained. In retrospect, the researcher regrets conceding to other ICEHR demands without rebuttal, but the power held by the ethics committee, coupled with time and financial constraints of the researcher, ultimately deterred the researcher from raising further concerns.

Research Site

Cambrian College's satellite campus offers two main services to the community: employment services and LBS services. Employment services are provided by two full-time Employment Consultants, who help community clients obtain employment, find training, build skills and build resumes. The LBS program provides academic services to the community. Academic services provided by the LBS program are Academic Upgrading and boutique courses, such as Basic Computer Training. The Academic Upgrading program is serviced by one

full-time professor. Clients and students are often referred between employment and literacy services.

Access

Access to the Academic Upgrading program at Cambrian College's Manitoulin Campus was granted by the site administrator, the Dean of the Schools of Justice, Community Services, and General Studies, and Cambrian College's Ethics Committee. Gaining permission from the site administrator was a relatively informal process since the researcher works at the research site. However, gaining permissions to conduct the research from the Dean and Cambrian College's Ethics Committee was a formal process. Cambrian College's gatekeepers were supportive and encouraging of the research.

The researcher is the full-time Upgrading professor at the campus, and at the time of the research, the researcher had been working for Cambrian College for seven years. This employment position and experience were advantageous to the researcher because the researcher was familiar and comfortable with navigating the various systems and departments at the College in order to gain approval for research at the satellite campus.

Site Description

Cambrian College's Manitoulin campus is located in the small town of Little Current, Ontario. The campus is situated in a quaint strip mall on Water Street. Across the street from the mall is the town office and postal building. Behind this building is the North Channel of Lake Huron where cruise ships sailing the Great Lakes come alongside, when weather permits, to allow tourists the chance to site see.

There is one door on Water Street to access Cambrian College's satellite campus; this door is the front entrance to the campus. The campus is essentially a long office space that is

adjacent to a coffee shop on one side and another business on the other side. Upon entering the campus, there are two computers to the left of the office space that community members can access. The front entrance also houses an administrative clerk's workspace and desk, along with a photocopier, fax machine and printer, which community members can use with staff assistance for a nominal fee. To the left of the clerk's desk is a door that connects to the coffee shop.

Cambrian College employees, clients, students, coffee shop employees and community members frequently use this door to conveniently move between the spaces in order to access the services of both businesses.

Moving further to the rear of the building is a long, narrow corridor with staff offices on the right and rest rooms and a computer lab/meeting room on the left. At the end of the corridor is the Academic Upgrading professor's office, and the classroom is located on the right of the corridor, directly across from the professor's office.

Participants

A request was made in 2020 to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario for access to specific EIOS-CAMS data fields for the LBS program at the Little Current satellite campus from January 1, 2013 to January 1, 2020. Unfortunately, the LBS data is stored as aggregate data that includes data for the LBS programs at both the Little Current and Espanola campuses. The LBS programs at both campuses are funded as one program by MLTSD, so data is collected as such. This means the data for the Little Current campus cannot be extracted from the aggregate data. Nevertheless, the data provides a general description of the population who attended the Upgrading program at the Little Current campus.

The following data pertains to all learners who participated in the LBS program at the Little Current and Espanola campuses from January 1, 2013 to January 1, 2020 (Ontario Ministry

of Labour, Training and Skills Development, 2020). The total number of participants who attended the program was 559, and 61% of these participants were female while 39% of these participants were male. 62% of participants in the LBS program were from a marginalized group: 33% identified as Aboriginal, 3% identified as a visible minority, 21% identified as a person with a disability, 2% identified as a newcomer, and 3% identified as Francophone. 66% of LBS participants had less than a Grade 12 education. 58% of LBS participants experienced an interrupted education. 54% of participants relied on government income support, such as Ontario Works (OW), Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), or Employment Insurance (EI) while 14% of participants reported having no income. The average age of participants was 34, and 55% of the participants were below the age of 30. Upon entry into the program, 50% of participants assessed at the lowest level of literacy of the three level Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF), Level 1, and 29% of participants assessed at Level 2. To put this into context, if an individual achieves assessment results near the upper end of the Level 3 performance indicator on the OALCF the individual may not receive free LBS services funded by the provincial government. The three levels of the OALCF are aligned with the first three levels of the Essential Skills Framework, and the OALCF was informed by the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2015). Participants exited the LBS program for the following reasons: 3% changed their goals, 8% moved out of the area, 23% completed the program, 5% found work unrelated to their goals, 11% found work related to their goals, 33% exited the program for personal reasons, 4% became unreachable. 98% of participants reported that they were satisfied with the program.

Sampling

Purposeful sampling was used in this study. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) point out that “in purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (p. 206). More specifically, the sampling strategy used was homogenous sampling, where all participants shared at least one commonality: the experience of being an adult learner in Cambrian College’s Academic Upgrading program on Manitoulin Island. The researcher chose to conduct the study at this specific site for three primary reasons. One, since the researcher is the professor at the site, the researcher was interested in elucidating findings that are applicable and actionable to his employment setting. Two, since Cambrian College partially funded the graduate degree, the researcher felt it was a suitable endeavour to conduct research that could benefit the educational institution, its employees and its students. Three, the researcher is not a local of the area, so the researcher had the desire to learn more about the barriers to education that local adults encounter.

Sample Size

Past and Current Learners.

Participants for the study were recruited using College administrative files at the study site. Participants were required to have been a registered learner in the LBS program at the study site within the last seven years: between January 1, 2013 and January 1, 2020. From the learner files, a database of 112 past and current learners was compiled. All persons in the database were invited to participate in the research. Of this population, 11 individuals completed a questionnaire, and three of the individuals who completed the questionnaire also participated in a private interview.

Past and Current Employees.

Employees of the satellite campus who worked directly with or alongside the Academic Upgrading program between January 1, 2013 and January 1, 2020 were contacted: 13 support staff and one past professor. In total, 14 employees were invited to interview. Of the 14 employees contacted, two employees participated in private interviews.

Recruitment Process

Participants were incentivized to participate in the study using two separate raffles for a \$100 Amazon gift card. Those participants who complete a questionnaire were given the chance to enter a raffle for a gift, and those participants who partook in an interview were given a chance to win a \$100 Amazon gift card. If participants withdrew from the study and/or withdrew their data from the study, they would have been entered in the raffle too. However, participant withdrawal and participant data withdrawal were not limitations in this study.

All contact with participants regarding recruitment was initiated using scripts: email scripts and telephone scripts. These scripts were drafted by the researcher and approved by the ICEHR.

Past and Current Learners.

Using the database that was compiled from learner files, a volunteer support staff person contacted all individuals in the database, by email or by telephone, to invite them to participate in the questionnaire. The requirement to contact some past and current learners by telephone was necessary because their learner files did not contain email addresses. The support staff contacted learners in lieu of the researcher, to mitigate the perceived risk of undue influence by the researcher, who is also the professor at the research site. The same support staff provided administrative support for the duration of the study.

The initial recruitment email contained a link to the Qualtrics survey platform where the questionnaire was hosted. Using the Qualtrics platform, an informed consent form was placed before the questionnaire in sequential order. At the end of the questionnaire, the participants were asked if they consented to being contacted for a follow-up interview.

If the participants were contacted by phone, the support staff person verbally invited them to participate in the questionnaire. If they chose to participate in the questionnaire, the support staff person mailed packages containing printed copies of the informed consent form, the questionnaire, and the consent to be contacted for a follow-up interview form to the participants, using Canada Post as the mail courier.

Approximately two months after the initial invite to participate in the questionnaire, a reminder of the invite to participate in the questionnaire was emailed to participants with email addresses. As well, participants who were mailed packages via Canada Post received a reminder by telephone. Eight participants completed the questionnaire online while four individuals were mailed packages, but only three of the four individuals who were mailed packages completed the questionnaire.

Ten of the 11 questionnaire participants consented to be interviewed. To collect as much data as possible, all 10 of these participants were contacted by the support staff person to book an interview. Four participants booked an interview, and three of these participants completed the interview.

Past and Current Employees.

The support staff person emailed 14 past and current employees to invite them to participate in the research. To ensure employee confidentiality, employees interested in participating in the interview were asked to contact the researcher directly, not the research

support staff person. Approximately a month after the first invite to participate, a reminder of the invite to participate in the research was emailed to the same employees by the research support staff person. In total, two employees contacted the researcher, and both employees completed an interview.

Data Collection

Questionnaire

Questionnaire data collection began in May and ended in mid-June. Questionnaire data was collected electronically using the Qualtrics platform, or data was alternatively collected using mailed paper copies of the questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 25 questions, and many questions contained sub-questions; the questionnaire contained a total of 38 items (see Appendix F). The questionnaire included closed-ended, mostly Likert-type questions, and a few open-ended questions. For variety in the questionnaire, Likert-type questions were designed with two main scales: 1 to 5 and Completely Disagree to Completely Agree. Although a larger proportion of the questions were designed to use the latter scale because the researcher perceived that this format would be more approachable to the participants.

Closed-ended questions pertained to the following: a) reasons for enrolling in the program, b) time spent in the program, c) self-efficacy in school, d) attitudes toward school, e) family and community influence in attending the Upgrading program, f) the relevance of the Upgrading program to community and culture, g) isolation vs community/peer connection while enrolled in the Upgrading program, h) institutional supports, i) the perception of employment opportunity as a result of participating in the program, j) the barriers of participation and persistence if employed while attending the program, and k) learning preferences. As well, broad, open-ended questions were used to extract richer and more spontaneous responses from

the participants. Since the closed-ended questions were specific, the researcher believed it was important to give the participants a chance to elaborate on their experiences in the Upgrading program.

The identity of the questionnaire participants was unknown to the researcher. To ensure the participants' anonymity to the researcher, the support staff person accessed the Qualtrics platform to download an Excel file which compiled the data from the completed questionnaires. She downloaded the file and sent the file to the researcher for analysis. However, the names and contact information of the participants were redacted before the file was emailed to the researcher. Also, names and contact information were redacted from paper copies of the questionnaire before being sent to the researcher.

To note, Qualtrics is the survey tool licenced and used by researchers at Memorial University. Use of this survey tool was required by the ICEHR and represented an additional external constraint on this research project.

Interviews

Two groups of participants were invited to interview: past and current students who completed the questionnaire and past and current employees who worked at the campus within the last seven years of this research. It is important to mention, before students consented to an interview, they were informed that the researcher would become aware of their participation in the study because the researcher would be conducting the interviews. Furthermore, the identities of students who volunteered to interview were not revealed to the researcher until the end of the winter semester once all grades were submitted.

Interviews were semi-structured, and they were conducted using loosely defined interview protocols. Semi-structured interviews were selected as a data collection tool for two

primary reasons. One, although interview questions for each interviewee were mostly developed from a list of guiding questions, in the case of the past and current student interviewees, the questions were adjusted or eliminated to account for answers to previous questions that the students had already given on the questionnaire. This technique allowed the researcher to probe deeper into the answers that student interviewees provided on the questionnaire. Two, a semi-structured interview format fostered a relaxed environment where a discussion could evolve organically. Given the researcher's familiarity with some of the participants, a strict interview protocol and interview format focused on the same questions for each interviewee would have been unnatural and uncomfortable.

Since virtual and phone interviews were conducted, due to COVID-19 physical distancing precautions, an oral consent form was used. Before each interview, each interviewee was emailed or mailed a copy of the oral consent form. Interviewees were asked to read the consent form before the interview.

Before each interview began, the researcher read the consent form to the interviewee and documented oral consent on the researcher's copy of the consent form. All the interviewees gave consent to audio record their interviews. Virtual interviews were conducted using the Zoom platform. Since the researcher had ICEHR approval to audio record the Zoom interviews, the interviewees were asked to turn off their cameras, so the researcher could solely record audio. Zoom interviews were saved to the researcher's password protected computer and backed up to a USB memory device that was locked in a room at the researcher's residence. Once all the Zoom interviews were transcribed, interviews were deleted from the researcher's laptop. Three participants chose to interview by Zoom: two employees and one student.

Telephone interviews were recorded using the application Call Recorder which was downloaded to the researcher's cellphone. Telephone interviews were saved on the researcher's cellphone and backed up to a USB memory device that was locked in a room at the researcher's residence. Once all the telephone interviews were transcribed, the audio recordings of the interviews were deleted from the researcher's cellphone. Two of the student participants chose to interview by telephone.

All participants were given pseudonyms in their interview transcriptions. After each interview was transcribed, the interviewer drafted a summary of the interview. Participants were sent the transcriptions and summaries of their interviews, and the participants were asked to review these documents for accuracy and to ensure they were comfortable with the text data being used in direct quotations. Also, participants were asked to inform the researcher of any identifying details which may reveal their identities, so these details could be redacted from the transcripts and the summaries; all the participants were satisfied with the interview transcriptions and summaries.

Data Analysis

Questionnaire data were analyzed using two methods. Firstly, closed-ended questions were analyzed using frequency distributions and bar charts. Secondly, data from the open-ended questions were analyzed in relation to the data collected from the interview questions, using thematic analysis. Open-ended questionnaire questions and interview data were not analyzed using software.

Text data from interview transcriptions were also analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves coding qualitative data. The process of comparing codes across qualitative documents can then be used to reveal themes in the data. According to the School of

Psychology at the University of Auckland New Zealand (n.d.), the process of carrying out thematic analysis involves six steps: a) familiarization with the data, b) coding, c) generating initial themes, d) reviewing themes, e) defining and naming themes, and f) writing up. The process of coding, generating, defining and naming themes involved numerous iterations until the researcher was satisfied that he had suitably categorized the qualitative data into appropriate themes.

Coding the qualitative data from the questionnaires and interviews was a lengthy process. To begin with, interviews were transcribed in Microsoft Word. Following the transcription of the interviews, each transcription was read numerous times, so the researcher could familiarize himself with the data. Additionally, the qualitative data from the questionnaires was reviewed many times, which allowed the researcher to familiarize himself with the open-ended questionnaire data. Through the data familiarization process, the researcher began to recognize patterns of ideas/thoughts/words which repeated throughout the interview transcriptions and questionnaires. Once the researcher recognized these emerging patterns, he began to colour code emerging themes, using varying colours of highlighters and pencil crayons.

The words, phrases and sentences that represented emerging themes were transcribed into Excel spreadsheets: one spreadsheet was created for each interview transcription. Additionally, the coinciding open-ended questionnaire themes and interview transcription themes for each student who participated in a questionnaire and an interview were combined in the same Excel spreadsheet. Furthermore, emergent themes from the questionnaire data of students who did not participate in interviews were transcribed onto a separate Excel spreadsheet. Emergent themes from the interview transcriptions and qualitative questionnaire data were closely compared to the

Excel spreadsheets to ensure the transfer of data was accurate. The emergent themes in the Excel spreadsheets were colour coded with highlighters and pencil crayons.

The initial themes in each Excel spreadsheet were compared to each other in order to review the themes that had emerged. Following this review, the emergent themes that repeated in at least three more separate documents were named and defined. Additionally, in order to be reported in the findings, each theme or subtheme that arose from the data was required to be triangulated by the data of at least one student and two employees or two students and one employee. This process was time consuming because properly categorizing the data under the appropriate themes and subthemes was an iterative process. Numerous times in the process, themes and subthemes were required to be renamed and redefined, and the data was required to be reclassified.

Quantitative questionnaire data enhanced the qualitative data collected from the questionnaires and interviews. When possible, qualitative and quantitative data were compared to the findings and theories available in the relevant adult learning, ABE and rural education literature that was reviewed in this paper. This process helped to generate the “Discussion” chapter of the paper.

Researcher Bias

In the conduct of research, researcher bias must be considered. Bias can be conscious and unconscious, so even the conscientious decision of a researcher to monitor and control for his bias may not be enough to appropriately control for unconscious bias. As a consequence, the researcher must implement measures to mitigate this inherent bias.

The researcher of this study acknowledges that he is biased toward the positive perception of his college, campus, program and reputation. In an effort to mitigate theses biases,

the following measures were implemented. Firstly, this research was submitted to rigorous review by the ICEHR at Memorial University. As mentioned in the “Ethics” section of this paper, the ethics committee was zealous in its interpretation of the TCPS 2. Given the researcher’s role of professor at the satellite campus, the ICEHR was stringent in its control for undue influence in the recruitment of participants in this study. As a result, selection bias was mitigated by the recruitment controls enforced by the ICEHR. Secondly, data was collected from numerous stakeholders at the campus, and every reasonable effort was made to collect data from as many stakeholders as possible, including administrators, support staff, professors and students. Collecting data from many stakeholders helped to mitigate selection bias through the triangulation of participants’ responses. Thirdly, a mixed methods study was conducted, which included two different data collections techniques: questionnaires and interviews. As a result, two different forms of data, quantitative and qualitative data, were analyzed and compiled in order to develop themes, generate discussion points and formulate conclusions. Rather than unconsciously focusing on data that reinforced the researcher’s biases, this active process of comparing quantitative and qualitative data from two different data collection techniques, also a form of triangulation, allowed the researcher to mitigate bias by focusing on themes that echoed throughout various forms of the data. Thus, focusing on reoccurring patterns of data, which were present in a significant portion of the participants’ responses, helped to mitigate researcher bias. Fourthly, after each interview, the researcher transcribed and summarized the interview. A document containing the transcription and summary of a participant’s interview was emailed or mailed to each participant to ensure the document was an accurate representation of the participant’s responses and the interviewer’s interpretation of those responses. This measure helped to reduce researcher bias in the interpretation of the interview data. Lastly, this paper was

submitted to the thorough reviews of a thesis supervisor and two examiners. These reviewers did not raise concerns about potential bias in the conduct of this research.

Chapter 4: Results

Analysis of closed-ended questions on the questionnaire provided a general description of the participants who participated in this study and informed the development of the interview questions. Thematic analysis of text data from both the questionnaires and interviews of past and current students were coded into themes, which enabled the researcher to elucidate factors that contributed to the participation and persistence of research participants in the Upgrading program. Data obtained from employee interviews allowed the researcher to triangulate the themes found in the student data because analysis of both student and employee data allowed the researcher to identify similar themes from ideas that originated in both the student and employee data. Since the sample of participants in this study was taken from a relatively small population of people who attended the Upgrading program and who live on a small island, contextualization of the data is limited in this paper due to anonymity, confidentiality and privacy concerns. Furthermore, in the “Results” and “Discussion” chapters, to further protect the anonymity of the participants, gendered pronouns were replaced with gender neutral third person pronouns, such as they, their, them.

To note, the negative data about the campus, the program and the professors in this study was significantly limited in size, in contrast to positive data. All negative quantitative data was included in the relevant tables and charts of the “Results” chapter. Additionally, where negative qualitative data contributed to support the identified themes in this study, it was included in the relevant tables. If negative qualitative data could not be triangulated to support emergent themes or create new themes, it was omitted from the “Results” chapter of this paper. However, some of the omitted data was discussed in the “Discussion” chapter if the researcher deemed the information added depth, richness and contrast to the discussion of the findings. Furthermore,

discussion of the negative data reported was limited because further clarification from the two participants who provided negative data was not possible. These participants did not elaborate their thoughts in the open-ended questions of the questionnaire, and although they were invited to participate, they did not volunteer to participate in the interviews. Therefore, the researcher was limited in the information available to accurately expand on the discussion of the negative data.

Questionnaire Results from Closed-Ended Questions

In general, the average age of the questionnaire participants when they first began attending the Upgrading program was forty years, with an age range of eighteen to sixty years of age. Ten of the participants were female, approximately 91%. Four of the participants self-identified as being of First Nations descent, approximately 36%, and another student declared they had a disability. Seven of the participants, approximately 70% of the 10 participants who answered the question or 64% of all participants, intended to earn a high school equivalency, ACE, while enrolled in the program. Additionally, one person in this seven thought they was upgrading for college prerequisites when they was in fact partaking in the ACE program; the data was adjusted to include this person in the total of seven participants who intended to earn a high school equivalency. Furthermore, three participants, 30% of the 10 participants who answered the question or 27% of all participants, intended to earn one or more prerequisite courses for a college program. However, all three of these participants believed they were completing the ACE program to earn those pre-requisites when, in actuality, they already had a form of high school completion; the researcher identified this discrepancy when analyzing the data across individuals. It seems some participants did not understand the difference between the ACE program and earning a pre-requisite for college.

Five participants, approximately 45%, spent four or more years in the program, and another five participants, approximately 45%, spent at least 3 months but no more than a year in the program while one participant, approximately 10%, spent two years in the program. Six participants, approximately 55%, exited the program more than once. Ten participants, approximately 91%, reported that employment did not affect their participation in the Upgrading program.

Five participants or approximately 45%, reported that at least one of their parents/caregivers had a high school diploma or equivalent. Two of these participants entered the program with at least a high school diploma or equivalency while three of these participants entered the program with below a grade-12 education. Other participants did not know the education level of their parents, or they chose not to answer the question.

Six participants, approximately 55%, lived in Little Current while enrolled in the Upgrading program. One participant had to commute 8km in one direction to attend the program, and four participants, approximately 36%, had to commute between 42 km to 55 km, one way, to attend the program. Six participants, approximately 55%, preferred to learn in an in-class environment; three of the participants who preferred in-class learning were First Nations, and two of them commuted approximately 50 km, one way to attend class. Four participants, approximately 36%, preferred a blended delivery model, in-class and online, and one other student preferred to learn alone.

Of the ten participants who responded to a question pertaining to goal achievement, two participants, approximately 20%, reported attaining their goals in upgrading, ACE certificates, and five participants, approximately 50%, reported that they are still working on attaining their goals in Upgrading. Of the 50% of participants who are still working on achieving their goals in

Upgrading, two participants intend to earn pre-requisite courses for college, and another two participants intend to earn their ACE certificates. Therefore, approximately 70% of the participants, who answered the question, have either achieved their goals or are persisting to achieve their goals in Upgrading.

Ages of Questionnaire Participants upon Entry into the Upgrading Program

Questionnaire participants were asked to report their respective ages when they first began participating in the Upgrading program. The average age of participants who reported their ages was 40 years old, and the age range of these participants was 18-60 years of age. Ten participants answered this question, or approximately 91% of participants answered this question.

Table 1. *Age Distribution of Questionnaire Participants*

Age Range	Number of Participants
15-20	2
21-30	2
31-40	1
41-50	1
51-60	3
61-70	1
Participant did not disclose age	1

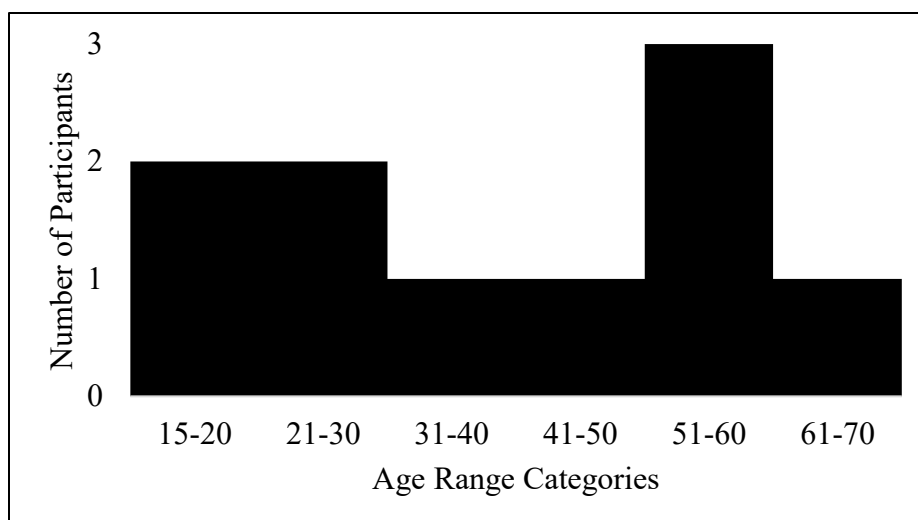


Figure 1. *Age Distribution of Questionnaire Participants upon Entry into the Upgrading Program*

Gender of Questionnaire Participants

The gender of the participants was primarily female. Approximately 91% of the participants identified as female while approximately 9% of participants identified as male.

Table 2. *Gender of Questionnaire Participants*

Gender	Frequency
Female	10
Male	1

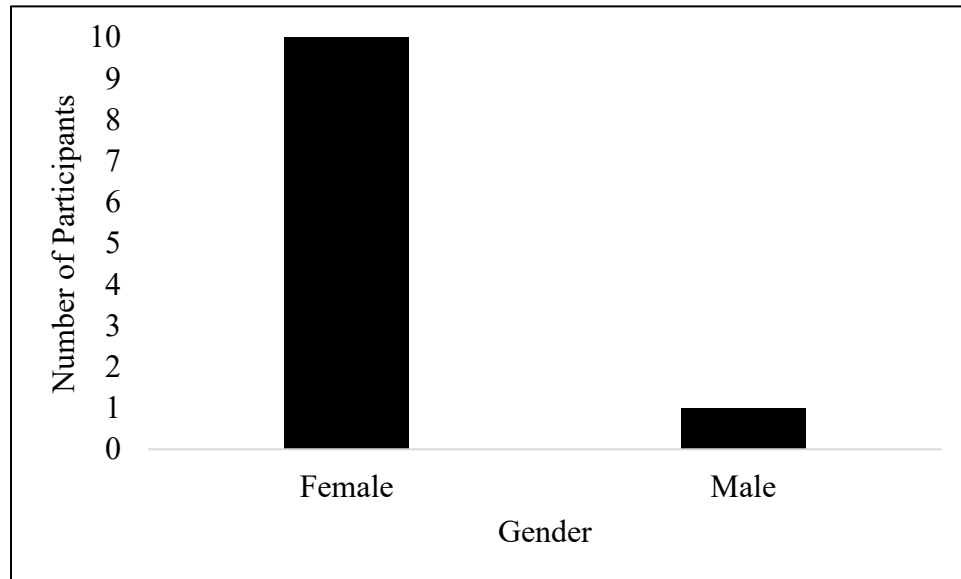


Figure 2. *Gender of Questionnaire Participants*

Members of Designated Groups

Approximately 36% of the participants identified as First Nations. Nine percent of the participants reported having a disability, and 55% of the participants chose not to disclose they were members or were not members of the groups listed in the questionnaire: newcomer, racialized person, Inuit, Metis, First Nations, Francophone, person with a disability, deaf, blind.

Table 3. *Group Identification of Questionnaire Participants*

Group	Number of Participants
I choose not to disclose or I am not a member of the mentioned groups	6
First Nations	4
Person with a Disability	1

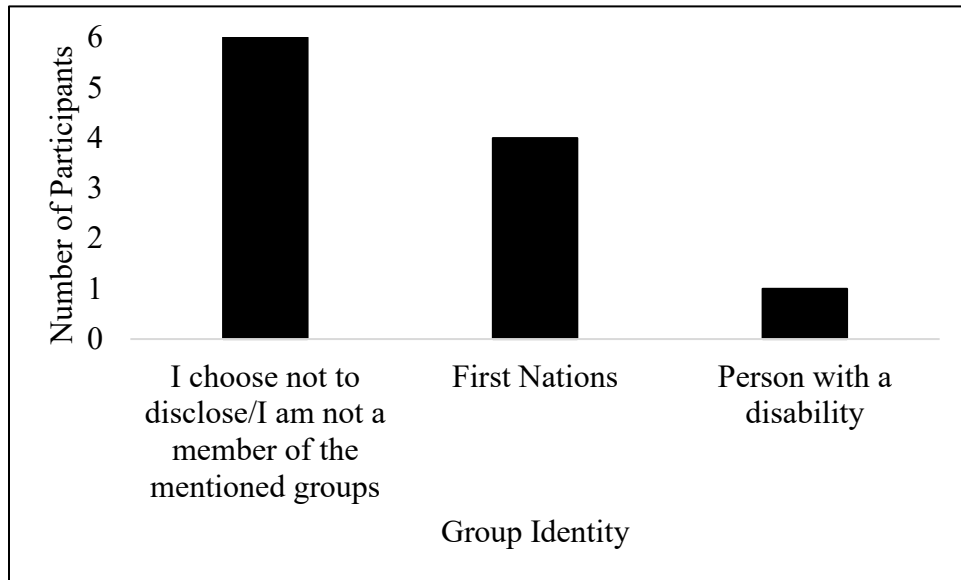


Figure 3. *Group Identification of Questionnaire Participants*

Highest Level of Education upon Entry into the Upgrading Program

Participants were asked to disclose their highest level of education upon entering the Upgrading program. Approximately 46% of the participants did not answer the question while approximately 9% reported elementary school as their highest level of education. Approximately 27% of the participants reported high school as their highest level of education, and 9% of the participants reported a GED as their highest level of education while 9% of the participants reported a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education.

Table 4. *Highest Level of Education of Questionnaire Participants upon Entry into the Upgrading Program*

Education Level	Number of Participants
Chose not to answer the question	5
Elementary School	1
High School Diploma	3
General Education Development Certificate	1
Bachelor's Degree	1

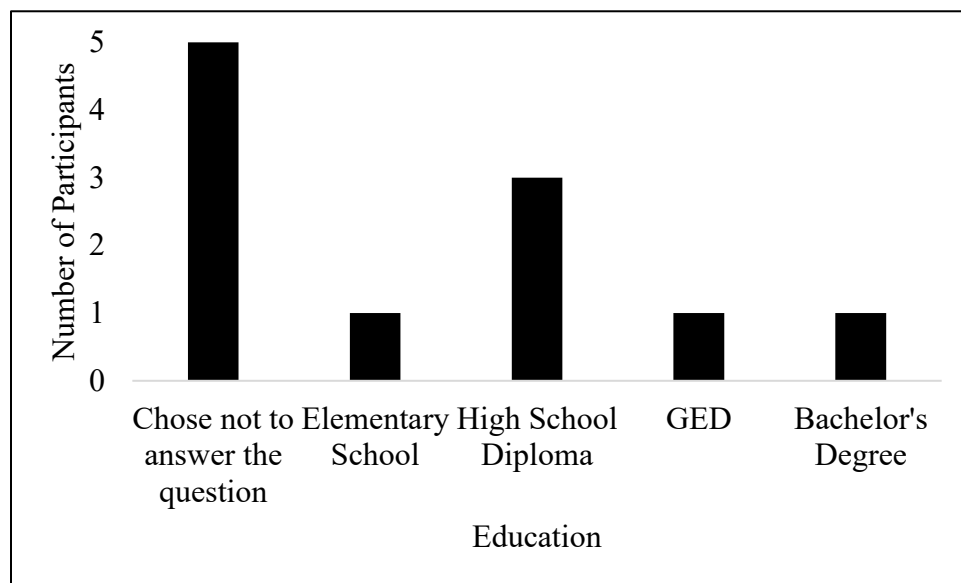


Figure 4. *Highest Level of Education Level of Questionnaire Participants upon Entry into the Upgrading Program*

Reasons for Enrolling in the Upgrading Program

Seventy percent of participants, who answered the question, enrolled in Upgrading to earn a high equivalency (ACE). A further 30% of participants who answered the question enrolled in Upgrading to complete one or more prerequisite courses for a College program, and 9% of participants chose not to answer the question. The number of persons pursuing a high school equivalency was increased from six to seven because a participant defined completing their high school equivalency in the ACE program as a pre-requisite course for college.

Table 5. *Questionnaire Participants' Reasons for Enrolling in the Upgrading Program*

Reasons	Number of Participants
Chose not to answer the questions	1
High School Equivalency	7
Prerequisite course/s for college program	3

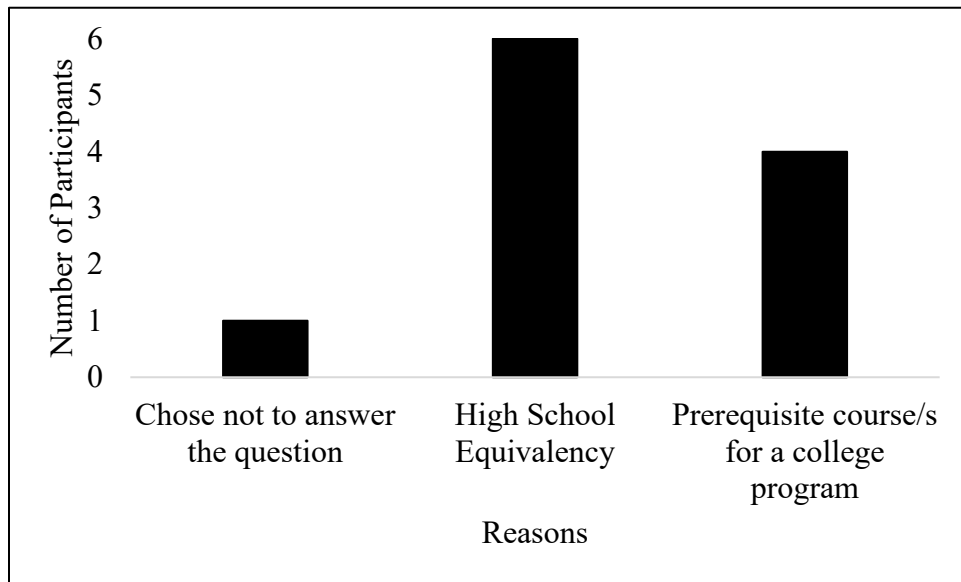


Figure 5. *Questionnaire Participants' Reasons for Enrolling in the Upgrading Program*

Amount of Time Spent Participating in the Upgrading Program

This question was intended to capture the total amount of time each participant had spent in the Upgrading program, including the time accumulated in previous attempts at completing their goals in the program before stop-out or withdrawal. However, at least two participants solely reported the amount of time they had most currently spent in the Upgrading program, such as 1-3 months. The identities of these participants are known to the researcher because they participated in the interviews, and the time they reported did not account for their previous attempts in the program. A more accurate representation of the time accumulated in the program for these two participants was more than 4 years for each individual. Thus, the data in the table was adjusted for the sake of accuracy to add these two participants to the number of participants who had spent four or more years in the program.

After data adjustments, approximately 28% of participants spent 3-6 months in the program. Approximately 18% of participants spent at least one year in the program. Another 9% of participants spent at least 2 years in the program, and about 45% of participants spent at least four or more years in the program.

Table 6. *Amount of Time Questionnaire Participants Spent Participating in the Upgrading Program*

Amount of Time	Number of Participants
1-3 months	0
3-6 months	3
1 year	2
2 years	1
More than 4 years	5

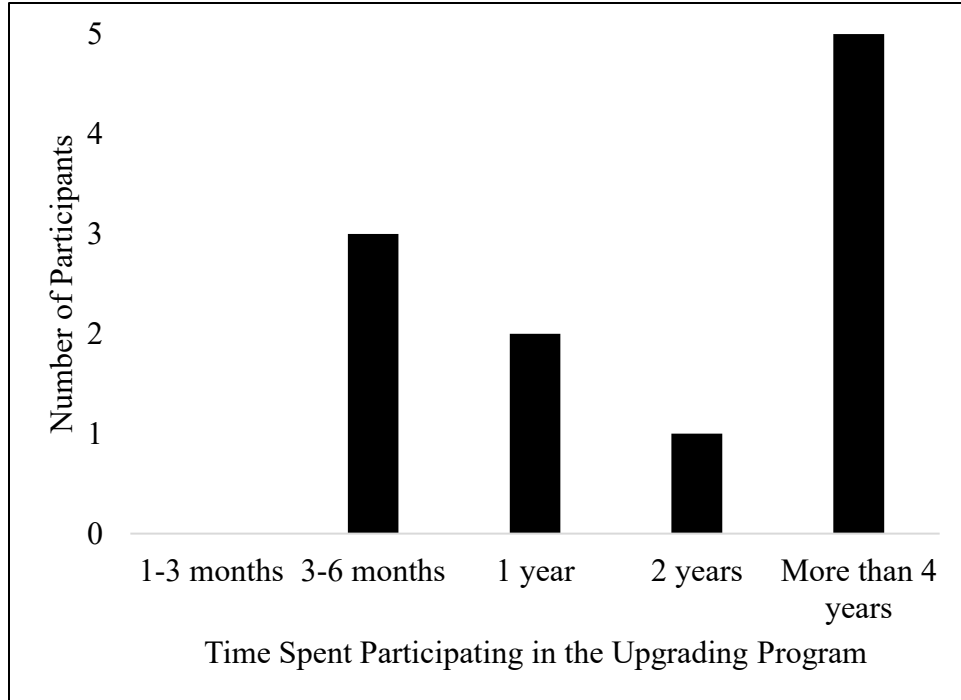


Figure 6. *Amount of Time Questionnaire Participants Spent in the Upgrading Program*

Exiting the Upgrading Program

Approximately 55% of participants stopped-out of the Upgrading program more than once. The remaining 45% of participants had not exited the program, as of yet, or had exited the program once. Four participants who exited the program more than once are still working on achieving their goals in Upgrading. One participant who has not exited the program once is still working on achieving their goal in Upgrading. Two participants, who had only exited the program once, achieved their goals in Upgrading. Two participants, who exited the program once, did not achieve their goals in Upgrading. One participant, who exited the program more than once, did not achieve their goal in Upgrading. One participant, who exited the program

more than once, did not report if they had or had not achieved their goal in Upgrading or if they planned to continue to work on achieving their goal in Upgrading.

Table 7. *Did You Exit the Upgrading Program more than once?*

Answer	Number of Participants
Yes	6
No	5

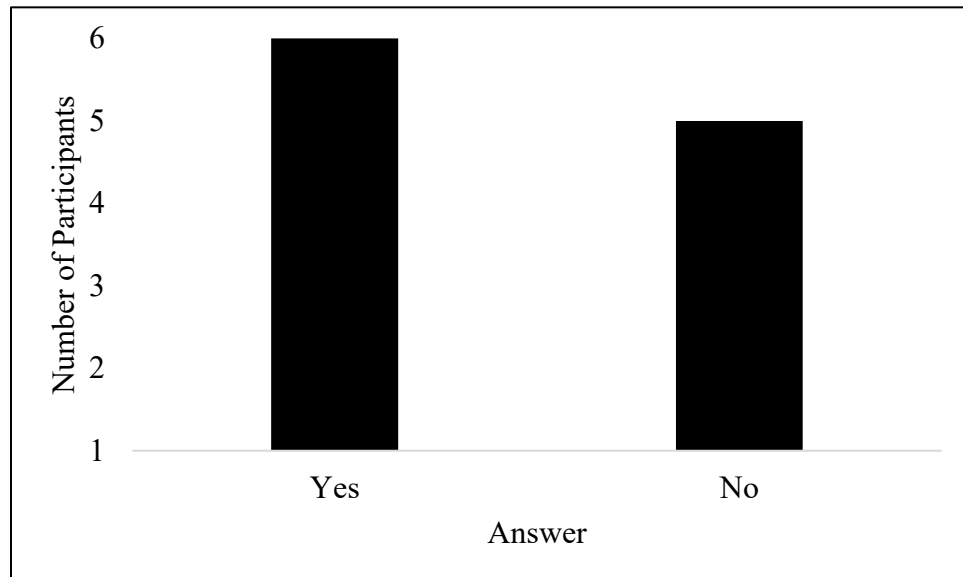


Figure 7. *Did You Exit the Upgrading Program more than once?*

I Am Self-Confident in a School Setting

Ten participants of 11 responded to this statement. Based on a Likert scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, approximately 80% of participants who reported an answer to the statement agreed to strongly agreed that they are self-confident in in a school setting; there was an even split between participants who agreed and strongly agreed to

the statement. The other 20% of participants disagreed to strongly disagreed that they had self-confidence in a school setting. One participant did not answer the question.

Table 8. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "I Am Self-Confident in a School Setting."*

Rating	Number Participants
One	1
Two	1
Three	0
Four	4
Five	4
No Response	1

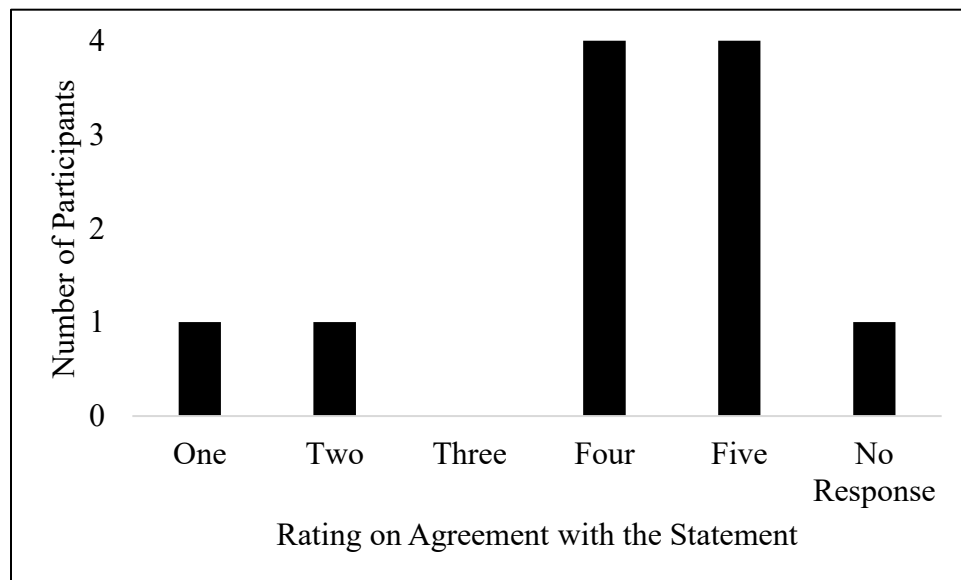


Figure 8. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "I Am Self-Confident in a School Setting."*

I Have a Positive Attitude toward Learning in School

Ten of 11 participants responded to this statement. Based on a Likert scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, approximately 90% of participants who responded to this statement agreed to strongly agreed that they had a positive attitude toward learning in school while approximately 10% of participants strongly disagreed that they had a positive attitude toward learning in school. However, a larger proportion of students, 78%, strongly agreed that they had a positive attitude toward learning in school. One participant did not answer the question.

Table 9. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "I Have a Positive Attitude toward Learning in School."*

Rating	Number of Participants
One	1
Two	0
Three	0
Four	2
Five	7
No Response	1

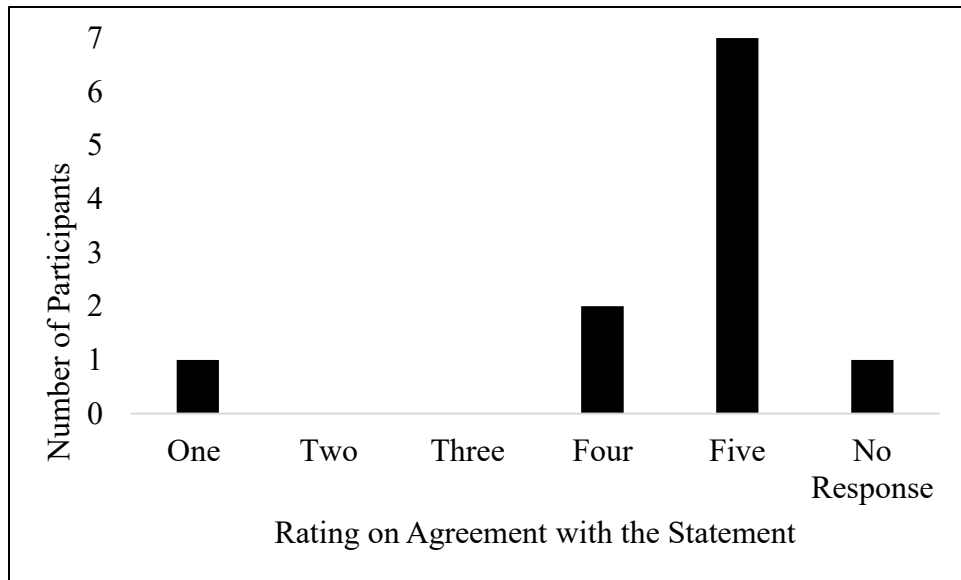


Figure 9. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "I Have a Positive Attitude toward Learning in School."*

Completion of Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) Certificate

Nine of 11 participants responded to this question. According to the data obtained from this question, approximately 22% of participants who answered the question reported completing an ACE certificate at the Manitoulin campus. Approximately 67% of participants reported beginning the ACE program but not completing it, which means they may still be working on achieving their ACE certificates. From the data, it was determined that two participants of this 67% are still working on achieving their ACE certificates. Three participants of this 67% believed they were working on an ACE certificate, but in fact they were working on prerequisite courses for college. Also, one person believed they was working on prerequisite courses for college, but they was actually working on their high school equivalency, an ACE certificate. Approximately 11% of participants reported that an ACE certificate was not their goal while they attended the Upgrading program, and two participants did not answer the question. To

summarize, the data obtained from this question was partly inaccurate because some participants did not understand that the ACE certificate is a high school equivalency and not a pre-requisite course for college. Although the data obtained from this question is problematic, the data remains in this manuscript because it identifies that there was some confusion surrounding the difference between the ACE certificate and pre-requisite course/s for college.

Table 10. *Questionnaire Participants' Responses to the Question, "Did you Complete an ACE Certificate at Cambrian College's Campus in Little Current?"*.

Response	Number of Participants
Yes	2
No	0
I started the ACE program, but I did not complete it	6
I started the ACE program at Cambrian, but I completed it elsewhere	0
No, an ACE certificate wasn't my goal while I attended the upgrading program	1
No response	2

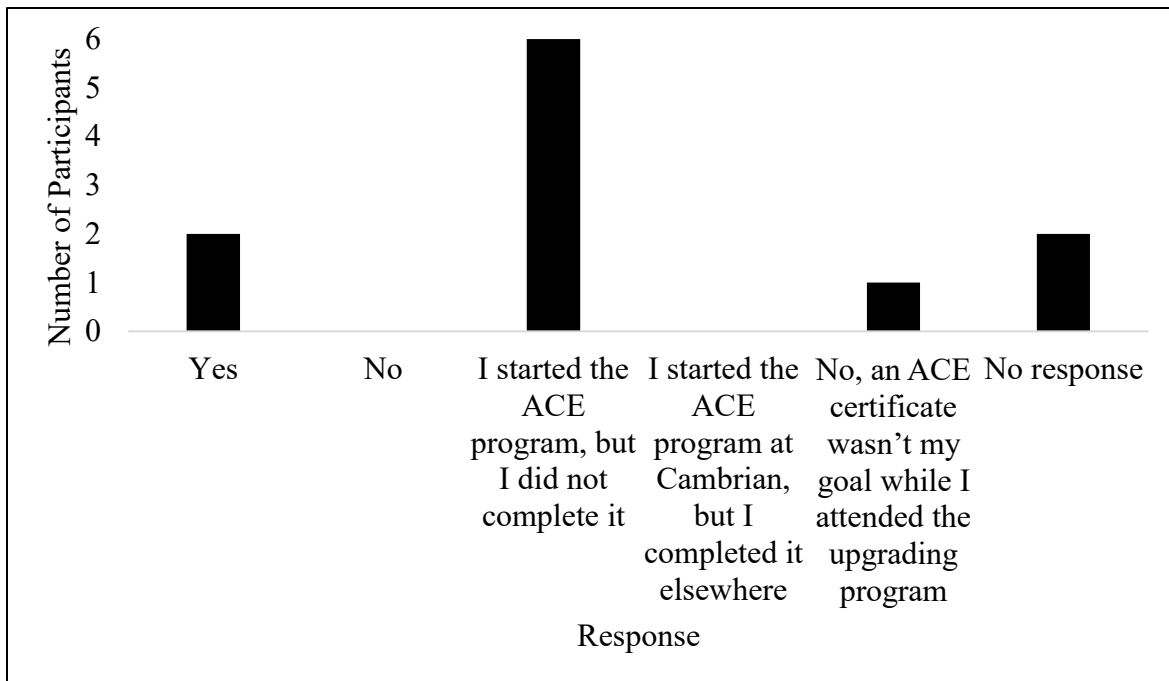


Figure 10. *Questionnaire Participants' Responses to the Question, "Did You Complete an ACE Certificate at Cambrian College's Campus in Little Current?"*.

Parental or Caregiver Completion of Secondary Education

Approximately 45% of participants had at least one parent or caregiver who had completed a high school diploma or high school equivalency while the other 55% of participants did not know, did not think the question was applicable or did not respond to the question.

Table 11. *Questionnaire Participants' Responses to the Question, "Do/Did Your Parents Have a High School Diploma or High School Equivalency?"*.

Response	Number of Participants
One does/did	2
Both do/did	3
I don't know	2
Not applicable	3
No Response	1

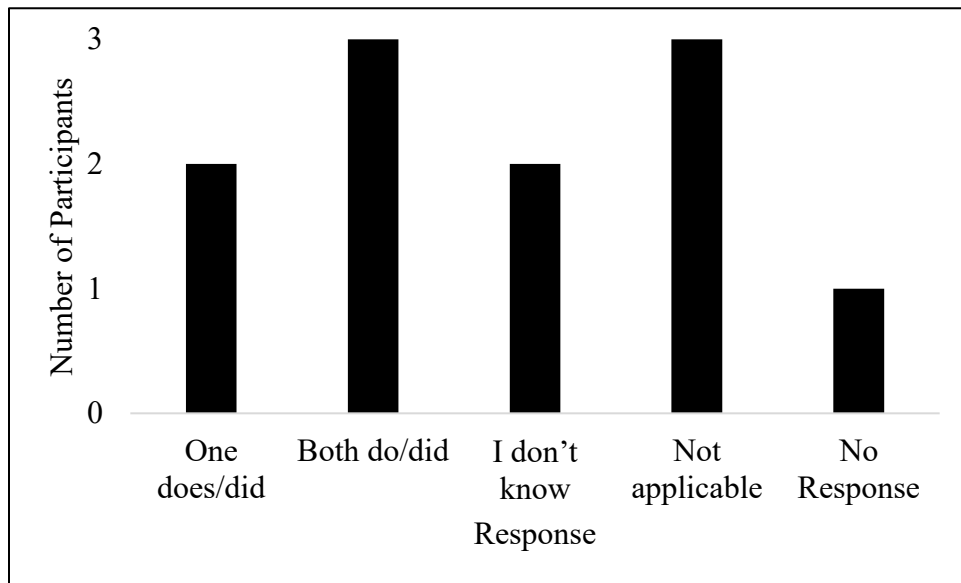


Figure 11. *Questionnaire Participants' Responses to the Question, "Do/Did Your Parents Have a High School Diploma or a High School Equivalency?"*.

Place of Residence While Attending Upgrading

Over half of the participants, approximately 55% resided in Little Current while they attended the Upgrading program. Approximately 9% of the participants resided in Sheguiandah and another 9% of the participants resided in Providence Bay. Approximately 9% of the participants resided in Gore Bay and 18% of the participants resided in Wikwemikong. Therefore, 55% of participants lived in close proximity to the campus while 45% of the

participants had to commute approximately 9 km to 55 km, each way, to attend the Upgrading program.

Table 12. *Questionnaire Participants' Places of Residence While Attending the Upgrading Program*

Response	Number of Participants
Little Current	6
Sheguiandah	1
Providence Bay	1
Gore Bay	1
Wikwemikong	2

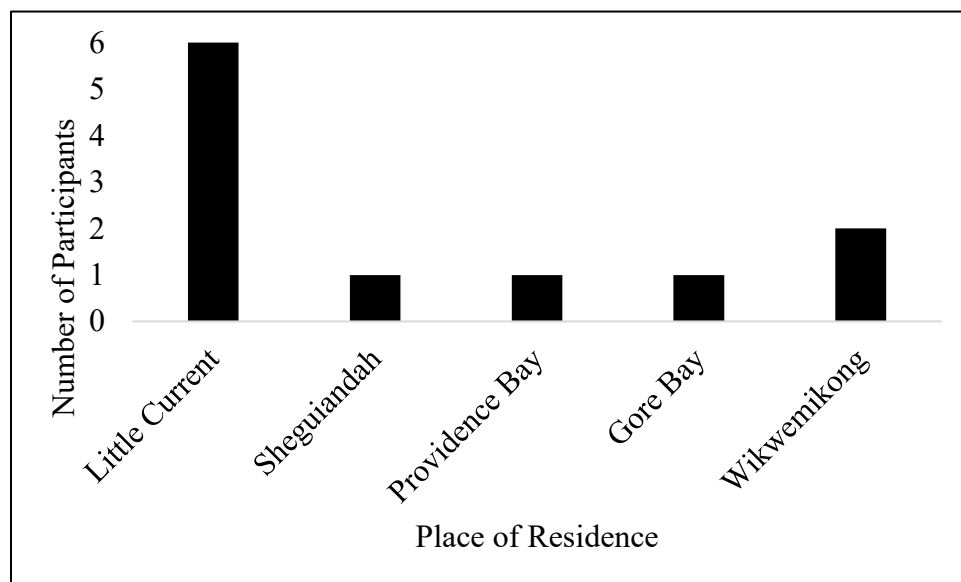


Figure 12. *Questionnaire Participants' Places of Residence While Attending the Upgrading Program*

Influence of Family/Loved Ones on Decision to Go Back to School

Of 11 participants, 10 responded to the statement regarding the influence of significant others in their college enrolment decisions. A large proportion of the participants who responded to the statement, approximately 70%, agreed or completely agreed that their families/loved ones positively influenced their decisions to return to school. Approximately 10% of participants, who responded to the statement, had a neutral position regarding this statement, and approximately 20% of participants, who responded to the statement, completely disagreed or disagreed with this statement. One participant did not respond to the statement. Of four self-identified First Nations participants, three agreed to completely agreed that their families/loved ones positively influenced their decisions to return to school. Interestingly all three of these participants were below the age of thirty while the participant who completely disagreed with the statement was 53 years of age at the time of the questionnaire.

Table 13. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "My Family/Loved Ones Positively Influenced My Decision to Go back to School."*

Level of Agreement	Number of Participants
Completely Disagree	1
Disagree	1
Neutral	1
Agree	3
Completely Agree	4
No Response	1

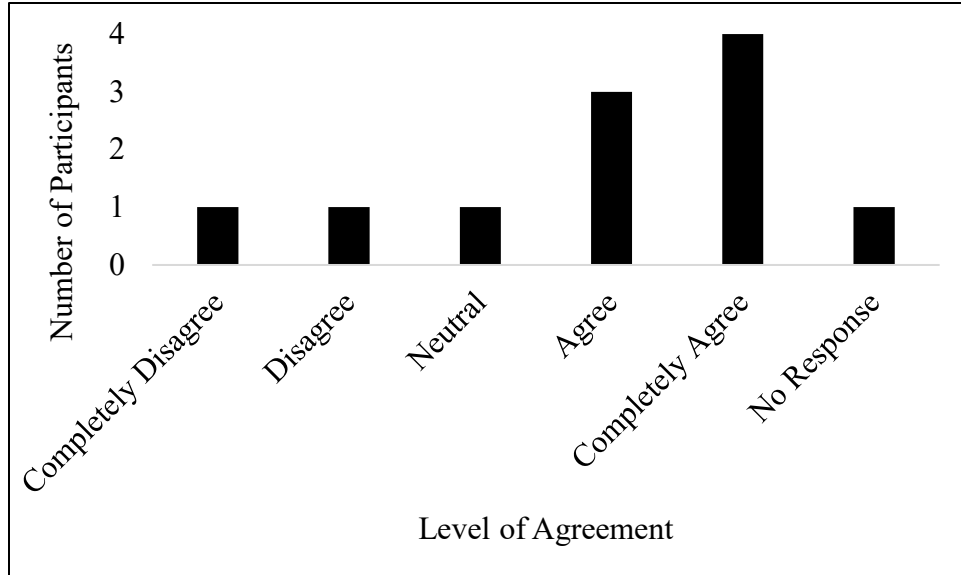


Figure 13. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "My Family/Loved Ones Positively Influenced My Decision to Go back to School."*

Support of Family/Loved Ones on the Decision to Go Back to School

A large proportion of participants, approximately 82%, agreed or completely agreed that their families/loved ones supported their decisions to go back to school. Approximately 9% percent of participants held a neutral position regarding this statement, and another 9% of participants completely disagreed. All four self-identified First Nations participants agreed to completely agreed that their families/loved ones supported their decisions to go back to school.

Table 14. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "My Family/Loved Ones Supported My Decision to Go back to School."*

Level of Agreement	Number of Participants
Completely Disagree	1
Disagree	0
Neutral	1
Agree	4
Completely Agree	5
No Response	0

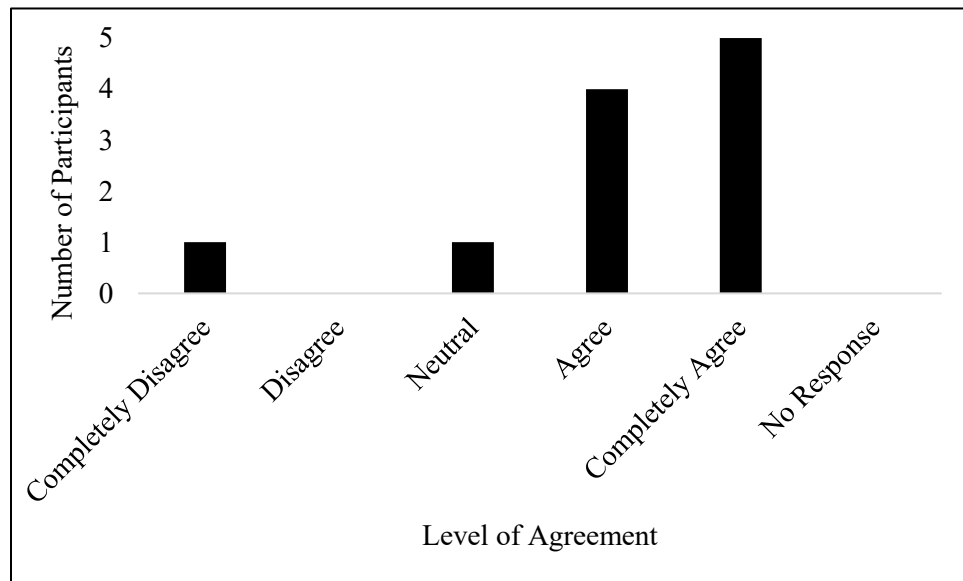


Figure 14. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "My Family/Loved Ones Supported My Decision to Go back to School."*

Community View of Education

Based on a Likert scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, approximately 82% of participants agreed to strongly agreed that their communities had a positive view of education while the remaining 18% of participants strongly disagreed to disagreed that their communities had a positive view of education. Of the four self-identified First Nations participants, three participants strongly agreed that their communities had a positive view of education while one participant disagreed that their community had a positive view of education.

Table 15. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "My Community Has a Positive View of Education."*

Rating	Number of Participants
One	1
Two	1
Three	0
Four	3
Five	6
No Response	0

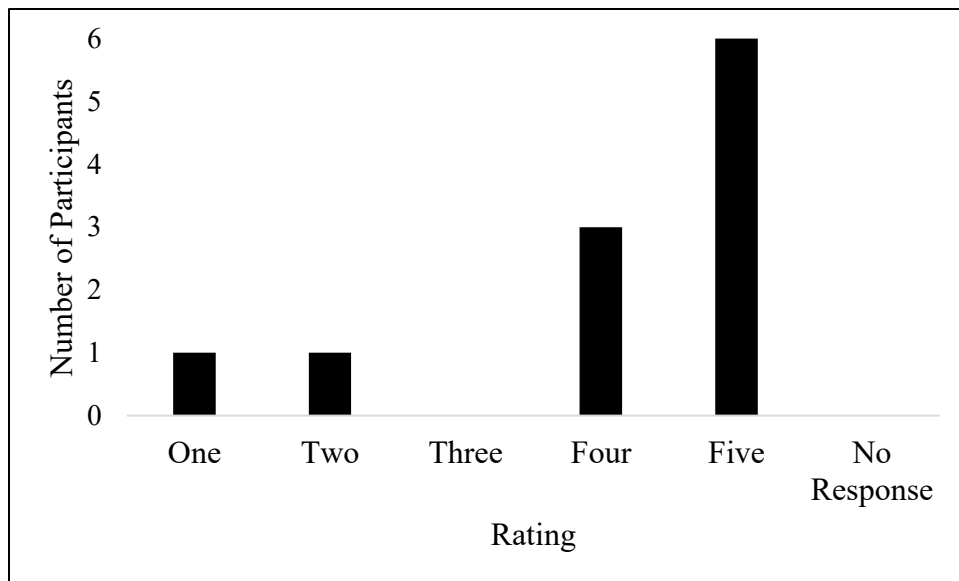


Figure 15. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "My Community Has a Positive View of Education."*

Relevance of Upgrading Program to Communities

Based on a Likert scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, approximately 82% of participants agreed to strongly agreed that the Upgrading program was relevant to their communities while approximately 9% of participants strongly disagreed that the Upgrading program was relevant to their communities. Of the 82% of participants who agreed to strongly agreed that the Upgrading program was relevant to their communities, 78% of these participants strongly agreed that the Upgrading program was relevant to their communities. Of the four self-identified First Nations participants, three participants

strongly agreed that the upgrading program was relevant to their communities while one participant held a neutral view on the statement.

Table 16. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "The Upgrading Program Is Relevant to My Community."*

Rating	Number of Participants
One	1
Two	0
Three	1
Four	2
Five	7
No Response	0

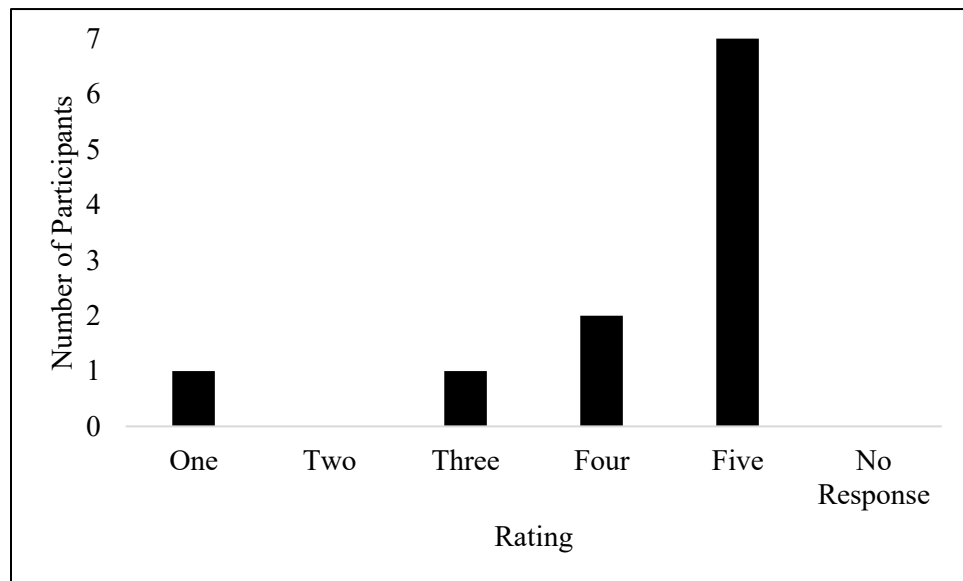


Figure 16. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "The Upgrading Program Is Relevant to My Community."*

Relevance of the Upgrading Program to Culture

Based on a Likert scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, approximately 64% of participants agreed to strongly agreed that the Upgrading program was relevant to their cultures while about 18% of participants strongly disagreed that the Upgrading program was relevant to their cultures. Of the 64% of participants who agreed to strongly agreed that the Upgrading program was relevant to their cultures, 86% of these participants strongly agreed that the Upgrading program was relevant to their cultures. Of the four self-identified First Nations participants, two participants strongly agreed that the Upgrading program was relevant to their cultures. One First Nations participant strongly disagreed that the upgrading program was relevant to their culture, and one First Nations participant held a neutral stance.

Table 17. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "The Upgrading Program Is Relevant to My Culture."*

Rating	Number of Participants
One	2
Two	0
Three	2
Four	1
Five	6
No Response	0

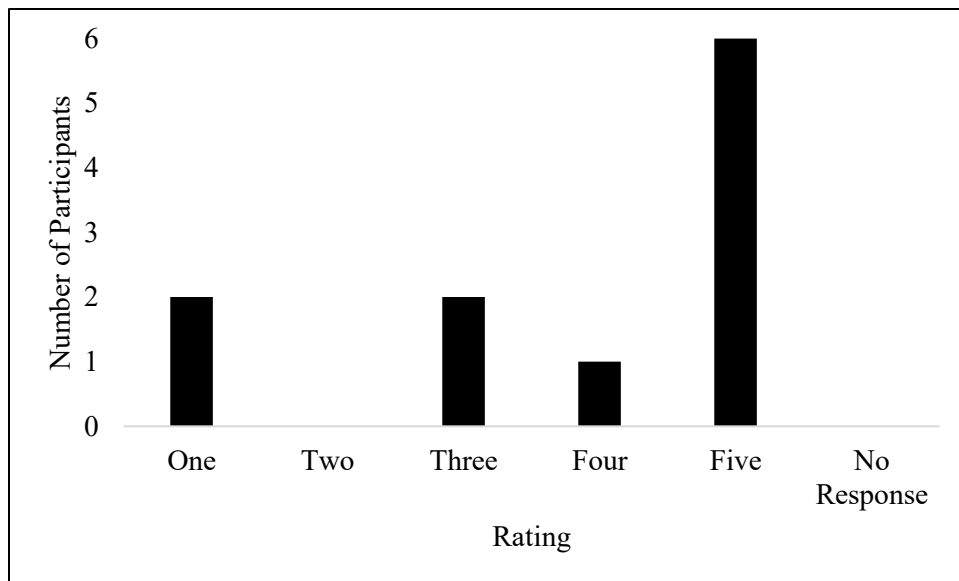


Figure 17. *Questionnaire Participants Agreement with the Statement, "The Upgrading Program Is Relevant to My Culture."*

Upgrading Participants' Feelings of Connection to Their Communities

Based on a Likert scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, approximately 64% of participants agreed to strongly agreed that they felt connected to their communities while they attended the Upgrading program. Of these 64% of participants, approximately 71% strongly agreed that they felt connected to their communities. Another 18% of participants strongly disagreed with the statement. One of these participants who strongly disagreed was from Gore Bay and the other participant was from Little Current. Of the four self-identified First Nations participants, two participants highly agreed that they felt connected to their communities while attending the upgrading program while one participant agreed. One First

Nations participants strongly disagreed that they felt connected to their community while attending the upgrading program, and they resided in Little Current

Table 18. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "While in the Upgrading Program, I Felt Connected to My Community."*

Rating	Number of Participants
One	2
Two	0
Three	2
Four	2
Five	5
No Response	0

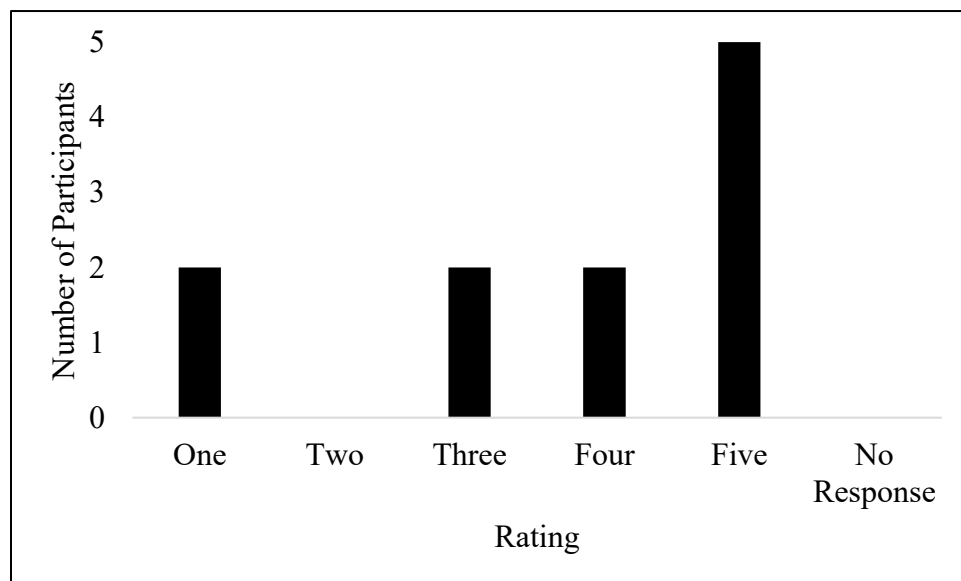


Figure 18. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "While in the Upgrading Program, I Felt Connected to My Community."*

Importance of Relevant Programming to Culture

Based on a Likert scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, approximately 64% of participants agreed to strongly agreed that programming relevant to their cultures was important. Of these 64% of participants, approximately 86% strongly agreed that programming relevant to their cultures was important. Approximately 9% of participants strongly disagreed that programming relevant to their culture was of importance. Of the four self-identified First Nations participants, two participants held a neutral stance while the other two participants were divided between agreement and strong agreement that programming relevant to their cultures was important.

Table 19. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "Programming Relevant to My Culture Is Important to Me."*

Rating	Number of Participants
One	1
Two	0
Three	3
Four	1
Five	6
No Response	0

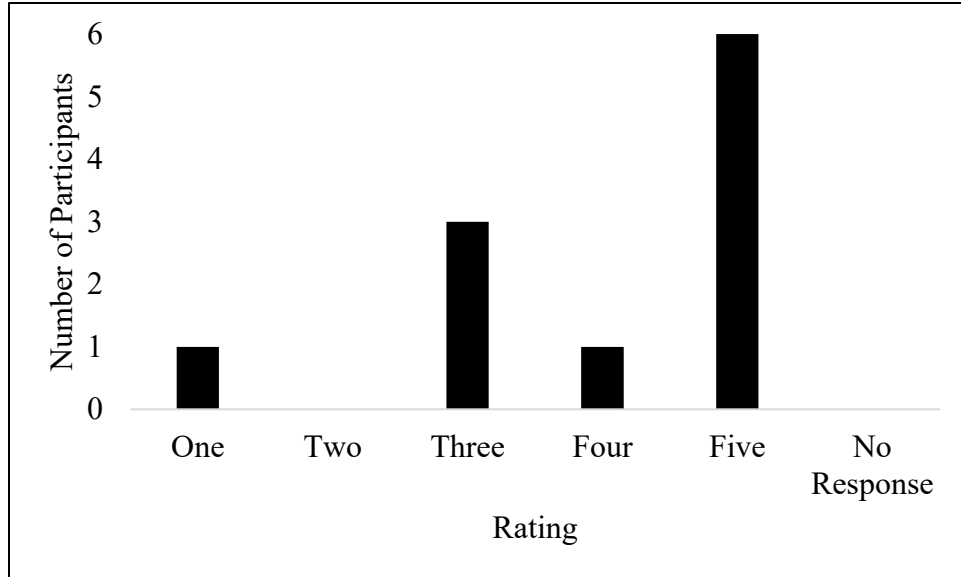


Figure 19. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "Programming Relevant to My Culture Is Important to Me."*

Importance of Community Relevant Programming

Based on a Likert scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, approximately 82% of participants agreed to strongly agreed that programming relevant to their communities was important. Of these 82% of participants, approximately 78% strongly agreed that programming relevant to their communities was important. Approximately 18% of participants strongly disagreed that programming relevant to their communities was important. Of the four self-identified First Nations participants, two strongly agreed that programming relevant to their communities was important while the other two First Nations participants were

divided between agreement and strong disagreement that programming relevant to their communities was important.

Table 20. *Questionnaire Participant's Agreement with the Statement, "Programming Relevant to My Community is Important to Me."*

Rating	Number of Participants
One	2
Two	0
Three	0
Four	2
Five	7
No Response	0

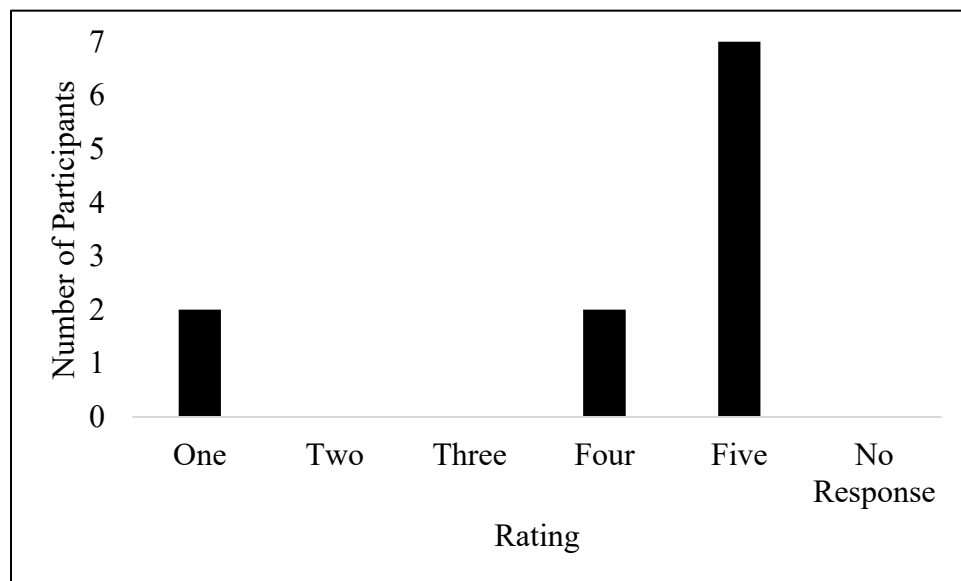


Figure 20. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "Programming Relevant to My Community Is Important to Me."*

Importance of College Reputation to Enrollment

Based on a Likert scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, approximately 82% of participants agreed to strongly agreed that the college's reputation positively affected their decisions to enroll. Of these 82% of participants, approximately 78% strongly agreed that the college's reputation positively affected their decisions to enroll. Approximately 9% of participants strongly disagreed that the college's reputation positively affected their decision to enroll. One participant held a neutral opinion on the statement.

Table 21. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "Cambrian College's Reputation Positively Affected My Decision to Enroll in the Upgrading Program."*

Rating	Number of Participants
One	1
Two	0
Three	1
Four	2
Five	7
No Response	0

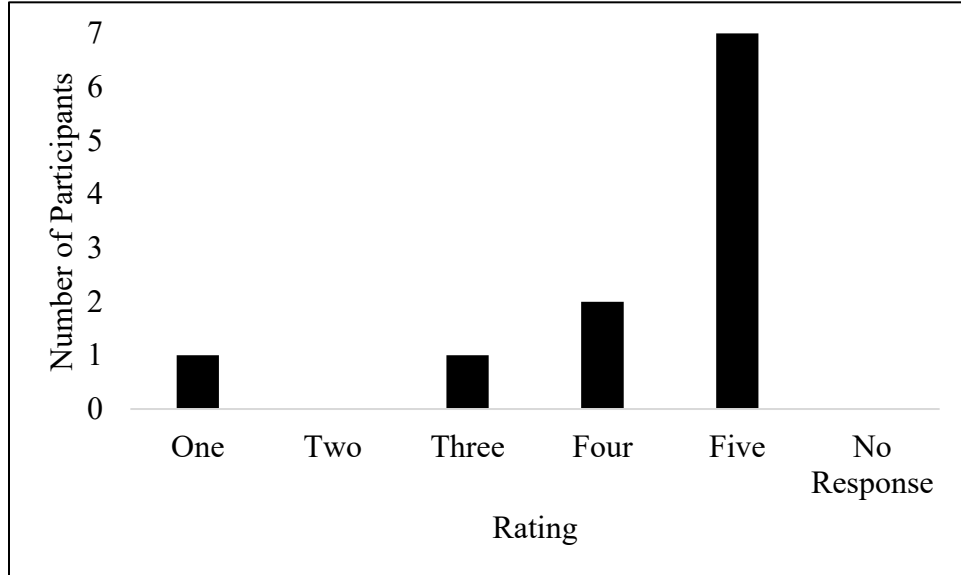


Figure 21. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "Cambrian College's Reputation Positively Affected My Decision to Enroll in the Upgrading Program."*

Affect of Campus Location on Enrollment

Based on a Likert scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, approximately 73% of participants agreed to strongly agreed that the campus' location positively affected their decisions to enroll. Of these 73% of participants, approximately 88% strongly agreed that the campus' location positively affected their decisions to enroll. A further 18% of participants strongly disagreed that the campus' location affected their decisions to

enroll. One of these participants, who strongly disagreed, was from Little Current, and the other participant was from Wikwemikong.

Table 22. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "The Location of the Campus in Little Current Positively Affected My Decision to Enroll in the Upgrading Program."*

Rating	Number of Participants
One	2
Two	0
Three	1
Four	1
Five	7
No Response	0

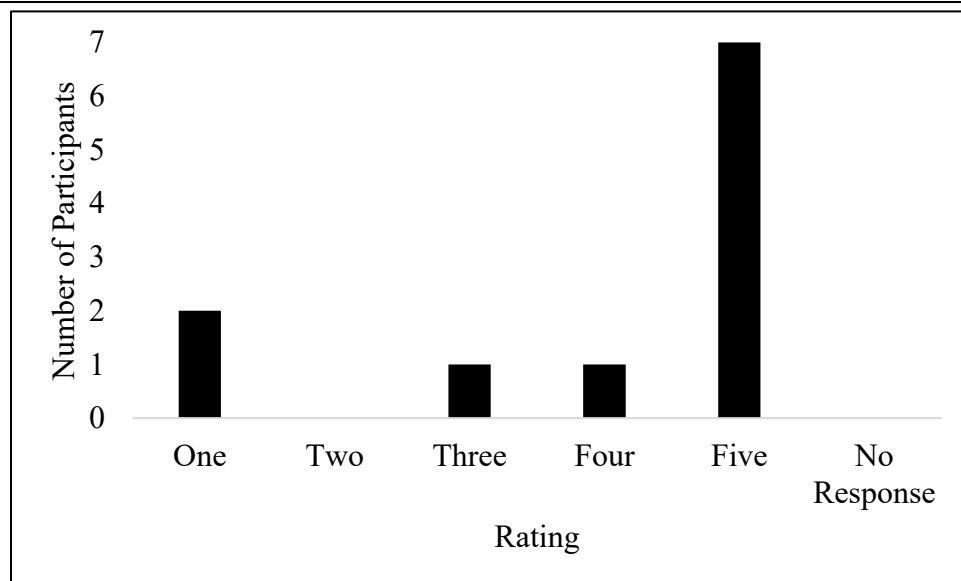


Figure 22. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "The Location of the Campus in Little Current Positively Affected My Decision to Enroll in the Upgrading Program."*

Pace of Learning

Based on a Likert scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, approximately 91% of participants agreed to strongly agreed that they enjoyed learning at their own pace while participating in the Upgrading program. Approximately 80% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement. One participant provided a neutral response to the statement.

Table 23. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "I Enjoyed Learning at My Own Pace when I Participated in the Upgrading Program."*

Rating	Number of Participants
One	0
Two	0
Three	1
Four	2
Five	8
No Response	0

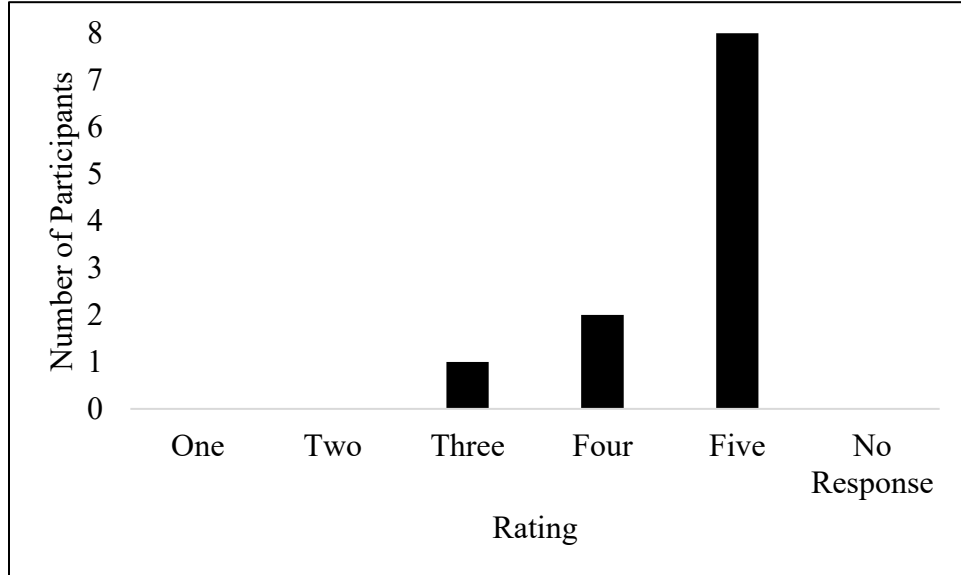


Figure 23. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "I Enjoyed Learning at My Own Pace when I Participated in the Upgrading Program."*

Learning Independently

Based on a Likert scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, approximately 82% of participants agreed to strongly agreed that they enjoyed learning independently while participating in the Upgrading program. Approximately 78% of these participants strongly agreed with the statement. One participant strongly disagreed, and another participant provided a neutral response.

Table 24. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "I Enjoyed Learning Independently when I Participated in the Upgrading Program."*

Rating	Number of Participants
One	1
Two	0
Three	1
Four	2
Five	7
No Response	0

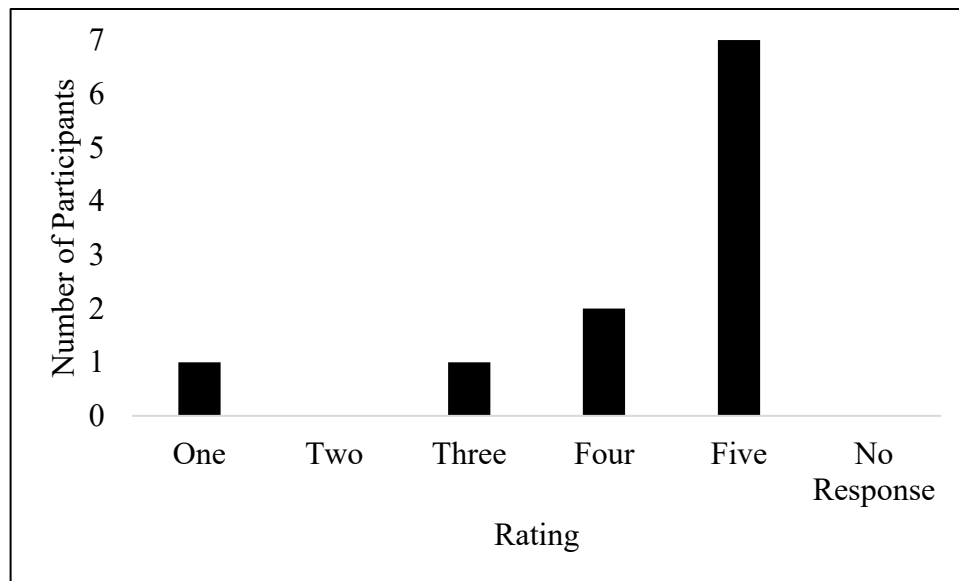


Figure 24. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "I Enjoyed Learning Independently when I Participated in the Upgrading Program."*

Preferred Learning Environment

Of 11 participants, approximately 55% preferred in class learning, 36% preferred blended delivery, and 9% preferred learning alone. Of the four First Nations participants, three preferred learning in class while one preferred a blended form of learning.

Table 25. *Questionnaire Participants' Responses to the Question, "How Do You Learn Best?"*.

Learning Environment	Number of Participants
In-Class	6
Online	0
Blended (Both in-class and online)	4
Alone	1
Other	0

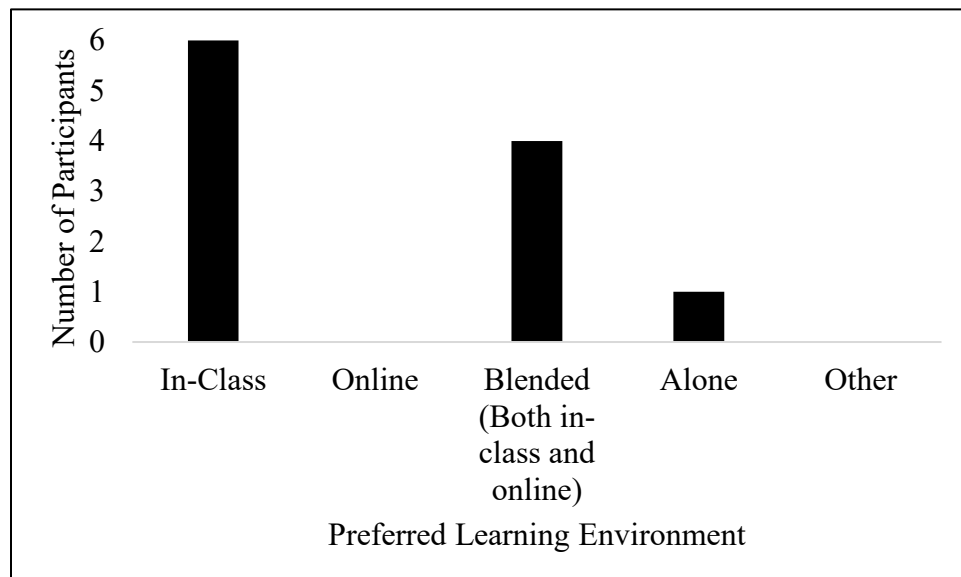


Figure 25. *Questionnaire Participants' Responses to the Question, "How Do You Learn Best?"*.

Perceived Influence of a High School Diploma or High School Equivalency on Job Security within Participants' Communities

Of the 11 participants, approximately 73% agreed to strongly agreed that achieving a high school diploma or equivalency would increase their chances of finding a job in their respective communities, and approximately 88% of this group strongly agreed with the statement. About 9% of participants strongly disagreed with the statement while 18% of participants responded neutrally to the statement.

Table 26. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "Achieving a High School Diploma or High School Equivalency Increases My Chances of Finding a Job in My Community."*

Rating	Number of Participants
One	1
Two	0
Three	2
Four	1
Five	7
No Response	0

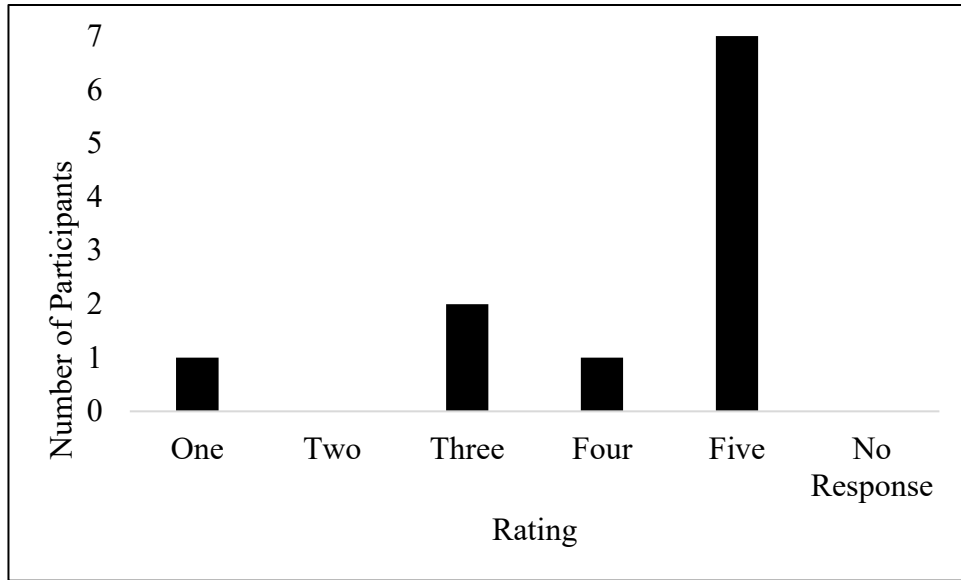


Figure 26. *Questionnaire Participant's Agreement with the Statement, "Achieving a High School Diploma or a High School Equivalency Increases My Chances of Finding a Job in My Community."*

Perceived Influence of a High School Diploma or High School Equivalency on Job Security outside Participants' Communities

Of the 11 participants, approximately 82% agreed to strongly agreed that achieving a high school diploma or equivalency would increase their chances of finding a job outside their communities, and 67% of this group strongly agreed with the statement. Approximately 18% of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 27. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "Achieving a High School Diploma or a High School Equivalency Increases My Chances of Finding a Job outside My Community."*

Rating	Number of Participants
One	2
Two	0
Three	0
Four	3
Five	6
No Response	0

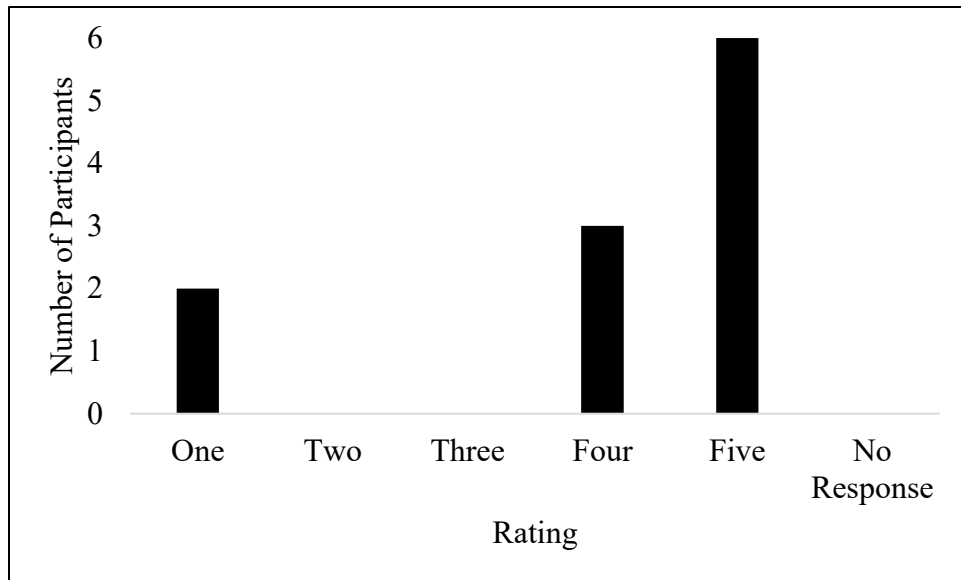


Figure 27. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "Achieving a High School Diploma or a High School Equivalency Increases My Chances of Finding a Job Outside My Community."*

Affect of Employment on Upgrading Attendance

Employment did not interfere with the attendance of approximately 91% of the participants. Only one participant reported that employment was a factor which negatively affected their attendance.

Table 28. *Questionnaire Participants' Responses to the Question, "Did Employment Negatively Affect Your Ability to Attend the Upgrading Program?"*.

Responses	Number of Participants
No	6
Yes	1
I had to exit the program because of employment	0
I wasn't working while attending the upgrading program	4

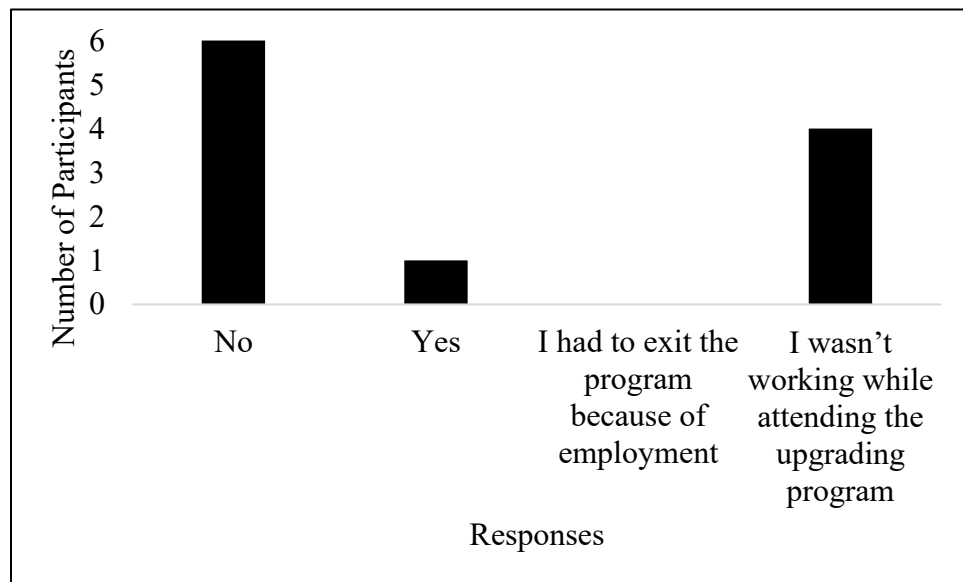


Figure 28. *Questionnaire Participants' Responses to the Question, "Did Employment Negatively Affect Your Ability to Attend the Upgrading Program?"*.

Perception of Community in the Classroom

Of the 10 participants who responded to the statement, approximately 80% agreed to strongly agreed that they felt a sense of community in the Upgrading classroom, and 75% of this group strongly agreed with the statement. As well, a further 10% of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement while the other 10% of the participants reported a neutral position.

Table 29. *Questionnaire Participants' Response to the Statement, "I Felt a Sense of Community in the Upgrading Classroom."*

Rating	Number of Participants
One	1
Two	0
Three	1
Four	2
Five	6
No Response	1

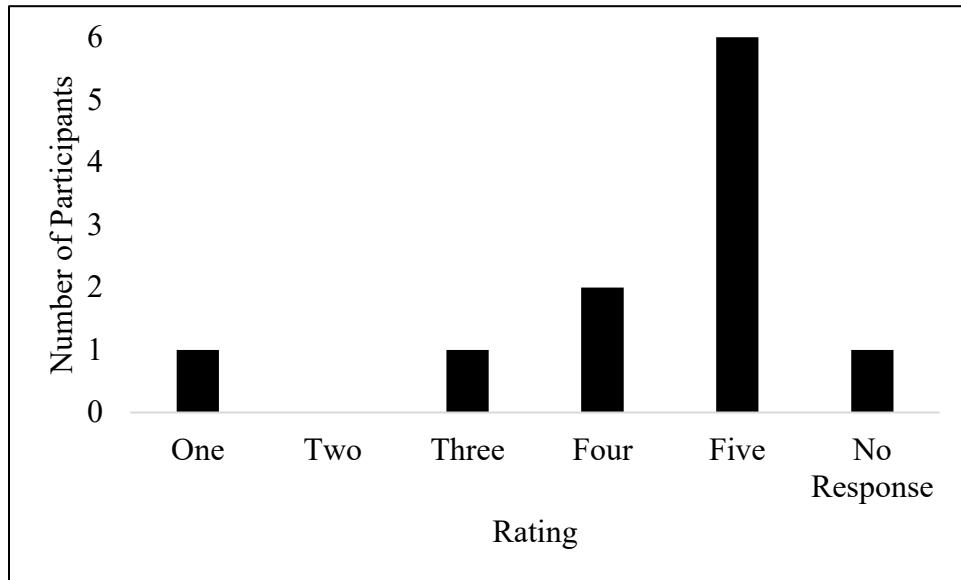


Figure 29. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "I Felt a Sense of Community in the Upgrading Classroom."*

Peer Support in the Classroom

Of the 11 participants, approximately 55% agreed to strongly agreed that the friends they made in the Upgrading classroom helped them progress toward their goals, and 67% of this group strongly agreed with the statement. As well, another 18% strongly disagreed with the statement while 9% disagreed with the statement. Approximately 18% of participants held a neutral stance.

Table 30. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "The Friends I Made in the Upgrading Classroom Helped Me Progress toward my Goal."*

Rating	Number of Participants
One	2
Two	1
Three	2
Four	2
Five	4
No Response	0

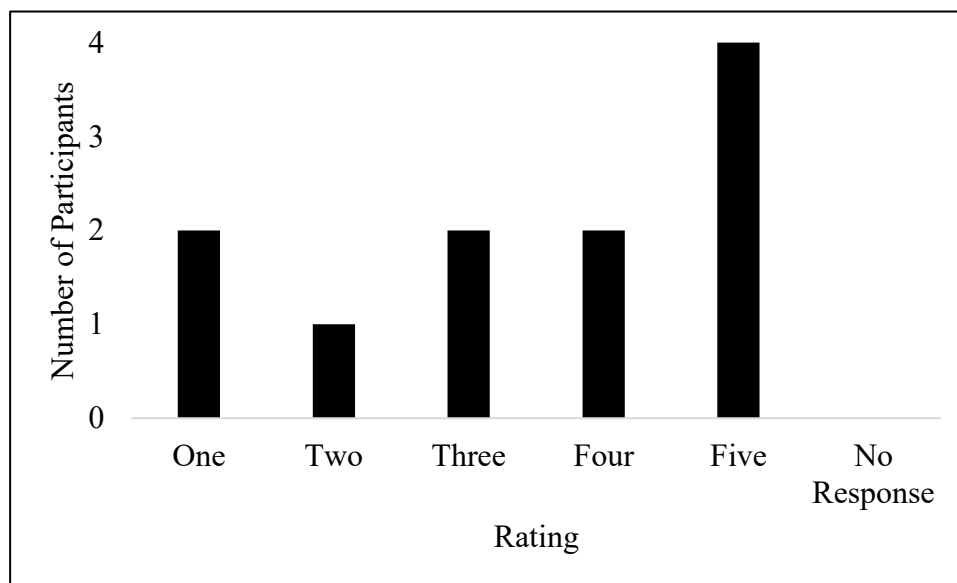


Figure 30. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "The Friends I Made in the Upgrading Classroom Helped Me Progress toward My Goal."*

Support in the Classroom

Of the 11 participants, approximately 82% agreed to highly agreed that they felt supported in the Upgrading classroom, and 78% of this group highly agreed with the statement. Two individuals, or about 18% of the participants, strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 31. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "I Felt Supported in the Upgrading Classroom."*

Rating	Number of Participants
One	2
Two	0
Three	0
Four	2
Five	7
No Response	0

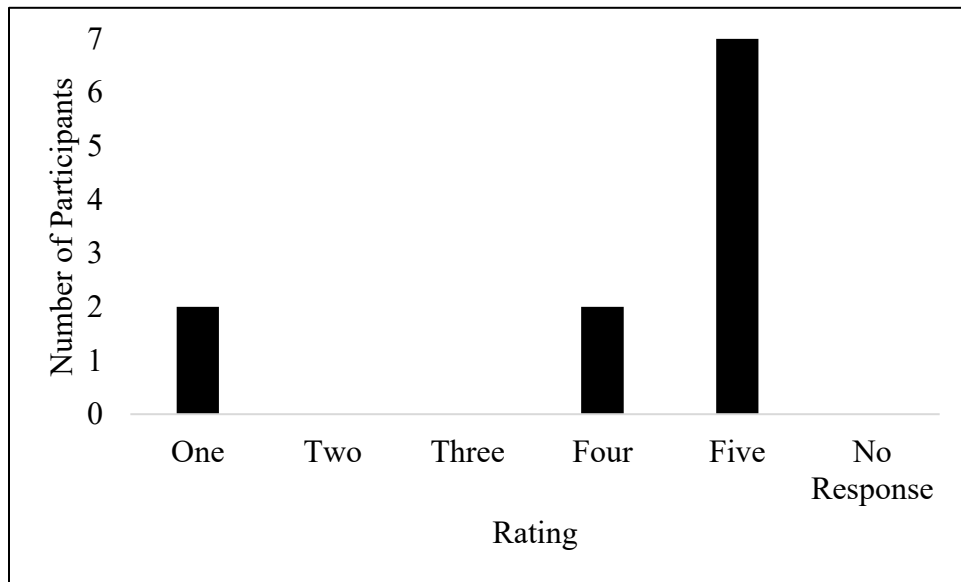


Figure 31. *Questionnaire Participants' Agreement with the Statement, "I Felt Supported in the Upgrading Classroom."*

Goal Achievement

Of the 10 participants who responded to the question, approximately 20% reported that they completed their goals in the Upgrading program, while 50% were still working on their goals in the Upgrading program, and approximately 30% did not achieve their goals in the Upgrading program. One person did not respond to the question.

Table 32. Questionnaire Participants' Responses to the Question, "Did You Achieve Your Goal in Cambrian College's Upgrading Program in Little Current? For Example, Did You Complete Your ACE or Finish a Prerequisite Course for College, etc?".

Responses	Number of Participants
Yes	2
No	3
I'm still working on achieving my goal at Cambrian	5
I'm still working on achieving my goal somewhere other than Cambrian	0
No Response	1

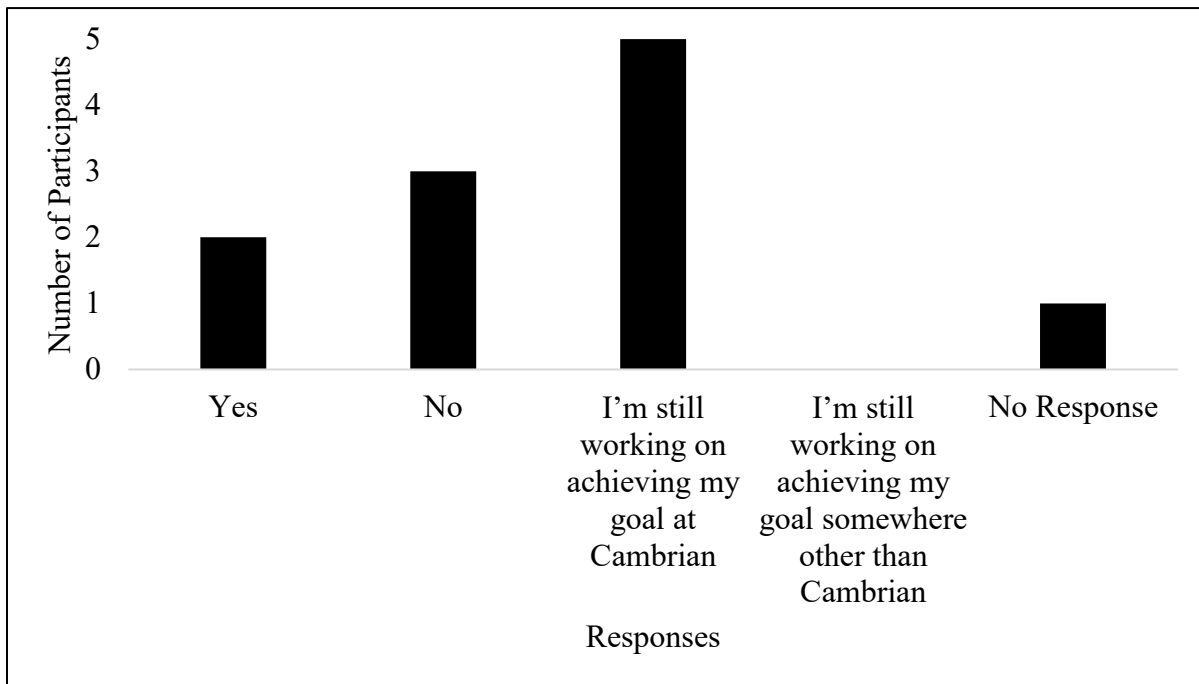


Figure 32. *Questionnaire Participants' Responses to the Questions, "Did You Achieve Your Goal in Cambrian College's Upgrading Program in Little Current? For Example, Did You Complete Your ACE or Finish a Prerequisite Course for College, etc."*

Themes in the Combined Questionnaire and Interview Text Data

Themes were identified using the text data from open-ended questionnaire questions and from individual interviews. It is important to note that a total of 9 out of 11 questionnaire participants completed one or more open-ended questions, and three of these participants also participated in the individual interviews. Past and current student participants' open-ended questionnaire data and interview data were used to identify themes while employee interview data was used to consolidate these themes.

Theme 1- The Satellite Campus' Personal Touch: A Positive and Supportive Experience

In the data collected from open-ended questionnaire data and interview data, many of the past and current student participants reported having a positive and supportive experience at the satellite campus. More specifically, employees at the campus were considered to be supportive, understanding, encouraging, patient, and helpful, and students had a positive experience overall. Additionally, four of these participants reported that the level of support they have received from the satellite campus is exceptional, and these participants did not think that the campus could support them more than the campus already does. Data obtained from employees reinforced the idea that the campus has a positive and supportive atmosphere. These employees believed that students have a personal connection with employees which encouraged students to return to use the campus' services. The two employee participants also mentioned that a positive and supportive environment combined with a personal touch promoted a positive reputation for the satellite campus, within the community.

From the questionnaires and interviews conducted with past and current student, this theme was consistent in the open-ended questionnaire data of two participants, open-ended questionnaire data and interview data of another participant, and the interview data of two other

participants. A comparison of the data from questionnaires and interviews confirmed the employees' beliefs that their program was delivered in a supportive, positive environment. One participant noted specifically that the campus "really does have that personal touch to it. I think that's something that probably keeps people coming back; they feel that personal touch and connection with the supports they can find there." Table 33 provides examples of student and employee perspectives in this respect.

Table 33. Theme 1- The Satellite Campus' Personal Touch: A Positive and Supportive Experience

Student Voices	Employee Voices
<p>"They are always ready to assist you in whatever it is you need."; "They are very understanding when you tell them about your hearing problem...."; "Cambrian College, as well as the Professor, have been supportive to me over the years...so I cannot really tell you how much more they can do to support a person.. In my case, they have and continue to be supportive."</p>	<p>"Cambrian College has a positive reputation in the community."; "It really does have that personal touch to it. I think that's something that probably keeps people coming back; they feel that personal touch and connection with the supports they can find there."; "...and I think that coming and having the face-to-face experience with the professor and the other supporting staff really helps to boost their confidence and to help show them that they have people there that are supporting them..."</p>
<p>"The experience I had was very good. It was satisfying, helpful, and I really enjoyed going to school."; "Everybody in the office is good."; "You guys are doing pretty much everything, so far. I don't think there really is anything else you</p>	<p>"At the same time, I think the college has a friendly atmosphere, and I think it's a quaint place where someone could feel comfortable that they want to go to, every single day."; "You guys are really personable, motivating and positive. You guys have a good</p>

guys can do to make a difference. What you guys are doing so far is pretty good.”

atmosphere.”; “I would also say people attend Cambrian because of the reputation of success people have by attending Cambrian.”; “Along with having a good instructor, having supportive staff, and it’s really nice in your location you have staff members that can help your individual get employment or help them with interview skills or help them with computer skills.”

“It’s great. It was a great experience...I have no complaints.”; “I don’t see anything that should be improved.”

“Their patience is helpful.”; “Cambrian College is great. You know, they’re actually helpful...They sort of just encourage things, and it suits me perfect.”; “Everybody is friendly and happy.”

“Nothing can be better for me at Cambrian.”

Theme 2- Support of the Professor

Data obtained from open-ended questionnaire and interview data, indicated that professor support was important to the students. More specifically speaking, students were positively disposed to a readily available, helpful, attentive, flexible, dedicated, encouraging, patient and calm professor. Data garnered from employee interview data reinforced that professor support was one of the important supports for students.

From past and current student questionnaires and interviews, this theme was formed from the open-ended questionnaire data of six participants and from the open-ended questionnaire data

and interview data of another participant. Data obtained from employee interviews reinforces the general idea that the role of the professor is important to the Upgrading students. Table 34 lists numerous examples which highlight the importance of the professor to the student experience.

Table 34. *Theme 2- Support of the Professor*

Student Voices	Employee Voices
<p>“The professor is always ready to help you whether it’s with a subject you having problems with or just there to listen.”</p> <p>“The professor was always attentive.”; “He is flexible, and I still thinking about going back because it is amazing how the learning flow well with him.”; “ The other thing I found very nice was that the professor was helping the students get home.”</p> <p>“dedicated teaching staff”</p> <p>“One-on-ones with the professor. Very helpful.”</p> <p>“Teacher was very helpful with any questions and always encouraging”</p> <p>“The instructor is patient and calm”</p> <p>“Either could have the teacher to work one-on-one with me, or let me go online alone.”</p>	<p>“...and I think that coming and having the face-to-face experience with the professor....”</p> <p>“Along with having a good instructor....”</p>

Theme 3- Situational Hardship

Text data from open-ended questionnaire questions and interviews elucidate three subthemes associated with the theme of situational hardship: health, transportation and personal reasons. The theme and subthemes were constructed from the data of five different participants. Data from both employee interviews supported the theme of situational hardship that was illustrated from the personal accounts of student participants. Table 35 provides various examples with respect to this theme.

Firstly, the subtheme of health was developed from the text data. For two past and current student participants, mental health, specifically depression, affected their abilities to participate and persist in the Academic Upgrading program. Another past student participant's ability to participate and persist in the Academic Upgrading program was impeded by their physical health. Employee data reinforced that mental and physical health were major barriers to the participation and persistence of Academic Upgrading participants at the satellite campus. From past and current student questionnaires and interviews, this subtheme was constructed from the open-ended questionnaire data of one participant and from the interview data of two other participants. The interview responses provided by employee participants in the study confirmed that student health and wellness is an important factor that affects their participation and persistence at the campus.

In general, past and current student text data highlighted that transportation affected the participation and persistence of past, present and potential Academic Upgrading students since there is no public transportation on the island, and many individuals must commute long distances to access the program. Specifically, one participant reported that a lack of transportation impeded their ability to attend the program, "the only barriers that prevented me

from enrolling at an earlier time was transportation issues.” Another participant reported that limited access to transportation impeded residents in his community from attending the program. Another past student reported the need for the professor to transport students to school due to the lack of public transportation. Employee data provided further evidence that limited access to transportation can affect student participation and persistence, but the data also captured that the campus does provide transportation supports for the learners when possible. From past and current student questionnaires and interviews, this subtheme was developed from the open-ended questionnaire data of one participant, from the interview data of two other participants, and from the data of both employee interviews.

Past and current students explained that personal reasons, such as work, family and relationships, impeded their abilities to participate and persist in the Upgrading program. Furthermore, participants perceived that personal reasons, such as work, family, childcare, finances, domestic abuse impeded the ability of other people they know from either participating or persisting in the program. Employee experience reinforced the subtheme that personal reasons hinder the ability of some people to participate and persist in the Upgrading program. Employees identified work, family, finances and childcare as important factors to consider. From past and current student questionnaires and interviews, this subtheme was formulated from the open-ended questionnaire data of one participant and from the interview data of two other participants. Data obtained from both employee interviews helped to forge the subtheme that personal reasons affected student participation and persistence at the satellite campus.

Table 35. *Theme 3- Situational Hardship*

Subtheme	Student Voices	Employee Voices
Health	<p>“My reasons for not achieving my goal so far is because of my depression which became worse when my mother passed away. I still have the depression but it’s not as bad as it was...I am gradually getting over my mom's death. “; “They have been so understanding about my depression which often makes it impossible to attend classes.”</p> <p>“I was getting too depressed, so I didn’t have the energy. You know, if you’re depressed you don’t have the same enthusiasm. You don’t have. I never forget: I said, ‘I want to go back. I want to go back.’ But I didn’t go”</p> <p>“Right now, the specialist is looking at my heart. That’s also probably another reason why. I’ll walk to school: get out of breath, start getting dizzy, and my blood pressure has been dropping.”</p>	<p>“I think we see a lot of mental health issues and other physical health issues.”</p> <p>“I think that people would drop-out from the program based on external factors, not necessarily what happens at Cambrian College or the Upgrading program. It would have a lot to do with their physical health and mental health....”</p>

Transportation

“The only barriers that prevented me from enrolling at an earlier time was transportation issues.”

“Perhaps their transportation has come to a stop. I think we see that happen. It could be because their friend is no longer going to drive them or whatever the reason.”

“Some reasons why people would not enroll in LBS would be because of transportation issues....”; I don’t know if you still do it, but there is the free breakfast program, free transportation.”

“Probably offer more rides or something like that. People would be more interested in going to school if they had a ride to get there. I think that would help a lot.”

“Some reasons why people would not enroll in LBS would be because of transportation issues....”; I don’t know if you still do it, but there is the free breakfast program, free transportation

“The professor was driving the students home because everything is far, and there is no access to public transportation.”

Personal Reasons

“Personal problems: work, family”; “I think things like having to go to work to support their family, or having to stay home and look after their children are definitely two things that could make them stop-out.”

“People keep telling me, ‘I should go to school too.’ Money is always a problem too. Some people have kids. They have to pay the babysitter, so they can go to school. That’s another reason why most of them don’t go to school too.”; “Stuff just happens, and there is just no way around it.”

“It was personal reasons.”; “The reasons were not related to the school.”; “Just God knows what happens at their house or what happens in their lives. Talk about serious talks for sure. If you read the statistics, the number of women and kids that are abused or go through different trauma, like rape, most of this happens inside the house from family... We don’t know what’s going on or why they are really stopping. Is it financial? Is it your parent? Because you’re involved in drugs?”

“Was in bad relationship in past that stopped me.”

Theme 4- Friends, Friendliness and Community

Two student participants identified that making friends was an important part of their experience in Upgrading. Two participants mentioned the friendliness of everyone at the campus and in the classroom. One employee mentioned that the campus is friendly, and both employees highlighted that the community students build and belong to while attending the Upgrading program is important to the student experience.

From past and current student questionnaires and interviews, this theme was elucidated from the open-ended questionnaire data of two participants and from the interview data of two other participants. Student responses confirmed the opinions of both employees that community is important to the student experience. As one employee commented, “It’s community. They become part of a community, which is an important part about their learning.” Table 36 lists participant responses related to the theme of friends, friendliness and community.

Table 36. *Theme 4- Friends, Friendliness and Community*

Student Voices	Employee Voices
“Friendly classroom”; “Since the COVID-19 and the library is also closed, I’ve been cut-off computers and friends.”	“It’s a community. They become part of a community, which is an important part about their learning.”
“Made lots of friends, a lot of new friends.”	“...I think the college has a friendly atmosphere....”; “As an example carpooling, you see it first hand. When someone is coming to school and they know they have a ride, and that one person is dedicated. They create a community to come to school.”
“everyone is friendly”	

Theme 5- Indigenous

Firstly, two student interview participants, who did not identify as being from Indigenous ancestry, identified that it is important for students, community members and tourists to learn about the local First Nations history and culture, such as language, customs, and the effects of residential schools and intergenerational trauma. Both employees, who were interviewed, identified that more could be done to incorporate local First Nations culture into the Academic Upgrading program and curriculum at the campus.

Secondly, one student interview participant, who did not identify as being from Indigenous ancestry, identified that there is a need for an employee at the campus who will respond to the unique needs of First Nations students. One employee noted that Indigenous students could be better supported if employees had more training, regarding the relevant resources in the community for First Nations students. Another employee suggested that providing an Indigenous Support Worker at the campus could increase the success rate of First Nations Academic Upgrading students.

From three student interviews, this theme along with two subthemes were elucidated. When compared to the student participant data in Table 37, the data obtained from both employee interviews supports the notion that more can be done to increase cultural inclusion at the campus. For example, one past employee responded, “I think we could probably look at having more culturally relevant material....”

Table 37. *Theme 5- Indigenous*

Subthemes	Student Voices	Employee Voices
Indigenous Curriculum	“Well, to learn about the Aboriginals. It’s important to know. They have a different	“I think we could probably look at having more culturally relevant material, and I think,

	<p>culture from me, from you. They went through different problems, culturally, than you and I. I think it's very important."</p> <p>"Not enough culture. Like a lot of it, I'm finding, is hidden."; "There is not the true Ojibway being offered."</p>	<p>specifically given the Indigenous community on Manitoulin Island, I think looking at different Indigenous resources might make a lot of sense."</p> <p>"I would say there is a significant lack of cultural inclusion at the Manitoulin campus."; "...I definitely can think of implementing land-based programs. One day you harvest sweet grass, or you go to smudge outside, or an opening prayer if you guys are going to have lunch together, or have someone do Aboriginal language classes. I guess those are ways to implement culture, not necessarily what is happening right now."; "...if there was the same working relationship with Kenjgewin Teg and Cambrian College then you could be offering programs together that are more culturally based."</p>
Indigenous Support	<p>"Yeah, I know there is a lot of this kind of help on the Island for different reasons: kids involved with drugs, parents with problems. Things like that. But I think that if you had something related to school. Somebody who the students could talk to, and they may be able to talk to more about their difficulties. In this way the school is going to find out more about what it can do to help the students."; "You know how First Nations students stop</p>	<p>"Maybe more training and understanding of the Indigenous cultures for staff would be very helpful. Maybe getting a better understanding of the resources that are available for supporting our students. Whether they be within the local First Nations or within our communities. What is available, and how they can support our students, so that we're better prepared to make those referrals."</p>

going?"; "They need somebody that they trust to talk to."

"There is no Aboriginal worker there. There is no Aboriginal individual even, so for Manitoulin to be predominantly Aboriginal and White, there needs to be an emphasis on the Aboriginal culture too."; "If there was support, like they have at Wabnode in Sudbury, there would probably be more of that demographic, but higher success rates with people still being bale to navigate what's happening in their lives as well as continue with the Upgrading program."; "From my own experience, if someone is there as a guidance person for you, they're probably going to have a connection and a relationship with each of the students. It's not the first day that you're going to have a deep conversation with them. I think they get to know this individual over time."

Theme 6- The Upgrading Program

Subthemes related to the Upgrading program were evident in the questionnaire and interview data: free resources and education, flexibility and promotion. Firstly, a free program and free program resources were mentioned by three participants, specifically textbooks, office supplies, food, photocopies; free transportation and travel supports were also provided to students when feasible. Data from an employee interview reinforced the concept that free education and resources were important features of the Upgrading program.

Secondly, the flexibility of the Upgrading program was positively mentioned by five participants. More specifically, the program was delivered in a manner where students can work at their own pace, without pressure or judgement, and one participant also communicated that they could seek academic assistance outside of class hours when their work schedule didn't coincide with class hours. In their interviews, both employees mentioned that the flexibility of the Upgrading program is an important feature, which effectively supports students at the campus.

Thirdly, the Upgrading program may not be sufficiently promoted. One participant, who at one point was a newcomer to the community, could have begun the program sooner if they had known the program was available, and another participant, who was born and raised in the community, communicated that some people within the community of Little Current have little knowledge about the Upgrading program. Both participants expressed concern about the lack of advertising related to the program. Both employees believed the Upgrading program could be better promoted; one employee was explicitly clear that the Upgrading program was not promoted enough or properly, and they could understand why someone their age would not know the program exist.

From past and current student questionnaires and interviews, this theme was developed from the open-ended questionnaire data of three participants, from the interview data of three other participants, and from the interview data of both employees. See table 38 for specific examples related to this theme and its subthemes.

Table 38. *Theme 6- The Upgrading Program*

Subthemes	Student Voices	Employee Voices
Free Resources	<p>“- good textbooks (gave clear instructions)</p> <p>- free supplies (pens, pencils, USB stick, etc.)</p> <p>- excellent free lunch program”</p> <p>“Sometimes there was food.”; “We had all the material. You photocopy”</p> <p>“Making it free, so anyone can attend.”</p> <p>“Free education and free rides to school and back.”</p>	<p>“At your location, there are a lot of resources available, so who wouldn’t want to go there everyday!”; “...free breakfast program.”</p> <p>“...the best thing is to promote that the upgrading program is free, and it is sought-out higher, in most cases, than a GED.”</p>
Flexibility	<p>“It’s nice to be given the option on whether to go everyday to school or to break it up.”</p> <p>“I wasn’t rushed to do anything.”</p> <p>“I could go at my own pace. That was another good thing about it.”</p>	<p>“They can go along quickly or they can go along slowly....”</p> <p>“...it is very flexible for how they can do the program.”</p>

“Well the flexibility. The flexibility of when I can take a test. The flexibility of going to see the professor to ask questions. Because the class, in reality, started a bit earlier than when I was going in the afternoon. That is a good help, yeah.”

“They don’t push anything.”

Promotion

“When I moved to Manitoulin, I didn't know that there was an upgrading program available to this area. It was only after living on the island for quite awhile that I found out about Cambrian's upgrading program through an acquaintance.”

“I think that lack of knowledge the program exists could be one.”

“I just wish there was an open house or something, so they could actually just come in and see. This is an actual classroom.”

“I guess somebody my age would not realize that the resource is there.”; “As well, advertising on Manitoulin Island would be having to invest in an advertising budget to be in the newspaper, to be on the radio and to really have a strong social media presence. Marketing and advertising need to continuously happen. Because of the scope of what you do and how

you help people, I think that it's not
done to the level it could be."

Chapter 5: Discussion and Future Research

Discussion

The themes elucidated by open-ended questionnaire data and interview data are discussed in this chapter in relation to the literature on student participation, student persistence and place-based education. When applicable, closed-ended questionnaire data is included to support the discussion of the different themes. Also, qualitative data that negatively reflected the campus, program or professors was discussed in order to add richness, depth and contrast to the findings.

A Personal Touch- Positive, Supportive Experience

According to the rich data garnered from questionnaires and interviews, the students who participated in this study felt that the satellite campus was supportive, happy, encouraging, friendly, helpful and patient. Generally, these participants had an overall positive experience while attending the Upgrading program at the campus. Employees expressed that this positive and supportive experience, the campus's personal touch, is attractive and comfortable to students and potential students. While the students did not explicitly state that their overall experience at the campus affected their participation and persistence, it is plausible to reason that a positive overall experience would favourably affect the participation and persistence of current students, and the word-of-mouth reputation of this positive experience may attract new students from the communities on Manitoulin Island. In fact, 82% of questionnaire participants agreed to strongly agreed, with a significantly larger proportion strongly agreeing, that the college's reputation positively affected their decisions to enroll. However, this study did not directly question or develop the participants' conceptualizations of the College's reputation or determine the extent

to which this reputation is based on Cambrian College's branding as an entire organization or the satellite campus's Island reputation.

According to the literature, student persistence can be related to students' level of commitment to an educational institution and to students' perception of an institution's commitment to student welfare. Tinto (1975) posited that a student's level of commitment to an academic institution, more specifically an American college, could affect student persistence at the institution. It follows that a high level of institutional commitment could, theoretically, indirectly increase the chances of a student persisting at the institution, and a low level of institutional commitment could indirectly decrease the chances of a student persisting at the institution.

Braxton et al. (2004) revised Tinto's integration model with a focus on the model's applicability to residential colleges and universities. The revised model posits that the institutional commitment to the welfare of students, in a collective and individual sense, is one of the factors that directly affects the social integration of the student. Furthermore, the social integration of the student has a direct effect on student persistence. Thus, theoretically if a student senses that an institution is highly committed to their welfare, the student's level of social integrations increases, and as a result, the likelihood that this student will persist is also increased. Most commonly, "this commitment to student welfare is reflected in the actions of faculty, staff and administrators" (Schreiner et al., 2011, p. 322).

Schreiner et al. (2011) studied the impact of institutional employees, staff and faculty, on the persistence of high-risk college students. The researchers "identified seven themes related to the positive attitudes and behaviours of campus personnel that made a difference in the success and persistence of high-risk students" (p. 325). One of the themes identified was the importance

of students connecting with institutional employees; high-risk students who made valuable connections with institutional employees were more likely to persist. In their interviews, students used words, such as caring, supportive, and helps me to describe the employees they had a connection with while attending the institution.

The findings of Tinto (1975), Braxton et al. (2004), and Schreiner et al. (2011) have not been empirically validated in ABE programs at small rural satellite campuses in Northern Ontario. However, the absence of empirical testing in this context does not prevent a researcher from hypothesizing that a student's perception of institutional commitment to their welfare could affect the student's social integration at the campus and consequently affect the student's persistence. In the case of the student research participants at Cambrian College's satellite campus on Manitoulin Island, arguably, the positive and supportive environment fostered by the employees in combination with the relationships that have been nurtured between employees and students may have contributed to the perception of some students that the institution is committed to their individual welfares. According to the questionnaire data, 55% of the student research participants had exited the program more than once, and 83% of these participants had also spent four or more years in the Upgrading program. It is plausible that student-employee relationships, a positive and supportive environment, and a positive perception of institutional commitment to student welfare may encourage these students to return on numerous occasions in attempts to accomplish their Upgrading goals.

One study on rural adult education research has also identified the importance of employee-student relationships to the retention and persistence of students. In a study conducted at a rural community college in North Carolina, researchers determined that responsive employee-student relationships and the relationships fostered from living in a small community

increased the likelihood of student retention (Howley et al., 2013). At the satellite campus in Little Current, evidence of responsive employee-student relationships is found in the claims of support that participants have received: “They are always ready to assist you in whatever it is you need.”

The voices of past and current student research participants who responded to open-ended questions on the questionnaire and who participated in the interviews spoke resoundingly positive of their experiences at the campus. A positive and supportive environment, a perception of institutional commitment to student welfare, and responsive employee-student relationships plausibly positively affected the persistence of many of the research participants, and the institutional reputation of students having positive educational experiences can permeate the community to increase community participation in educational programs. However, one must be careful when evaluating the overall student experience with such a small sample since the voices of past and current students who did not participate in the research remain silent.

Support of the Professor

The prevalence of students’ descriptions pertaining to the professors’ behaviours, attitudes, and availabilities in the data from the questionnaires and the interviews of past and current student participants highlighted the importance professor support. This can be associated with the quality of the relationship between a professor and a student – most research participants were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences with the professors that have taught at the campus over the last 7 years. The closed-ended questionnaire results indicated that approximately 82% of past and current student participants agreed or strongly agreed that they felt supported in the Upgrading classroom, and 78% of these participants strongly agreed. In both employee interviews, employees also mentioned or suggested the importance of the student-

professor relationship to the student experience. However, it is important to mention that 18% of the participants had an adverse experience. These two participants strongly disagreed that they felt supported in the Upgrading classroom. Unfortunately, both participants who had an adverse experience chose not to interview. Although, one of these participants mentioned in their response to one of the open-ended questionnaire questions that they was distracted by the conversation in the classroom and that they could have used more one-on-one support with the professor. The comment regarding distracting conversation in the classroom was related to the past tendency of the professor to allow students to speak freely to each other in the classroom during class hours. The professor did not enforce “quiet hours” in the classroom. Over the last couple years, the same professor now limits what he and the class consider to be distracting conversation in the classroom. Even though the student did not receive the support they desired from the professor, the participant’s perceived importance of one-on-one support from the professor supports the claim that the student-teacher relationship is important to student success.

The adult education literature discussed in the previous theme identified the importance of employee-student relationships to student persistence (Braxton et al., 2004; Schreiner et al., 2011; Tinto, 1975;). As an example, faculty-student relationships are of critical importance for the persistence of high-risk college students; faculty must make a conscientious effort to forge these connections with each student, especially those who are at high risk of exiting (Schreiner et al., 2011). Additionally, the nature and quality of student-faculty interactions within the classroom were found to affect student persistence at commuter institutions (Dwyer, 2015). Also, in her investigation into the persistence of continuing education learners at the University of Manitoba, Sloan-Seale (2011) similarly discovered that “nurturing and caring instructors” (p. 32) and one-one one support were important factors affecting student persistence.

ABE literature affirms the importance of the teacher to the success of students; the quality of the student-teacher relationship and the quality of support the teacher provides to the student affects student persistence (Comings et al., 1999; Petty & Thomas, 2014; Zacharakis et al., 2011). In their research of ABE students, Zacharakis et al. (2011) noted the importance of teachers encouraging and inspiring ABE students. Participants in the study “lauded their teachers’ patience, caring attitude, academic assistance and belief in the students’ capacity for overcoming personal barriers and achieving academic success” (p. 93). Additionally, in a study of ABE and GED learners at a rural community college in Georgia, USA, student participants communicated the value of instructor encouragement and patience to their persistence (Spivey, 2016). Moreover, students highlighted the importance of instructor attitude and enthusiasm to student persistence.

At the satellite campus in Little Current, most student voices, who chose to elaborate on their experience in Upgrading, lauded their experiences with their professor. Students used phrases, such as “always ready to help,” “always attentive,” “he is flexible,” “dedicated teaching staff,” “very helpful,” “always encouraging,” “patient” and “calm,” to describe their experiences with their professors. Based on the adult education, ABE and rural ABE literature and the findings of this study, it is reasonable to suggest that the support and relationships with the professor at the satellite campus had a positive impact on the persistence of these students. Unfortunately, at least two research participants did not feel supported in the classroom, which plausibly affected student persistence. However, based on questionnaire data, one of these students who did not feel supported in the classroom attended the Upgrading program for four or more years, and they travelled approximately 100 km a day to do so, which are both evidence of

persistent behaviour despite the reported lack of support in the classroom. Unfortunately, data is not available to suggest why this student showed persistent behavior.

Since there is only one professor for all Upgrading students at the campus, students spend 20 hours a week, on average, in the classroom with the professor, and many students participate in the program for numerous years. It is reasonable to hypothesize that professor support and the student-professor relationship are important to student success. Given the context of the Upgrading program, the findings of this study and the findings in the literature, it is important for the professor at the satellite campus to foster positive and supportive relationships with each student in the Upgrading program. The quality of these relationships and the support that is provided can impact student persistence. Additionally, the reputation of supportive professors could positively affect community participation in the program.

Situational Hardship

Text data from questionnaires and interviews presented the theme of situational hardship as a factor which affected the college program participation and persistence of research participants in this study. As previously observed in the work by Flynn et al. (2011), such “Situational barriers relate to a person’s life situation and include poverty, violence, living situation and familial support” (, p. 44). Adult education, ABE and rural education literature is rich with examples of situational barriers that affect the participation and persistence of students (Cross, 1981; Flynn et al., 2011; Hayes, 1988; Leis, 1994; Ryan, 2014; Spivey, 2016; Steel & Fahy, 2011; Stelmach, 2011).

Three subthemes were associated with the theme of situational hardship in this research: health, transportation, personal reasons. In total, five past and current student participants reported one or more of these subthemes affecting their personal participation and/or persistence

once or numerous times in the Upgrading program. Thus, approximately 45% of past and current student participants reported that one or more situational hardships had affected their participation and/or persistence in the upgrading program, and two of these participants also reported on the perceived effect of situational hardships on the participation and persistence of individuals they know. However, it is important to note, many past and current student participants did not respond to the open-ended questions regarding their participation and persistence in the program, so the percentage of participants affected by situational hardships in this sample may be higher than the data suggests.

Three participants reported that either their mental or physical health affected their attendance and persistence in the Upgrading program. Two participants withdrew from the upgrading program because of their mental health while another participant withdrew because of physical health complications. To employees, health is one of the major factors which they perceive to impede the participation and persistence of individuals in the Upgrading program. In the case of the two participants who were suffering from depression, despite the mental health supports available in the community and through the main campus, both participants withdrew from the program. It is unknown if they were referred to mental health services by employees at the campus, and it is also unknown if the participants informed employees of their difficulties before withdrawing from the Upgrading program. However, this does highlight the need for campus employees to proactively attempt to identify students suffering from mental health issues and to refer these individuals to mental health services before they withdraw from the Upgrading program. This initiative by campus employees could significantly affect the life outcome for a student and their retention in the program. As well, if the campus staff know about the health complications of their students, this knowledge could help them assist students in navigating

barriers and accommodating their diverse learning needs. As an example, the learner could learn from home rather than attending class at the campus. This accommodation might not work for all circumstances. Considering the situation faced by one participant in this study, who withdrew from the program due to their physical health and noted that it was also difficult for them to learn from home given their health condition, working from home would not have helped the participant surmount this barrier.

Transportation is a barrier that has been found to affect the delivery of ABE programs, but limited access to transportation has more of an impact on rural students because of the lack of public transportation in many rural communities (Hayes, 1988; Ryan, 2014; Steel & Fahy, 2011; Stelmach, 2011). As well, from the perspectives of both employees who participated in this study at the satellite campus, transportation is one of the major barriers to student participation and persistence in the Upgrading program. Although in this study, solely one past student participant reported that transportation affected their participation in the program. In fact, 77% of past and current student participants agreed to strongly agreed that the campus's location positively affected their decisions to enroll; approximately 88% of these participants strongly agreed. Three participants of four participants who lived approximately 50 or more km away from the campus agreed to strongly agreed with the statement. Thus, for the majority of students the campus was in a favourable location, and for the students who live fifty or more km from the campus, the campus location still positively affected their decisions to enroll. Thus, for the majority of the participants in this study, it seems that transportation had not, as of yet, impeded their participation and persistence in the program. Reliable transportation to access education is an important consideration for rural communities. Steel and Fahy (2011) found that providing stable logistical supports and communicating the availability of stable logistical supports were

important factors that contributed to the attraction and retention of under-represented populations from rural and remote Northern Alberta communities.

Although transportation did not affect the participation and persistence of most past and current student participants, these participants perceived that others were adversely affected by transportation barriers. Two past student participants reported that transportation significantly affected many other people they know from participating and/or persisting in the program –this information affirms the perspectives of employees, regarding the impact of the limited accessibility to transportation. Manitoulin Island does not have a public transportation system. Taxis are available but the cost is high due to the long distances that some individuals must travel to attend school. The satellite campus attempts to reduce the barrier in a couple of ways. First, through the MLTSD the campus has access to training supports which can be used to aid with a student's transportation to the campus. The student can use the money to pay for fuel when using their personal motor vehicle or use the money to pay someone else to drive them to school. Students could hire a taxi, but once again, this option is quite costly. Most students cannot afford to commute to the school via taxi on a daily basis even with the assistance of training supports. Students commuting to the school from distant communities, such as Wikwemikong, often carpool to the campus with a student who has a personal motor vehicle. However, it is a common occurrence for many students from these communities to be left without transportation when the person who was driving them to school cannot attend the program for a short duration of time, withdraws from the program or graduates from the program.

Another method used by the campus to provide transportation to some students is the Ontario Works (OW) van. Through an agreement with the District Services Board in the area,

the campus can access a van to drive students who live within a reasonable radius of the campus to school. The campus attempts to recruit students from the program or individuals from the community to volunteer to drive the van, but it is often difficult to retain a driver. Additionally, it is difficult to find volunteers who have a driver's license. As a result, over the last three years, the Upgrading professor has volunteered to drive the van before and after class. Given the lack of public transportation on the island, limited access to personal motor vehicles, the common occurrence of a student lacking a driver's license, and the limited resources available to the campus, transportation is a significant barrier for many island residents. Without an increase in funding, it is difficult to identify other options available to reduce this barrier for a greater number of current and potential students.

Three past and current student participants were prevented from attending school by personal reasons, such as work, family, and relationships. Both employees discussed the effects of personal reasons, such as work, family, finances, childcare and balancing multiple priorities, on the participation and persistence of individuals who want to enroll or are enrolled in the Upgrading program. In contrast, 70% of past and current student participants felt that their families/loves ones positively influenced their decisions to go back to school, and approximately 82% of past and current student participants felt that their families/loved ones supported their decisions to go back to school. Furthermore, the participation and persistence of 91% past and current student participants were not affected by employment. Therefore, family support and employment did not affect the participation and persistence of many participants in this study, but although the type of personal reasons were not divulged, personal reasons did affect three participants. Also, two participants reported that personal reasons are factors which prevented individuals they know of from participating and persisting in the Upgrading program, suggesting

personal reasons affected the participation and persistence of other voices who did not participate in this study.

To help reduce the barriers associated with work-school balance, school-family balance or work-life balance, the campus should continue to be generally flexible and accommodating to the needs of its students. Among many recommendations to address the retention and persistence of continuing education students at the University of Manitoba, Sloane-Seale (2011) recommends, “[t]ime extensions to complete the program and flexibility in the application of policies...” as being critical to retention and persistence (p. 36). Additionally, Steel and Fahy (2011) suggested program flexibility and the availability of logistical supports are vital to the retention of learners in Northern location of Alberta.

The participation and persistence of approximately 50% of past and current students in this study were affected by situational hardships, which are similar in comparison to Cross’s (1981) concept of situational barriers. Furthermore, it was perceived by some participants in this study that situational hardships affect the participation and persistence of many other people who did not participate in this study.

To help reduce barriers related to situational hardships and to help students navigate the associated barriers to education, employees should take an active interest in the lives of the students in an attempt to identify barriers early before situational hardships negatively impact the academic trajectories of students. Ensuring to refer students to the appropriate supports and maintaining the standards of flexibility and accommodation in the program can help students navigate their barriers to education. To add, the campus could attempt strategies it is not currently employing, such as helping students actively construct personal approaches to coping with situational hardships (Comings et al., 1999) or mentoring or the support of an academic

advisor (Flynn et al., 2011). However, as a few participants have informed this research, sometimes there is nothing the educational institution or the employees can do to retain a student who is facing an actual barrier that is perceived to be insurmountable at the time: “Stuff just happens, and there is just no way around it.”

Friends, Friendliness and Community

Based on qualitative questionnaire and interview data, two past and current student participants found the campus and the classroom to be friendly. As well, two past and current student participants valued the classroom and campus as a place to make friends. In fact, one participant felt they was cut-off from their friends due to campus closure as a result of the pandemic. Employees also perceived the campus to be friendly, and they perceived that the community Upgrading students form when they attend the program is important to their learning experiences.

Wlokowski’s Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching posits inclusion within the classroom as one of the four essential conditions required for culturally responsive teaching (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2019). The intent of using this framework when teaching is two fold: to intrinsically motivate students to learn and to intrinsically motivate teachers “to regularly gather data to know their students as unique and valuable members of the classroom community rather than as problems that need to be solved” (p. 53). Establishing inclusion within the classroom is defined as “creating a learning environment in which students and teachers feel respected and connected to one another” (p. 58). Through inclusion in the classroom, students can develop relationships which are important to their learning experience and to their integration within a non-urban educational institution (Townsend & Delves, 2009). These relationships provide more than friendships to the students. The relationships fostered in

the classroom provide students with a support network while attending school. Student support networks within rural educational institutions are deemed to be vital to the students' academic success (Townsend & Delves, 2009). Additionally, as previously discussed, social inclusion is an important factor which affects student retention and persistence (Braxton et al., 2004; Tinto, 1975).

Within the Manitoulin campus, it is evident some students form friendships and peer networks. Students carpool to school from surrounding communities. Students share resources or barter for resources, such as food, crafts and cigarettes. Some students solely interact with other students during class hours while others will form weekend friendships too.

From the closed-ended questionnaire data, 80% of past and current student participants agreed to strongly agreed that they felt a sense of community in the classroom, and the majority of these participants, 75%, strongly agreed with the statement. When comparing this finding to the qualitative data, it is tempting to conflate the sense of community with inclusion in the classroom. However, approximately 55% of the past and current student participants agreed to strongly agreed that the friends they made in the Upgrading classroom helped them progress toward their goals. Instead the data may indicate that while most participants felt a sense of community in the classroom, 45% of the past and current student participants did not feel sufficiently supported by their peers. Perhaps this is an indication of the establishment of only partial inclusion in the classroom.

Utilizing collaborative learning activities is one strategy which may prove to be effective in creating a greater sense of inclusion for students in the classroom setting. Collaborative learning activities are known to facilitate the development of social networks which can give students an increased sense of inclusion (Taylor & Trumpower, 2014). Delivery at the satellite

campus occurs in the classroom, but classroom delivery is not instructor led. Students learn independently, which makes it somewhat more difficult to implement collaborative learning activities. Although with some thought and planning, the professor could include collaborative learning activities which focus on general education rather than course specific curriculum.

Establishing social networks and community in the classroom are essential in rural educational contexts. Established social networks help students attend and persist in education through peer support and the sharing of resources. Furthermore, social inclusion can intrinsically motivate students to learn (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2019) while also increasing the chances of student retention and persistence (Braxton et al., 2004, Tinto, 1975).

Indigenous Student Perspectives

The rural education literature consistently highlights the importance of community and culturally relevant programming to rural communities and to the academic success of rural students. Irvin et al. (2009) argued that “Efforts to make class activities and work meaningful and relevant to rural students’ interests and attachment to place may increase motivation and engagement and thereby improve outcomes” (p. 31). Many rural citizens are committed to staying and working in their communities, and these individuals also desire to learn about the problems within their communities and to learn strategies which will help them solve these problems (Howley, 2009; Wright, 2012). Given that just 64% of the participants felt connected to their communities while in the Upgrading program and the importance of community relevant programming to rural communities, it is important to consider adopting strategies to increase the proportion of Upgrading participants who feel connected to their communities while enrolled in the program. Notably, three of four First Nations participants felt connected to their communities while enrolled in Upgrading.

With respect to the community and cultural relevance of the Upgrading program at the Manitoulin campus, most past and current student participants, approximately 82%, believed that the Upgrading program was relevant to their communities while a smaller number of participants, approximately 64%, believed the Upgrading program was relevant to their cultures. Focusing on the responses of past and current First Nations students, three of four participants strongly agreed the Upgrading program was relevant to their communities while two participants held a neutral view on the statement. Additionally, two First Nations participants strongly agreed the Upgrading program was relevant to their cultures while one participant strongly disagreed, and the other participant held a neutral view on the statement. Moreover, approximately 82% of participants believed that programming relevant to their communities was important to them while approximately 64% of participants believed programming relevant to their cultures was important to them. Of the First Nations participants, there was a stronger desire for programming to be relevant to their communities rather than their cultures.

It is important to note, the two participants who strongly disagreed with the relevance of the Upgrading program to their cultures did not offer suggestions for improvement; one participant was First Nations, and the other participants was from Gore Bay. Gore Bay is a small community located on the North Channel, approximately halfway across the Island from the swing bridge, and the town is considered to have a different community culture in contrast to the community of Little Current.

There appears to be a need to increase the percentage of Upgrading participants who feel connected to their communities while enrolled in the Upgrading program and to increase the cultural relevance of the Upgrading program. Two past and current student interview participants who communicated a cultural gap in the programming had suggestions for improvement to the

Upgrading program; these participants did not identify as Indigenous. Both of these participants suggested including curriculum which is relevant to the local First Nations culture and history. Both employees who interviewed also expressed the need for more educational material and activities that are relevant to Indigenous cultures. Since people from the Anishinaabe culture are a significant portion of the population who inhabit Manitoulin Island and who attend the Upgrading program, it is crucial to include relevant material, curriculum and activities. Most Indigenous participants in the research did not raise issue with the programming at the campus, but non-Indigenous students expressed a desire to learn more about the cultures and histories of First Peoples.

Three interview participants communicated their desire for Indigenous specific supports that could address the need to increase the participation and persistence of Indigenous students. One past-student interviewee identified the importance of providing more support to First Nations students, in the form of a counsellor or an advisor. As well, both employee interviewees perceived there could be more support available at the campus for First Nations students. Concerned about the availability of government funding to provide more support at the campus, one employee suggested more training for staff with respect to local First Nations culture and to specific local resources and referrals for Indigenous students. Another employee suggested the need for an Aboriginal counsellor. The counsellor could assist Indigenous students with academic advising, cultural support, counselling, postsecondary applications and employment (Hardes, 2006). Previous work in this area has indicated that “[h]aving an Aboriginal counsellor on campus to provide advice and personal guidance can make the difference between keeping and losing an Aboriginal student” (Malatest, 2010, p. 52).

Cambrian College, through the main campus, provides Indigenous students with access to Indigenous Student Support Advisors. Considering the lack of funding for an onsite Indigenous Support Advisor at the satellite campus, it would be feasible for the satellite campus to develop strategies to increase accessibility to this support for Indigenous students on Manitoulin Island. While virtual appointments with the advisors are possible when students request them, an on-campus presence would be necessary, on at least a monthly basis. It is highly unlikely that most Indigenous students will reach out to an advisor who is unfamiliar to them. There will be a need for the advisors to have a regular presence at the satellite campus, so over time, Indigenous students could build relationships with and trust in the Indigenous Student Support Advisors.

The Upgrading Program – Resources, Flexibility and Promotion

In their interviews and other responses, past and current students and employees spoke positively about the supports available in the Upgrading program, but they spoke with criticism regarding the promotion of the Upgrading program. Firstly, participants lauded the supports available in the Upgrading program: resources and flexibility. The Upgrading program offers free resources, such as school supplies, free tuition, and at times, free food. Past and current students and a past employee praised the availability of these resources for students. Another important support, which was valuable to participants, was the flexibility of the Upgrading program. According to questionnaire data, approximately 91% of participants enjoyed learning at their own pace, and approximately 82% of participants enjoyed learning independently. Students can progress through the program at their own pace and adjust their goals as life circumstances may dictate. With a few exceptions, when a student returns to the program after stopping-out, the student can continue progressing from the last activity the student finished in their prior period of enrollment. Additionally, students can progress in the program at their own pace in a non-

judgemental and pressure free environment. Study participants highly valued these qualities of the Upgrading program in their questionnaire and interview responses.

The requirement for program flexibility and supports in adult education is supported by the adult education research. In a study pertaining to improving the retention and persistence of continuing education students at the University of Manitoba, participants communicated that time extensions and flexibility were important considerations which would potentially increasing their retention and persistence (Sloane-Seale, 2011). Some participants in the study expressed their frustration with the institution and the program because accommodations were not granted based on the unique life circumstances of individual students; students believed that at times institutional and program policies should be amended to be more inclusive. Another Canadian study focused on discovering strategies to increase the attraction and retention of under-represented populations for rural and remote communities in Northern Alberta (Steel & Fahy, 2011). These researchers found that assuring students that they would be supported was important to attracting students and encouraging their enrollment. Also, one of the strategies the researchers suggested to increase student retention was a flexible program design, including “options for entry and re-entry into programs, as stop-outs become necessary” (p. 44).

Lastly, responses from participants in the study at the satellite campus on Manitoulin Island, identified the need for the Upgrading program to be advertised more. Indeed, past and current students and past and current employees expressed that there is a lack of knowledge regarding the Upgrading program, within the communities of Manitoulin Island. Some Island residents may not know the program exists, and others may know of the program but may not know of the program’s purpose. One participant in the study noted, for example, “When I moved to Manitoulin Island, I didn’t know there was an Upgrading program available to this area. It was

only after living on the island for quite awhile that I found out about Cambrian's Upgrading program through an acquaintance.”

The Upgrading program mostly relies on ‘word of mouth’ in the community to advertise its services; results of this study suggest that this form of advertising is not sufficient to appropriately promote the program. As mentioned by one of the employee participants, the campus should be continually marketing the program through the various media sources available on the Island, but the budget of the campus is not conducive to a prolonged marketing campaign. The campus also uses social media, like Facebook to advertise Upgrading, but the extent to which this platform recruits new students is unknown. Regardless, the campus needs to increase its promotion of the Upgrading program in order to increase participation. One past employee believes in promoting the affordability of the Upgrading program, “...the best thing to promote that the Upgrading program is free....” Indeed, the Upgrading was not always free. At one point, Upgrading participants paid tuition to attend the program. In fact, in Alberta, adult upgrading is not free. Students can pay as much as \$500 to 600 per course and \$200-300 for textbooks and additional fees (Government of Alberta, 2020). Perhaps if the affordability of the program was more widely known to Island residents, more residents would appreciate the privilege of having a free Upgrading program in their community, and more residents would attend the program. Thus, free program resources and a flexible program were of benefit to participants in this study. Literature suggests that support and program flexibility are important factors which can contribute to the attraction and retention of students. As well, the attraction of students to the Upgrading program may be hindered by insufficient promotion of the program.

Future Research

Given the lack of research in the available literature, the participation and persistence of ABE students in rural and Northern areas of Canada should be further explored. As well, the effects of rurality and place-based education on ABE student participation and persistence in rural and Northern areas of Canada are worth exploring. The results of this study are a good starting point for this further work because they represent the voices of ABE learners who lived and studied in rural Northern Canada, more specifically rural Northern Ontario.

Additionally, there is minimal research in the literature pertaining to the voices of individuals who desire to participate in literacy services but who have never participated. During the process of the literature review, the research of Flynn et al. (2011) was the sole publication found that captured the voices of individuals who did participate in ABE due to the various barriers that prevented them from participating. If researchers could achieve the difficult task of recruiting research participants who have the desire to attend ABE but who have always been impeded from pursuing this goal, more could be learned about the barriers to participation for these potential ABE learners. The results of this research would be highly valuable to aid educational institutions and literacy organizations to reach and serve a broader portion of the adult population.

The survey response rates and interview participation rates in this study were lower than desired. One participant mentioned this could be because communications regarding the research were too formal for Manitoulin Island, “Even this interview email that was sent. I think the way that the emails were conducted are way too formal, in a sense. The way that one is approached that’s just not the way people speak on Manitoulin.” Should researchers in rural communities align their policies, procedures, documentation and language to coincide with the ‘way of doing

things’ in the specific rural areas where the research will be conducted? Given the evidence in the literature which indicates that educational institutions should align their organizations and curriculums with the cultures of the rural areas they are situated, is it not unreasonable to suggest that institutions and researchers should conduct research in a manner deemed appropriate and acceptable to the rural communities where the research will be conducted? Would this help to increase response rates in rural communities? Should ethics committees give more consideration to the ‘rural way of doing things’? These are interesting future research questions to pursue.

In the context of the Upgrading program at Cambrian College’s satellite campus on Manitoulin Island, more research should be conducted to align the Upgrading program with the needs of the communities on Manitoulin Island. The researcher is not aware of a community consultation having ever been done by the campus. As the literature review in this paper has discussed, community and relationships are important considerations in the education of rural residents. It has been shown previously that “Developing effective adult literacy programs in rural communities is a learning process that takes time and resources. Trust among stakeholders must be earned, and it deepens as people believe their interests are included” (Ziegler & Davis, 2008, p. 33). Future research involving Upgrading programming at the satellite campus should involve collaboration with the relevant communities on Manitoulin Island to determine their needs. Local input could be gathered through community consultation, focus groups, group interviews, and surveys.

One way to increase the chances of community involvement in this research would be to design the study and instruments, to recruit participants and to collect the data using a community-based participatory research (CBPR) design. Small communities respond better to research when the research team develops strong relationships within the communities and when

researchers collaborate with the communities (Lewis et al., 2016; Lightfoot et al., 2008). In a CBPR design, community members would be included in the conduct of the research. As an example, in Pictou Landing First Nation, community members were hired to conduct face-to-face surveys, door-to-door, within their communities (Lewis et al., 2016). As a result, a 59% response rate was achieved for the survey. Research of this scale on Manitoulin Island would require an extensive investment in time and funding to conduct properly. Time would be needed to thoroughly consult with, build relationships with and collaborate with the communities. Funding would be needed to acquire resources and to pay community research assistants.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What factors have affected student participation from January 2013 to January 2020?
2. What factors have affected student persistence from January 2013 to January 2020?
3. From the perspective of the study participants, is the Upgrading program culturally and/or community relevant?

A mixed methods methodology was used to address the research questions. This methodology involved the use of questionnaires, which contained open and closed-ended questions, and semi-structured interviews. Overall, the methodology used to address the research questions was satisfactory. With respect to the questionnaires, most participants answered most of the closed-ended questions, but the response rate on the open-ended questions was lower. A low response rate on open-ended questionnaire and survey questions is not an uncommon phenomenon. With respect to the semi-structured interviews, the participants provided high quality data that addressed the research questions. However, both the questionnaires and interviews were necessary to collect enough data to analyze and answer the research questions.

Despite the effectiveness of the methodology in eliciting high quality information from the participants, recruitment was the primary factor that hindered the collection of an adequate amount of information to effectively answer the research questions. Unfortunately, participant recruitment was low due to factors, such as the ethics restrictions associated with the researcher being the primary Upgrading professor at the campus, the lack of research promotion due to the initial COVID-19 lockdown, the requirement for correspondence to and data collection from rural participants to be virtual due to the pandemic restrictions, and outdated contact information

for past students. Consequently, the data collected from the participants provided enough information to adequately answer the research questions.

The participation and persistence of some participants in this study were directly affected by situational hardships, such as health, employment, transportation and personal reasons, which decreased rates of participation and persistence. Despite the supports available at the campus, approximately 55% of the participants stopped-out of the program at least once. In general, participants felt that there was nothing else the campus could do to assist them with their barriers to participation and persistence. As one participant stated, “sometimes life just happens.”

Other factors which may have positively affected the participation and persistence of students were not explicitly mentioned by the participants. To discover these other factors, the data provided by the participants was compared to the literature. From these comparisons, the researcher inferred factors which could have potentially contributed to the participation and persistence of students. A strong participant consensus on the positive and supportive environment at the campus was deemed to have potentially positively affected student participation and persistence. Additionally, the support of the professor was another factor found to have potentially positively affected the persistence of many participants. The friendships and community fostered within the program and the flexibility of the program were deemed to have potentially positively affected student persistence for some participants.

With respect to education relevant to their communities and cultures, many participants were mostly content with the relevance of the current programming at the campus although only 64% felt connected to their communities while attending the Upgrading program. Furthermore, the relevance of community relevant programming was not found to affect the participation and persistence of the student participants in this study. However, a need for the increased inclusion

of local First Nations' culture and history in the curriculum of the program and culture of the campus was desired by some of the non-Indigenous students and employees while 75% of First Nations participants found the program was relevant to their communities, and 50% of the Indigenous participants found the Upgrading program was relevant to their culture.

Unfortunately, the sole First Nations participant who disagreed that the Upgrading program was relevant to their culture did not provide elaboration on the questionnaire, and they did not choose to participate in the interviews. As a result, information pertaining to how the program and campus could increase their relevance to First Nations culture, from the perspective of this participant, was not available. The need for Indigenous supports, such as the accessibility of an Indigenous counsellor was identified by one student participant and both employee participants. This data shows that increasing the relevance of the Upgrading program and the campus culture to First Nations culture is required and desirable. For further context, to highlight the importance of this finding, approximately 30-50% of the students in the Upgrading program, at any point in time, identify as First Nations.

At the time of this study approximately 20% of participants, who answered the questions on the questionnaire, reported completing their goals in Upgrading, and 50% reported they are still pursuing their goals in Upgrading. This indicates that 70% of the participants in this study have persisted or continue to persist in the Upgrading program. Albeit, 30% of this group of participants had been gradually progressing in the program for four or more years, which is less than ideal progress but indicates persistence nonetheless.

Despite the persistence of 70% of the past and current student participants in this study, it is important to remember that it was not possible to collect information from a larger sample of the population. Since the data cannot be generalized to the population of past and current

Upgrading students beyond the participants in this study, it is possible that many past and current students face different barriers to participation and persistence than were identified by the research.

The findings of this study coincide with some of the research findings in the literature. One, ABE students face numerous barriers to education which differ from individual to individual, and rural students face additional disadvantages, such as lack of access to public transportation; in this study, participation and persistence were reported to be negatively affected by physical and mental health, transportation and personal reasons.

Two, the peer-reviewed literature provides theory and empirical evidence that the commitment of a postsecondary institution to the welfare of adult students and high-risk students can affect student persistence (Braxton et al., 2004; Howley et al., 2013; Schreiner et al., 2011; Tinto, 1975). In the form of a supportive and positive campus environment and responsive employee-student relationships, the satellite campus expressed its institutional commitment to the students. In this way, the commitment of the satellite campus to student welfare likely positively affected the persistence of ABE students in a rural Northern Canadian context.

Three, research has shown that teacher-student relationships are important to student persistence in adult education and ABE settings (Comings et al., 1999; Dwyer, 2015; Petty & Thomas, 2014; Sloane-Seale, 2011; Spivey, 2016; Zacharakis et al., 2011). The findings of this study indicate that high-quality professor-student relationships and one-on-one support positively affected student persistence in a rural Northern Canadian setting, more specifically rural Northern Ontario.

Four, the peer-reviewed literature raised the importance of classroom inclusion to student participation, persistence and motivation (Braxton et al., 2004; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2019;

Taylor & Trumpower, 2014; Tinto, 1975; Townsend & Delves, 2009). In this study, 80% of past and current student participants felt a sense of community in the classroom, but only 55% of past and current student participants felt that the friends they made in the classroom helped them progress toward their goals. This data may indicate that only partial inclusion had been established in the classroom, so the professor must strive to increase the level of inclusion in the Upgrading classroom.

Five, the rural education literature provides substantial evidence pertaining to the significant importance of place-based education to rural communities (Adie & Barton; 2012; Bracken, 2008; Burnell, 2003; Corbett, 2007; Erickson et al., 2012; Irvin et al., 2009; Howley, 2009; Marchant & Taylor, 2014; Ritchey, 2008; Townsend & Delves, 2009; Twyford et al., 2009; Wright, 2012; Ziegler & Davis, 2008). Place-based education should foster an educational environment where students feel connected to their communities and cultures while attending an educational institution. However, of the student participants in this study, 64% felt connected to their communities while attending the Upgrading program, and 64% agreed the Upgrading program was relevant to their cultures. Consequently, the goal of the satellite campus and its employees should be to increase these percentages by increasing community connection and cultural inclusion at the campus. Increasing community connection and cultural inclusion could have the added benefit of increasing classroom inclusion, which positively affects student participation, persistence and motivation.

Lastly, program flexibility was found to be important to the retention and persistence of continuing education students in Alberta, and program flexibility was also found to be important to the attraction and retention of under-represented populations for rural and remote communities in Northern Alberta (Sloane-Seale, 2011; Steel & Fahy, 2011). Flexible programs that adapt their

policies and procedures to accommodate the individual life circumstances of a student and to allow for unburdened re-entry into education after student stops-out appeal to adult learners who are attempting to balance multiple roles and responsibilities in their lives and to adult learners who face numerous geographical, cultural, economic, institutional and/or societal barriers to education. A large proportion of the students in the Upgrading program at the satellite campus in Little Current strongly approved of the program's flexibility. Learning at their own pace and learning independently, free of pressure and judgement, were important to a strong majority of participants. While streamlined and unburdened exit and re-entry into the program after stop-out were not mentioned by the students, this is a feature of the Upgrading program that plausibly affected the participation and persistence of students who have stopped-out in the past.

It is necessary for all levels of government in Canada, educational institutions and literacy organizations to understand the importance of highly responsive customer service to the participation and persistence of rural ABE participants. Providing high-quality support and fostering strong employee-student relationships are necessary to enable the persistence of many rural ABE students. Thus, low staff to student and professor to student ratios are essential to adequately support the needs of rural ABE students. Consequently, adequate funding is necessary to support these ratios and to provide the training supports necessary to allow rural ABE participants to overcome potential barriers to education.

Cambrian college's satellite campus should continue to develop its strengths as a positive and supportive environment with dedicated and supportive staff and faculty. As well, the campus should continue to ensure that the Upgrading program is flexible, non-judgemental, accommodating and low pressure for students. Areas for improvement include fostering a greater sense of inclusion in the classroom, identifying situational hardships in students and referring

students to the appropriate resources before students consider withdrawing, increasing community connection, advancing cultural inclusion for the local First Nations culture, and increasing promotion of the Upgrading program.

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Appendix A

Invite to Participate in Questionnaire- Email

Good Day:

My name is **[Support Staff]**. I am contacting you because our records indicate that you once participated or are currently participating in Cambrian College's Academic Upgrading program in Little Current.

The Upgrading professor at the campus, Christopher Prechotko, is conducting a study on the participation and persistence of past and present Academic Upgrading participants in Little Current. Christopher is conducting the study for his graduate program at the Memorial University of Newfoundland. He hopes the results of the study will help Cambrian College improve its services to the community.

The study has two stages. In the first stage of the study past and present students are being asked to participate in a survey. Completion of the survey questionnaire is completely voluntary. The survey will take approximately 7-10 minutes to complete. If you are a current student, your decision to participate or not participate in the study will not affect your grades. As an incentive to complete the survey, participants will be entered into a draw for a chance to win a \$100 gift card from Amazon.

The second stage of the study will consist of follow-up interviews. Selection of participants for the interviews will be based upon the most pertinent answers from the survey. Interview participants will be entered into another draw for the chance to win a \$100 gift card from Amazon.

Your decision to take part in the study is completely voluntary. Before participating in the survey, you will be asked to read an implied consent form. If you choose, you can withdraw

consent at any time. Your information will be kept confidential and anonymous. Christopher, will not know of your participation in the survey unless you decide to participate in the follow-up interview.

If you are interested in participating in the survey, please follow these instructions:

1. If you would like to complete the survey online please use this link

https://mun.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_agyO6gx3JWEzBGZ . The survey can easily be completed from your smartphone, tablet or computer. After you click on the link, you will read an implied consent form. Additionally, after you complete the survey, you will be invited to participate in a follow-up interview. You do not have to participate in the follow-up interview. If you choose to participate in a follow-up interview, please click “Yes”. If you do not wish to participate in a follow-up interview, please click “No”.

2. If you would like to complete a hard-copy of the survey, please reply to this email, and a package will be mailed to you through Canada Post.

The proposal for this research has been approved by Cambrian’s Research Ethics Committee and by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-737-8368. You can also pose questions about the research ethics of this study by emailing research@cambriancollege.ca or by calling 705-566-8101 ext. 6216.

Thank you for your time,

[Support Staff]

Appendix B

Invite to Participate in Questionnaire-Phone Script

Good Day:

My name is **[Support Staff]**. I am contacting you because our records indicate that you once participated or are currently participating in Cambrian College's Academic Upgrading program in Little Current.

The Upgrading professor at the campus, Christopher Prechotko, is conducting a study on the participation and persistence of past and present Academic Upgrading participants in Little Current. Christopher is conducting the study for his graduate program at the Memorial University of Newfoundland. He hopes the results of the study will help Cambrian College improve its services to the community.

The study has two stages. In the first stage of the study past and present students are being asked to participate in a survey. Completion of the survey questionnaire is completely voluntary. The survey will take approximately 7-10 minutes to complete. If you are a current student, your decision to participate or not participate in the study will not affect your grades. As an incentive to complete the survey, participants will be entered into a draw for a chance to win a \$100 gift card from Amazon.

The second stage of the study will consist of follow-up interviews. Selection of participants for the interviews will be based upon the most pertinent answers from the survey. Interview participants will be entered into another draw for the chance to win a \$100 gift card from Amazon.

Your decision to take part in the study is completely voluntary. Before participating in the survey, you will read a consent form. If you choose, you can withdraw consent at any time. Your

information will be kept confidential and anonymous. Christopher, will not know of your participation in the survey unless you decide to participate in the follow-up interview. If you decide to consent to a follow-up interview, your identity and survey responses will no longer be anonymous to Christopher.

Are you interested in participating in the survey?

The proposal for this research has been approved by Cambrian's Research Ethics Committee and by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-737-8368. You can also pose questions about the research ethics of this study by emailing research@cambriancollege.ca or by calling 705-566-8101 ext. 6216.

Thank you for your time. Goodbye.

Appendix C

Reminder to Participate in Questionnaire-Email

Good day:

The purpose of this email is to remind you of your invitation to participate in Christopher Prechotko's graduate research study. If you have already completed the survey, please disregard this email.

If you still intend to participate in the survey, please do so before Friday the 12th of June, 2020.

You can access the survey at this link

https://mun.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_agyO6gx3JWEzBGZ

If you have decided not to participate in this survey, thank you for your time. You will not be contacted again with regard to this research.

The proposal for this research has been approved by Cambrian's Research Ethics Committee and by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-737-8368. You can also pose questions about the research ethics of this study by emailing research@cambriancollege.ca or by calling 705-566-8101 ext. 6216.

Thank you for your time,

[Support Staff]

Appendix D

Reminder to Participate in Questionnaire-Phone Script

Good Day:

My name is **[Support Staff]**, and I work for Cambrian College. You were contacted some time ago, and invited to participate in a survey for Christopher Prechotko's graduate research study. The intent of this call is to remind you about the survey. If you still intend to participate in the survey, please mail the survey by June 9th, 2020. If you have decided not to participate in this survey, thank you for your time. We will not contact you again with regard to this research.

The proposal for this research has been approved by Cambrian's Research Ethics Committee and by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-737-8368. You can also pose questions about the research ethics of this study by emailing research@cambriancollege.ca or by calling 705-566-8101 ext. 6216.

Thank you for your time.

Appendix E

Informed Consent Form for Questionnaire

Title: Participation and Persistence of Basic Adult Education Participants at a Small Satellite Campus on Manitoulin Island

Researcher: Christopher Prechotko, Academic Upgrading Professor-Little Current Campus/Cambrian College, christopher.prechotko@cambriancollege.ca or 1-800-461-7145 ext. 6218.

Supervisor: Dr. Dale Kirby, Assistant Professor-Faculty of Education/Memorial University of Newfoundland, dkirby@mun.ca or 709-864-3186.

You are invited to take part in a research project, titled **“Participation and Persistence of Basic Adult Education Participants at a Small Satellite Campus on Manitoulin Island.”** This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future. The researcher acknowledges the barriers that indigenous people have traditionally faced in accessing education, and the intergenerational effects of colonialism. It is recognized that such

barriers have had an adverse impact on access to education for many people of indigenous descent.

Introduction: Hello, my name is Christopher Prechotko, and I am the Academic Upgrading Professor at Cambrian College's satellite campus in Little Current, Ontario. As part of my graduate program, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Dale Kirby. This research is not being conducted on the behalf of Cambrian College.

Purpose of Study: You have been contacted because of your past or present participation in Cambrian College's Academic Upgrading program in Little Current, Ontario. The purpose of this study is to determine the reasons for student participation and persistence in the Academic Upgrading program.

What You Will Do in this Study: You are being asked to complete the survey attached to this letter of consent. Your participation in this survey is voluntary. If you are currently a student at the campus, your participation or non-participation in this survey will not impact your grades. There will be no negative consequences should you choose not to participate. Additionally, you may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. You may also consent to a follow-up interview, which will be conducted during the second half of the study. However, you do not have to participate in the interview if you participate in the survey. Please read the **Follow-Up Interview** section of this consent form for more information about consenting to the interview.

Length of Time: You will complete one survey, and the survey should take approximately 7-10 minutes to complete.

Compensation: To thank you for participating in the survey, you will be entered into a draw for a \$100 Amazon gift card.

Withdrawal from the Study: You may withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty. Should you also choose to withdraw the data you have provided in the survey, you may do so up until June 14, 2020. After this date, data from the survey will have been analyzed, anonymized and compiled into a database that does not contain information that can be used to identify your participation in the study. If you choose to withdraw your participation in the study, you will still be entered into the draw for the Amazon gift card; if you choose to withdraw your data, you will still be entered into the draw for the Amazon gift card. To withdraw from the study, please email supportstaff@cambriancollege.ca or call 1-800-461-7145 ext. 6234 and ask for [Support Staff]. Please provide your name to withdraw from the study.

Possible Benefits: This study may benefit you because it will give you the chance to reflect upon your reasons for participating in upgrading. Reflecting on these experiences and your current trajectory in life may help you identify future life goals. Additionally, the results of this study may help Cambrian College adjust its policies, procedures and supports to better serve current upgrading students, future upgrading students, and the communities on Manitoulin Island. Also, little research has been conducted on the participation of basic adult education learners at small, rural college satellite campuses, especially in Northern Ontario. Therefore, information from this research could be of benefit to education, social services, the scholarly community and society as a whole.

Possible Risks: Because you will be reflecting upon past and current life experiences, some of this reflection may trigger unpleasant memories or feelings. If you need someone to speak to about any unpleasant memories or feelings that may arise from participating in the study, please contact one of the following community services: Manitoulin Crisis Response Program toll free

at 1-877-841-1101, Manitoulin Counselling and Treatment Services, at 705-368-0756, or Noojmowin Teg Health Centre at 705-368-2182 ext. 222.

Confidentiality: The ethical duty of confidentiality includes safeguarding participants' identities, personal information, and data from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure. Your privacy and confidentiality will be maintained. Only the lead researcher, Christopher Prechotko, a Cambrian College support staff and Dr. Dale Kirby, will see your responses on the survey form.

The data from this research project may be published and presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although, we will report direct quotations from the survey, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information such as your name, birthdate, address, email and phone number will be removed from our report. Because the participants for this research project have been selected from a small group of people, some who are known to each other, it is still possible that you may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what you have answered on the survey form.

Anonymity: Anonymity refers to protecting participants' identifying characteristics, such as name or description of physical appearance. Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure your anonymity. However, your anonymity pertaining to your participation in the study cannot be guaranteed if you volunteer for the study in a group setting. To guarantee your anonymity, only a support staff will have access to your survey responses. Also, your participation in the survey will only be known to the support staff. As a result, the Upgrading professor, Christopher, will not know of your participation in the survey. Additionally, the answers you provide on the survey will remain anonymous in any possible publication that may result from this study.

Follow-up Interviews: If you decide to participate in a follow-up interview, you should be aware that Christopher Prechotko will know of your participation in the study because he will be conducting the interviews. However, should current students consent to an interview, he will only learn of your participation in the study after the semester is over and final grades have been submitted. After completing this survey, you will be asked if you want to consent to an interview.

Recording of Data: Your responses on the survey form will be recorded and analyzed.

Use, Access, Ownership, and Storage of Data: Electronic information and data will be stored on a hard drive and a USB stick. Electronic data files will be password-protected and stored on a password-protected computer. The USB stick, containing a back-up copy of all electronic information and data, will be locked in a filing cabinet, in a locked room. Paper-based information and data will be locked in a filing cabinet, in a locked room. Christopher Prechotko, and his supervisor, Dr. Dale Kirby, will have access to data that has been anonymized. The support staff who is helping to conduct the study will have access to all the survey data, and she will be tasked with anonymizing the data before Christopher views the participants' responses. After five years, all completed survey forms will be destroyed.

Third-Party Data Collection and/or Storage: Data collected from you as part of your participation in this project will be hosted and/or stored electronically by Cambrian College's Server and/or Memorial University of Newfoundland's Qualtrics platform and is subject to their respective privacy policies, and to any relevant laws of the country in which their servers are located. Therefore, anonymity and confidentiality of data may not be guaranteed in the rare instance, for example, that government agencies obtain a court order compelling the provider to grant access to specific data stored on their servers. If you have questions or concerns about how

your data will be collected or stored, please contact the researcher and/or visit the providers' website for more information before participating. The privacy and security policy of the third-party hosting data collection and/or storing data can be found at: <https://cambriancollege.ca/about/official-documents-and-policies/privacy-of-information/> and <https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/>.

Reporting of Results: Data from this research may be published in journal articles, may be part of a report to organizations within Cambrian College, may be part of a report to ministries within the government of Ontario or may be part of conference presentations. Upon completion, my thesis will be available at Memorial University's Queen Elizabeth II Library, and can be accessed online at: <http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/search/collection/theses>. Data will be reported as aggregate data, summarized form data, and using direct quotations.

Sharing of Results with Participants: After the thesis has passed final submission, you may request a copy of it from Christopher Prechotko.

Questions: You are welcome to ask questions before, during, or after your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact: Christopher Prechotko at christopher.prechotko@cambriancollege.ca or 1-800-461-7145 ext. 6218. You may also contact the supervisor Dr. Dale Kirby at dkirby@mun.ca or 709-864-3186. The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy and Cambrian College's Research Ethics Committee. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861. Alternatively, you may pose

questions about the research ethics of this study by emailing research@cambriancollege.ca or by calling 705-566-8101 ext. 6216.

Consent: After reading this form and completing the survey you have given your implied consent for the following terms:

- You have read the information about the research. ·
- You have been able to ask questions about this study. Please email christopher.prechotko@cambriancollege.ca or call 1-800-461-7145 ext. 6218 if you have any questions. ·
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions. ·
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing. ·
- You understand that you are free to withdraw participation in the study without having to give a reason and doing so will not affect you now or in the future. ·
- You understand that if you choose to end participation **during** data collection, any data collected from you up to that point **will be retained by the researcher, unless you indicate otherwise.** ·
- You understand that if you choose to withdraw **after** data collection has ended, your data can be removed from the study up to **[Enter Date]**. After this date, your data will have been anonymized and you cannot withdraw your data. ·
- You agree and give consent for the researcher to use direct quotations from the survey questionnaire. By giving your consent, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Appendix F

Questionnaire

Past and Current Learner Survey-Participation and Persistence of Basic Adult Education Participants

Please note, you may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer

1. Please, provide your name and your preferred method of contact, phone or email.

2. Approximately, how old were you when you attended the Upgrading program in Little Current?

3. I identify as:

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Gender Diverse
- ☐ Prefer not to disclose

4. Please complete if you wish to identify as a member of a designated group. Please tick all that apply.

☐

Newcomer

☐

Racialized Person

☐

Person with a disability

☐

Inuit

☐

Metis

☐

First Nations

☐

Deaf

☐

Francophone

☐

I choose not to disclose, or i am not a member of one of the above groups

5. What was the highest education that you fully completed before enrolling in the Upgrading program? Choose from the list below.

- ☐ I didn't finish elementary school
 - ☐ Elementary School
 - ☐ High School Diploma
 - ☐ Academic and Career Entrance Certificate (ACE)
 - ☐ General Education Development Certificate (GED)
 - ☐ Apprenticeship
 - ☐ Journey Person
 - ☐ College Diploma
 - ☐ Bachelor's Degree
 - ☐ Graduate Degree
 - ☐ Doctorate
-

6. What was your reason for enrolling in Cambrian College's Academic Upgrading Program in Little Current? Choose from the list below.

- ☐ High School Equivalency
 - ☐ Independence
 - ☐ Prerequisite course/s to enroll in a college program
 - ☐ Employment
 - ☐ Apprenticeship
 - ☐ Other
-

7. Approximately how long did you spend in the Upgrading program?

- ☐ 1 week to a month
 - ☐ 1 to 3 months
 - ☐ 3 to 6 months
 - ☐ 1 year
 - ☐ 2 years
 - ☐ 3 years
 - ☐ 4 years
 - ☐ more than 4 years
-

8. Did you exit the Upgrading program more than once?

☐ Yes

☐ No

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being low and 5 being high, rate your agreement with the following statements:

	1	2	3	4	5
I am self-confident in a school setting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a positive attitude toward learning in school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Did you complete an ACE certificate at Cambrian College's campus in Little Current?

☐ Yes

☐ I started the ACE program, but i did not complete it

☐ I started the ACE program at Cambrian, but i completed it elsewhere

☐ No, an ACE certificate wasn't my goal while i attended the upgrading program

11. Do/did your parents or caregivers have a high school diploma or high school equivalency?

- ☐ one does/did
- ☐ both do/did
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Not applicable
-

12. Where community or town did you live when you attended the Upgrading program in Little Current?

13. Why did you decide to go back to school? Did any barriers prevent you from enrolling at an earlier time?

14. Please choose your response to the following statements.

	Completely Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Completely Agree
My family/loved ones positively influenced my decision to go back to school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My family/loved ones supported my decision to go back to school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being low and 5 being high, please rate your agreement with the following statements:

	1	2	3	4	5
My community has a positive view of education.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The upgrading program is relevant to my community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The upgrading program is relevant to my culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
While in the upgrading program, i felt connected to my community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Programming relevant to my culture is important to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Programming relevant to my community is important to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being low and 5 being high, rate your agreement with the following statements:

	1	2	3	4	5
Cambrian College's reputation positively affected my decision to enroll in the Upgrading program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The location of the campus in Little Current positively affected my decision to enroll in the Upgrading program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoyed learning at my own pace when i participated in the Upgrading program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoyed learning independently when i participated in the Upgrading program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. How do you learn best?

- ☐ In-class
- ☐ Online
- ☐ Blended (Both in-class or online)
- ☐ Alone
- ☐ Other
-

18. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being low and 5 being high, please rate your agreement with the following statements:

	1	2	3	4	5
Achieving a high school diploma or a high school equivalency increases my chances of finding a job in my community?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Achieving a high school diploma or a high school equivalency increases my chances of finding a job outside my community?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. Did employment negatively affect your ability to attend the Upgrading program?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ I had to exit the program because of employment
- ☐ I wasn't working while I attended the Upgrading program
-

20. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being low and 5 being high, please rate your agreement with the following statements:

	1	2	3	4	5
I felt a sense of community in the Upgrading classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The friends I made in the Upgrading classroom helped me progress toward my goal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt supported in the Upgrading classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. Did you achieve your goal in Cambrian College's Upgrading program in Little Current? For example, did you get your ACE or finish a prerequisite course for college, etc?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I'm still working on achieving my goal at Cambrian
- ☐ I'm still working on achieving my goal somewhere other than Cambrian
-

22. If you didn't achieve your goal, please explain why you didn't achieve it. If you did achieve your goal or you are currently enrolled in the Upgrading program, please skip this question.

23. Please explain how Cambrian College can or could have better support/ed you to achieve your goal in Upgrading.

24. Please list the things that Cambrian College did/does well to help support you in the Upgrading program.

25. Do you consent to being contacted for a follow-up interview?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Appendix G

Student Interview Invite-Email

Hello [insert student name],

I am emailing because you completed a questionnaire related to a study on the participation and persistence of Academic Upgrading learners at Cambrian College's satellite campus in Little Current, Ontario. You have been contacted again because your questionnaire was selected for a follow-up interview. The intent of the interview is to gain a more in-depth understanding of your reasons for participating and persisting in the Academic Upgrading program. If you did not complete the program, your reasons for not doing so are also of importance to us. As a reminder, this study is being conducted by Christopher Prechotko, the Upgrading professor at the campus, for his graduate program. He hopes to use the results of this study to help Cambrian College adjust its policies, procedures and supports to better serve the community on Manitoulin Island. Interview participants will be entered into another draw for the chance to win a \$100 gift card from Amazon.

Before the Pandemic, interviews were intended to take place in the Academic Upgrading classroom at the Little Current Campus. However, due to physical distancing restrictions, interviewees now have the option to interview via phone or Zoom, in lieu of face-to-face interviews. In the future, should physical distancing restrictions be eased to allow in-person interviews at the Cambrian College, interviewees will be given the additional option to interview at the Little Current Campus.

Your decision to take part in the interview is completely voluntary. You will be asked to read an informed consent form. If you choose, you can withdraw consent at any time. Your information will be kept confidential and anonymous. You should also know, if you choose to participate in

the follow-up interview, your participation in the study will no longer remain anonymous to the lead researcher. If you are currently a student at the campus, the interview will be conducted after the semester is over and after final grades have been submitted. The interview will take approximately an hour to complete.

Are you interested in participating in the interview? Please reply to this email before Friday the 26th of June if you are interested in participating in the interview.

Thank you for your time.

[Support Staff]

The proposal for this research has been approved by Cambrian's Research Ethics Committee and by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-737-8368. You can also pose questions about the research ethics of this study by emailing research@cambriancollege.ca or by calling 705-566-8101 ext. 6216.

Appendix H

Student Interview Invite- Phone Script

Hello, may I speak with (name)?

Hi, my name is [support staff member]. I am calling because you completed a questionnaire related to a study on the participation and persistence of Academic Upgrading learners at Cambrian College's satellite campus in Little Current, Ontario. You have been contacted again because your questionnaire was selected for a follow-up interview. The intent of the interview is to gain a more in-depth understanding of your reasons for participating and persisting in the Academic Upgrading program. If you did not complete the program, your reasons for not doing so are also of importance to us. As a reminder, this study is being conducted by Christopher Prechotko, the Upgrading professor at the campus, for his graduate program. He hopes to use the results of this study to help Cambrian College adjust its policies, procedures and supports to better serve the community on Manitoulin Island. Interview participants will be entered into another draw for the chance to win a \$100 gift card from Amazon.

Before the Pandemic, interviews were intended to take place in the Academic Upgrading classroom at the Little Current campus. However, due to physical distancing restrictions, interviewees now have the option to interview via phone or Zoom, in lieu of face-to-face interviews. In the future, should physical distancing restrictions be eased to allow in-person interviews at the Cambrian College, interviewees will be given the additional option to interview at the Little Current campus.

The proposal for this research has been approved by Cambrian's Research Ethics Committee and by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been

treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-737-8368. You can also pose questions about the research ethics of this study by emailing research@cambriancollege.ca or by calling 705-566-8101 ext. 6216.

Your decision to take part in the interview is completely voluntary. You will be asked to read an informed consent form. If you choose, you can withdraw consent at any time. Your information will be kept confidential and anonymous. You should also know, if you choose to participate in the follow-up interview, your participation in the study will no longer remain anonymous to the lead researcher. If you are currently a student at the campus, the interview will be conducted after the semester is over and after final grades have been submitted. The interview will take approximately an hour to complete.

Are you interested in participating in the interview? Y/N

When would you like to book an interview?

We will send you a consent form in the mail.

Thank you for your time.

Student Reminder of Invite to Interview-Email

Appendix I

Student Interview Oral Informed Consent Form

Title: Participation and Persistence of Basic Adult Education Participants at a Small Satellite Campus on Manitoulin Island

Researcher: Christopher Prechotko, Academic Upgrading Professor-Little Current Campus/Cambrian College, christopher.prechotko@cambriancollege.ca or 705-368-3194.

Supervisor: Dr. Dale Kirby, Assistant Professor-Faculty of Education/Memorial University of Newfoundland, dkirby@mun.ca or 709-864-3186.

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled “Participation and Persistence of Basic Adult Education Participants at a Small Satellite Campus on Manitoulin Island.”

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

The researcher acknowledges the barriers that indigenous people have traditionally faced in accessing education, and the intergenerational effects of colonialism. It is recognized that such barriers have had an adverse impact on access to education for many people of indigenous descent.

Introduction:

Hello, my name is Christopher Prechotko, and I am the Academic Upgrading Professor at Cambrian College's satellite campus in Little Current, Ontario. As part of my graduate degree, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Dale Kirby. This research is not being conducted on behalf of Cambrian College.

Purpose of Study:

You have been contacted because of your past or present participation in Cambrian College's Academic Upgrading program in Little Current, Ontario. The purpose of this study is to determine the reasons for student participation and persistence in the Academic Upgrading program. If you did not complete the program, we are also interested in learning the reasons why you did not complete the program. The results of this study will help Cambrian College adjust its policies, procedures and supports to better serve the community on Manitoulin Island.

What You Will Do in this Study:

You completed a questionnaire related to a study on the participation and persistence of Academic Upgrading learners at Cambrian College's satellite campus in Little Current, Ontario. You have been contacted again because the answers you provided on the questionnaire are worthy of further exploration. The intent of the interview is to gain a more in-depth understanding of your reasons for participating and persisting in the academic upgrading

program. If you did not complete the program, your reasons for being unable to do so are also of importance to us. If you are currently a student at the campus, your participation or non-participation in this interview will not impact your grades. There will be no negative consequences should you choose not to participate. Also, you may skip any interview questions that you do not want to answer.

Length of Time:

The interview should take approximately one hour.

Compensation:

To thank you for participating in the interview, you will be entered into a draw for a \$100 Amazon gift card.

Withdrawal from the Study:

You may withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty. Should you also choose to withdraw the data you have provided in the interview, you may do so up until [enter date]. After [enter date], data from the interview will have been analyzed, anonymized and compiled into a database that does not contain information that can be used to identify your participation in the study. If you choose to withdraw your participation the study, you will still be entered into the draw for the Amazon gift card; if you choose to withdraw your data, you will still be entered into the draw for the Amazon gift card. To withdraw from the interview, please contact support.staff@cambriancollege.ca or call 705-368-3194.

Possible Benefits:

This study may benefit you because it will give you the chance to reflect upon your reasons for participating in upgrading. Reflecting on these experiences and your current trajectory in life may help you identify future life goals. Additionally, the results of this study may help Cambrian

College adjust its policies, procedures and supports to better serve current upgrading students, future upgrading students, and the communities on Manitoulin Island. Also, little research has been conducted on the participation of basic adult education learners at small, rural college satellite campuses, especially in Northern Ontario. Therefore, information from this research could be of benefit to education, social services, the scholarly community and society as a whole.

Possible Risks:

Because you will be reflecting upon past and current life experiences, some of this reflection may trigger unpleasant memories or feelings. If you need someone to speak to about any unpleasant memories or feelings that may arise from participating in the study, please contact the following community services: Manitoulin Crisis Response Program toll free at 1-877-841-1101, Manitoulin Counselling and Treatment Services, at 705-368-0756, or Noojmowin Teg Health Centre at 705-368-2182 ext. 222.

Confidentiality:

The ethical duty of confidentiality includes safeguarding participants' identities, personal information, and data from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure. Your privacy and confidentiality will be maintained. Only the lead researcher, Christopher Prechotko and possibly his research supervisor, Dr. Dale Kirby, will see your responses in the interview.

The data from this research project may be published and presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although we will report direct quotations from the interview, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information such as your name, birthdate, address, email and phone number will be removed from our report. Because the participants for this research project have been selected from a small group of people, some who

are known to each other, it is still possible that you may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what you have answered in the interview.

Anonymity:

Anonymity refers to protecting participants' identifying characteristics, such as name or description of physical appearance.

Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure your anonymity. If you would like to ensure that your participation in the study is anonymous, please inform Christopher Prechotko in a private conversation, and I will make every effort to ensure your anonymity in participation is maintained. Additionally, the answers you provide in the interview will remain anonymous in any possible publication that result from this study.

Recording of Data:

Your responses in the interview will be audio-recorded. If you have chosen to be interviewed on the Zoom platform, an audio file of the interview will be recorded using the option available on the Zoom platform. If you have chosen to be interviewed by phone, an audio file of the interview will be recorded using an application called "Call Recorder."

Use, Access, Ownership, and Storage of Data:

If you have chosen to interview via the Zoom platform, audio files will be saved to a password-protected laptop, and the files will be stored on a firewall-protected server at Cambrian College.

The audio files will be backed-up to a USB stick that will be stored in a locked room at my residence until physical distancing restrictions have eased. Once we return to an office environment at Cambrian College, the USB will be moved to a locked filing cabinet, in a locked room at the campus. Audio files on the Zoom platform will be deleted once they have been backed-up.

If you have chosen to interview via phone, recorded audio interview files will be stored on my personal cell phone until they have been transcribed. The cell phone is password and fingerprint protected. Once the interviews have been transcribed, they will be deleted from my cell phone. Interview audio files will be backed-up on my password-protected College laptop. Files will be stored on the College server, which is protected by a firewall. Interview audio files will also be stored on a USB stick that will be stored in a locked room at my residence. Once we are permitted to return to work at the campus, the USB stick will be transferred to a locked filing cabinet, in a locked room at the campus.

Only the lead researcher, Christopher Prechotko, and his supervisor, Dr. Dale Kirby, will have access to data that has not been anonymized. After five years, all audio-recordings from the interviews will be destroyed.

Third-Party Data Collection and/or Storage:

Data collected from you as part of your participation in this project will be hosted and/or stored electronically by Cambrian College's server is subject to its respective privacy policies, and to any relevant laws of the country in which the server is located. Therefore, anonymity and confidentiality of data may not be guaranteed in the rare instance, for example, that government agencies obtain a court order compelling the provider to grant access to specific data stored on the server. If you have questions or concerns about how your data will be collected or stored, please contact the researcher and/or visit the provider's website for more information before participating. The privacy and security policy of the third-party hosting data collection and/or storing data can be found at:

<https://cambriancollege.ca/about/official-documents-and-policies/privacy-of-information/>

Reporting of Results:

Data from this research may be published in journal articles, may be part of a report to organizations within Cambrian College, may be part of a report to ministries within the government of Ontario or may be part of conference presentations. Upon completion, my thesis will be available at Memorial University's Queen Elizabeth II library, and can be accessed online at: <http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/search/collection/theses>. Data will be reported as aggregate data, summarized form data, and using direct quotations.

Sharing of Results with Participants:

After my thesis has passed final submission, you may request a copy of it from me if you wish.

Questions:

You are welcome to ask questions before, during, or after your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact: Christopher Prechotko at christopher.prechotko@cambriancollege.ca or 705-368-3194. You may also contact the supervisor, Dr. Dale Kirby, at dkirby@mun.ca or 709-864-3186.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy and Cambrian College's Research Ethics Committee. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861. Alternatively, you may pose questions about the research ethics of this study by emailing research@cambriancollege.ca or by calling 705-566-8101 ext. 6216.

Consent

By giving your consent, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Record of Oral Consent for Interview

Participant Name: _____

Date and Time of Contact: _____

Now that I have read you the consent form, we will proceed with the oral consent process.

Did you receive the mailed or emailed consent form? Yes ☐ No ☐

Did you read the consent form? Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you understand what the study is about and what you will be doing?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw participation in the study without having to give a reason and doing so will not affect you now or in the future?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you understand that if you choose to end participation **during** data collection, any data collected from you up to that point **will be retained by the researcher, unless you indicate otherwise?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you understand that if you choose to withdraw **after** data collection has ended, your data can be removed from the study up to [enter date]? After [enter date], your data will have been anonymized and you cannot withdraw your data.

Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you agree to be audio-recorded? Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you agree to the use of direct quotations? Yes ☐ No ☐

Now that I have read the consent form to you, do you have any questions about taking part in the interview? Yes ☐ No ☐

Are you satisfied with the answers to your questions? Yes ☐ No ☐

Would you like to participate in the interview? Yes ☐ No ☐

Researcher's Signature: _____

I have read the consent form to the participant and explained the study to the best of my ability. Before receiving the participant's consent, I invited questions and gave answers. I believe the participant understands what is involved, and the participant has freely chosen to participate.

Appendix J

Student Interview Guiding Questions

1. Why did you enroll in upgrading?
2. What circumstances contributed to your decision to enrol in upgrading?
3. Describe your experience in the program.
4. Did you finish the program? Did you achieve a goal in the program before leaving? Are you still a student in the program?
5. What factors helped you finish the program/What factors contributed to your decision to stop-out/withdraw from the program/What factors have helped you persist in the program, so far?
6. Could the campus have done more to support your progress in the program?
7. Was the course material relevant to your culture/community?
8. Would culturally/community relevant course resources have contributed to your success in the program?
9. Would you like to say anything else that you think is relevant to our goal of improving our upgrading services to better serve the community and future students?

Appendix K

Employee Invite to Interview-Email

My name is [Support Staff], and I am contacting you on behalf of the Academic Upgrading Professor for Cambrian College's satellite campus in Little Current, Christopher Prechotko. Christopher is currently working toward completing his graduate degree at the Memorial University of Newfoundland.

For his graduate research project, he is conducting a study on the participation and persistence of past and present Academic Upgrading participants at Cambrian College's satellite campus, in Little Current. Christopher hopes the results of this study will help the college improve its services to the community.

The study has two stages. In the first stage of the study past and present students were asked to participate in a survey.

The second stage of the study will consist of interviews. In this stage, past and present students and past and present employees can volunteer to participate in an interview. There will only be one interview conducted for every volunteer. The interview will take approximately an hour to complete, and your responses will be anonymized for the study. The subject of the interview will involve your experiences pertaining to the Academic Upgrading program. These interviews are completely voluntary. Due to COVID-19, interviews will take place at a distance by Zoom or by phone; you can choose the interview method that is most convenient for you. Interview participants will be entered into a draw for the chance to win a \$100 gift card from Amazon.

Your decision to take part in the study is entirely voluntary, and you'll be asked read a consent form. Your consent will be audio-recorded and documented on the consent form. In addition, for the purpose of transcription, the interview will be audio-recorded. All of your responses will be

kept confidential and anonymous. The interview will take approximately an hour to complete. If you choose, you can withdraw from the study at any time.

If you are interested in participating in the interview, please contact Christopher at christopher.prechotko@cambriancollege.ca or 1-800-461-7145 ext. 6218.

The proposal for this research has been approved by Cambrian's Research Ethics Committee and by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-737-8368. You can also pose questions about the research ethics of this study by emailing research@cambriancollege.ca or by calling 705-566-8101 ext. 6216.

Thank you for your time.

[Support Staff]

Appendix L

Employee Reminder to Participate in Interviews-Email

Good day,

I am contacting you to remind you of your invitation to participate in Christopher Prechotko's research project.

For his graduate research project, Christopher is conducting a study on the participation and persistence of past and present Academic Upgrading participants at Cambrian College's satellite campus, in Little Current. Christopher hopes the results of this study will help the college improve its services to the community.

You are invited to participate in the second stage of the study. The second stage of the study will consist of individual student and employee interviews. All past and present employees at the campus, within the last seven years, have been invited to participate in the study. There will only be one interview conducted for every volunteer. The interview will take approximately an hour to complete, and your responses will be anonymized for the study. Only Christopher will know of your decision to participate in the interview. Your identity will be kept anonymous to the College, its employees and the community at large. The subject of the interview will involve your experiences pertaining to the Academic Upgrading program. Interview participants will be entered into a draw for the chance to win a \$100 gift card from Amazon.

Due to physical distancing restrictions, interviewees have the option to interview via phone or Zoom. Your decision to take part in the study is entirely voluntary, and you'll be asked to read an informed consent form. If you choose, you can withdraw from the study at any time.

Please contact Christopher before the [enter date] to communicate your interest in participating.

If you are interested in participating in the interview, Christopher can be contacted at

christopher.prechotko@cambriancollege.ca or 705-562-8479.

Thank you for your time. Sincerely,

[Support Staff]

The proposal for this research has been approved by Cambrian's Research Ethics Committee and by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-737-8368. You can also pose questions about the research ethics of this study by emailing research@cambriancollege.ca or by calling 705-566-8101 ext. 6216.

Appendix M

Employee Interview Oral Consent Form

Title: Participation and Persistence of Basic Adult Education Participants at a Small Satellite Campus on Manitoulin Island

Researcher: Christopher Prechotko, Academic Upgrading Professor-Little Current Campus/Cambrian College, christopher.prechotko@cambriancollege.ca or 1-800-461-7145 ext. 6218.

Supervisor: Dr. Dale Kirby, Assistant Professor-Faculty of Education/Memorial University of Newfoundland, dkirby@mun.ca or 709-864-3186.

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled “Participation and Persistence of Basic Adult Education Participants at a Small Satellite Campus on Manitoulin Island.”

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please inform the researcher, Christopher Prechotko if you have any questions about the study or you would like more information before you consent to participate in the study.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you now or in the future.

The researcher acknowledges the barriers that Indigenous Peoples have traditionally faced in accessing education, and the intergenerational effects of colonialism. It is recognized that such barriers have had an adverse impact on access to education for many people of Indigenous descent.

Introduction:

Hello, my name is Christopher Prechotko, and I am the Academic Upgrading Professor at Cambrian College's satellite campus in Little Current, Ontario. As part of my graduate degree, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Dale Kirby. This research is not being conducted on behalf of Cambrian College.

Purpose of Study:

You have been contacted because of your past or present experience working with Cambrian College's Academic Upgrading program in Little Current, Ontario. The intent of this study is to determine the reasons for student participation and persistence in the Academic Upgrading program. It is hoped, the results of this study will help Cambrian College adjust its policies, procedures and supports to better serve the community on Manitoulin Island.

What You Will Do in this Study:

In this study, you are being asked to volunteer for an interview. During the interview, you will be asked questions pertaining to your experiences with student participation and persistence in the Academic Upgrading program in Little Current. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you are currently an employee at the campus, your participation or non-participation in this survey will not affect your employment. There will be no negative consequences should you choose not to participate.

Length of Time:

The interview should take approximately one hour.

Compensation:

To thank you for participating in the interview, you will be entered into a draw for a \$100 Amazon gift card.

Withdrawal from the Study:

You may withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty. Should you also choose to withdraw the data you have provided in the interview, you may do so up until **[Enter Date]**.

After **[Enter Date]**, data from the interview will have been analyzed, anonymized and compiled into a database that does not contain information that can be used to identify your participation in the study. If you choose to withdraw your participation the study, you will still be entered into the draw for the Amazon gift card; if you choose to withdraw your data, you will still be entered into the draw for the Amazon gift card. To withdraw from the study, please contact Christopher Prechotko at christopher.prechotko@cambriancollege.ca or 1-800-461-7145 ext. 6218.

Possible Benefits:

The results of this study may help Cambrian College adjust its policies, procedures and supports to better serve current upgrading students, future upgrading students, and the communities on Manitoulin Island. Also, little research has been conducted on the participation of basic adult education learners at small, rural college satellite campuses, especially in Northern Ontario. Therefore, information from this research could be of benefit to education, social services, the scholarly community and society as a whole.

Possible Risks:

Regarding your participation in the study, no possible risks have been identified. However, if your participation in the study triggers unpleasant emotions or memories, please contact one of the following community services: Manitoulin Crisis Response Program toll free at 1-877-841-1101, Manitoulin Counselling and Treatment Services, at 705-368-0756, or Noojmowin Teg Health Centre at 705-368-2182 ext. 222.

Confidentiality:

The ethical duty of confidentiality includes safeguarding participants' identities, personal information, and data from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure. Your privacy and confidentiality will be maintained. Only the lead researcher, Christopher Prechotko and possibly his research supervisor, Dr. Dale Kirby, will know of your participation in the interview.

The data from this research project may be published and presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although we will report direct quotations from the interview, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information such as your name, birthdate, address, email and phone number will be removed from our report. Because the participants for this research project have been selected from a small group of people, some who are known to each other, it is still possible that you may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what you have answered in the interview.

Anonymity:

Anonymity refers to protecting participants' identifying characteristics, such as name or description of physical appearance.

Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure your anonymity. Additionally, the answers you provide in the interview will remain anonymous in any possible publication that result from this study.

Recording of Data:

Your responses in the interview will be audio-recorded. If you have chosen to be interviewed on the Zoom platform, an audio file of the interview will be recorded using the option available on the Zoom platform. If you have chosen to be interviewed by phone, an audio file of the interview will be recorded using an application called “Call Recorder.”

Use, Access, Ownership, and Storage of Data:

If you have chosen to interview via the Zoom platform, audio files will be saved to a password-protected laptop, and the files will be stored on a firewall-protected server at Cambrian College. The audio files will be backed-up to a USB stick that will be stored in a locked room at my residence until physical distancing restrictions have eased. Once we return to an office environment at Cambrian College, the USB will be moved to a locked filing cabinet, in a locked room at the campus. Audio files on the Zoom platform will be deleted once they have been backed-up.

If you have chosen to interview via phone, recorded audio interview files will be stored on my personal cell phone until they have been transcribed. The cell phone is password and fingerprint protected. Once the interviews have been transcribed, they will be deleted from my cell phone. Interview audio files will be backed-up on my password-protected College laptop. Files will be stored on the College server, which is protected by a firewall. Interview audio files will also be stored on a USB stick that will be stored in a locked room at my residence. Once we are

permitted to return to work at the campus, the USB stick will be transferred to a locked filing cabinet, in a locked room at the campus.

Only the lead researcher, Christopher Prechotko, and his supervisor, Dr. Dale Kirby, will have access to data that has not been anonymized. After five years, all audio-recordings from the interviews will be destroyed.

Third-Party Data Collection and/or Storage:

Data collected from you as part of your participation in this project will be hosted and/or stored electronically by Cambrian College's server is subject to its privacy policies, and to any relevant laws of the country in which the server is located. Therefore, anonymity and confidentiality of data may not be guaranteed in the rare instance, for example, that government agencies obtain a court order compelling the provider to grant access to specific data stored on the server. If you have questions or concerns about how your data will be collected or stored, please contact the researcher and/or visit the provider's website for more information before participating. The privacy and security policy of the third-party hosting data collection and/or storing data can be found at: <https://cambriancollege.ca/about/official-documents-and-policies/privacy-of-information/>

Reporting of Results:

Data from this research may be published in journal articles, may be part of a report to organizations within Cambrian College, may be part of a report to ministries within the government of Ontario or may be part of conference presentations. Upon completion, my thesis will be available at Memorial University's Queen Elizabeth II library, and can be accessed online at: <http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/search/collection/theses>. Data will be reported as aggregate data, summarized form data, and using direct quotations.

Sharing of Results with Participants:

After my thesis has passed final submission, you may request a copy of it from me if you wish.

Questions:

You are welcome to ask questions before, during, or after your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact: Christopher Prechotko at christopher.prechotko@cambriancollege.ca or 1-800-461-7145 ext. 6218. You may also contact the supervisor Dr. Dale Kirby at dkirby@mun.ca or 709-864-3186.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy and Cambrian College's Research Ethics Committee. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861. Alternatively, you may pose questions about the research ethics of this study by emailing research@cambriancollege.ca or by calling 705-566-8101 ext. 6216.

Consent

By giving your consent, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Record of Oral Consent for Interview

Participant Name: _____

Date and Time of Contact: _____

Now that I have read you the consent form, we will proceed with the oral consent process.

Did you receive the mailed or emailed consent form? Yes ☐ No ☐

Did you read the consent form? Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you understand what the study is about and what you will be doing?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw participation in the study without having to give a reason and doing so will not affect you now or in the future?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you understand that if you choose to end participation **during** data collection, any data collected from you up to that point **will be retained by the researcher, unless you indicate otherwise**?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you understand that if you choose to withdraw **after** data collection has ended, your data can be removed from the study up to **[Enter Date]**? After **[Enter Date]**, your data will have been anonymized and you cannot withdraw your data.
Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you agree to be audio-recorded? Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you agree to the use of direct quotations? Yes ☐ No ☐

Now that I have read the consent form to you, do you have any questions about taking part in the interview? Yes ☐ No ☐

Are you satisfied with the answers to your questions? Yes ☐ No ☐

Would you like to participate in the interview? Yes ☐ No ☐

Researcher's Signature: _____

I have read the consent form to the participant and explained the study to the best of my ability. Before receiving the participant's consent, I invited questions and gave answers. I

believe the participant understands what is involved, and the participant has freely chosen to participate.

Appendix N

Employee Interview Guiding Questions

1. Can you describe the upgrading program?
2. Why do you think students have chosen Cambrian College for upgrading?
3. What do you think impedes individuals in the community from enrolling in the Upgrading program?
4. What do you think enables individuals within the community to enroll in the upgrading program?
5. What do you think contributes to students' decisions to stop-out/withdraw?
6. What do you think contributed to students' abilities to persist in the upgrading program?
7. What do you think the Little Current campus does well in regard to supporting the Academic Upgrading students?
8. Can you define culturally/community relevant programming in your own words?
9. Can you give examples of culturally/community relevant programming at the satellite campus in Little Current?
10. Do you think culturally/community relevant programming is important to the students and/or to the students' success in the program?
11. Do you have suggestions on how we should improve the upgrading program?
12. Do you want to say anything else relevant to your experiences with the upgrading program, the upgrading program, the upgrading program's role in the community, the campus or the campus' role in the community?