Final Report:

Review of the 2021 Indigenous Undergraduate Summer Research Program (IUSRS)

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Appendix A: Interview Guide – Scholars ............................................................................ Error! Bookmark not defined.
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1. Program Background

Hosted by the McMaster Indigenous Research Institute (MIRI), the Indigenous Undergraduate Summer Research Scholars (IUSRS) program provides a hands-on graduate-level research experience for Indigenous undergraduates. A key aim of IUSRS is to inspire and support the next generation of Indigenous scholars. Offering academic, social, and cultural activities, IUSRS facilitates mentorship and supports Indigenous students in making informed choices about preparing for graduate studies. IUSRS is an annual program running from May to June each year. IUSRS 2021 was the seventh cycle of the program.

The purpose of this report is to facilitate discussions amongst MIRI staff and IUSRS Program Coordinator(s) to inform future cycles of the IUSRS program. This report assesses the IUSRS 2021 cycle and presents recommendations to assist MIRI in ensuring IUSRS continues to achieve program aims. The basis of this report is the anonymized responses from the supervisors and scholars of the 2021 program.

2. Report Summary

“MIRI should keep doing what it’s doing, because it’s doing it well!” – Supervisor 7

I. Responses from both scholars and supervisors of the 2021 IUSRS program indicate the program is highly valued and impactful for participants. Indigenous scholars consistently stated that participation in 2021 IUSRS had increased their confidence to pursue and succeed in graduate studies. For supervisors, IUSRS provides a trusted connection to Indigenous scholars that they would not otherwise have.

II. One of the key opportunities for MIRI to enhance the IUSRS program lies in extending the duration of the program. Scholars and supervisors believe extending program duration would allow for scholars to have a more fulsome research experience. In addition to recommending extending the duration of the program, supervisors suggested financial support for the program extension could come from their faculties or their own research funding.

III. A key strength of IUSRS is the local Indigenous cultural connections built into the program. Scholars indicated that the series of workshops and cultural activities offer
needed space to engage with Indigenous ways of knowing and doing as well as providing opportunities for scholars to connect with each other. Non-Indigenous supervisors expressed interest in appropriately engaging in cultural workshops either through shared learning opportunities with scholars or leading workshops themselves.

IV. The shift to offering IUSRS online this year was positively reviewed by both scholars and supervisors. However, both groups identified offering the program in-person (when possible) would be the ideal format. Scholars indicated a desire for more social opportunities to build relationships with each other. While supervisors expressed a desire for more opportunities to build stronger connections with MIRI/IUSRS as well as with all scholars and other supervisors.

V. Review of how scholars and supervisors describe and promote the program suggests there is an opportunity to strengthen messaging about IUSRS. Analysis of scholar and supervisor responses confirm IUSRS perceptions align with the key aim of the program. However, supervisor responses indicate the IUSRS program is also an opportunity for supervisors to learn more about and support Indigenous research across campus. Supervisors also identified IUSRS as an opportunity for McMaster and their faculties to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s education-related Calls to Action.

3. Data Collection Methods
Through internal discussions, MIRI staff identified individual interviews with 2021 IUSRS scholars and supervisors would be the ideal method of reviewing this year’s cycle of the program. Indigenous scholars were recruited to participate by the 2021 IUSRS Program Coordinator. Confirmed scholar participants received a gift card in appreciation of their contributions to this review. IUSRS 2021 supervisors were recruited to participate by the MIRI Research Coordinator. In confirming interview dates and times, E. Victoria provided a copy of the appropriate interview guide (scholar or supervisor) to each interviewee.

In total, individual interview were conducted with eight (8) scholars and seven (7) supervisors over the month of July 2021. Interviews were conducted by E. Victoria Bomberry over Zoom. The length of interviews ranged between thirty (30) and sixty (60) minutes. The Interview Guides (Appendix A and Appendix B) were developed by MIRI staff based on a survey of IUSRS 2020 scholars and supervisors. E. Victoria reviewed and revised the questions to be appropriate for individual interviews. Scholars and supervisors were provided the option of participating anonymously. Due to the small sample size, it was decided by MIRI and E. Victoria to anonymize all transcripts to respect the requests for anonymity.

Each interview was recorded for audio and auto-transcribed by Zoom’s in-meeting feature. E. Victoria Bomberry reviewed each interview audio recording and edited the transcript for
accuracy. E. Victoria then anonymized each transcript by removing identifying information such as names, faculty and program association, and research project. A copy of anonymized transcripts were provided to each participant as an opportunity to confirm accurate reflection of their IUSRS 2021 experience and comments.

1. Analysis
An iterative analysis of interview transcripts was performed by E. Victoria Bomberry. Upon confirmation from participants that transcripts accurately reflected their experiences and comments, E. Victoria identified themes based on participants views of what components of the program are working well and what opportunities MIRI should consider to enhance program experience for both scholars and supervisors.

4. Key Findings - Scholars
1. Promotion & Recruitment
According to the IUSRS 2021 scholars, the primary platform Indigenous undergraduates are learning about the program is through the e-mail newsletters of Indigenous Studies programs at their university. The only other avenue of promotion and recruitment identified was word of mouth from previous IUSRS scholars as well as Indigenous faculty at McMaster. Word of mouth was particularly helpful for one scholar who had heard of IUSRS but feared they were ineligible due to their status as a mature student pursuing a second degree. Although this individual did not identify reaching out to MIRI for more information, they relayed their concerns about eligibility to a peer (former IUSRS scholar), who was aware of program eligibility parameters and encouraged the individual to apply. One potential area of concern regarding promotions and recruitment was raised by a scholar who (prior to the program start) expressed lack of awareness that IUSRS provides research opportunities across disciplines and faculties.

Decisions to apply to IUSRS were largely driven by a pre-existing interest in graduate studies. Scholars also identified applying to the program in order to learn more about and engage with Indigenous ways of knowing and doing as well as enhance general research skills. Two scholars perceived participation in IUSRS as an opportunity to bridge knowledge gained in the academy

“The IUSRS program allows Indigenous students to be exposed to a lot of different types of graduate experiences as opposed to perhaps a presentation by any one department. The fact that MIRI has so many different connections and scholars participating really gives the program a wide perspective.” – Scholar 5
with the needs of their communities. For scholars coming from outside the Greater Hamilton Area decisions to participate in 2021 IUSRS was influenced by the offering of the program online. Based on the feedback from 2021 IUSRS scholars, IUSRS is accurately perceived as an opportunity for Indigenous undergraduates to learn more about graduate studies in a culturally supportive framework.

“[IUSRS] is a valuable experience to connect with Elders and meet other Indigenous students across Canada - within the academy it can be challenging to find community and connect.” – Scholar 2

2. Overall Experience
Scholars consistently identified their IUSRS experience as positive overall and influential in their decision to pursue graduate studies. Several scholars stated participation in IUSRS increased their confidence in applying and/or pursuing graduate studies. Prior to their IUSRS participation, several scholars identified feelings of self-doubt about their ability to be successful in graduate level studies. Through research engagement and the workshop series, scholars identify IUSRS participation helps fill gaps in their understanding about pursuing graduate level studies, including the application process, the types of graduate programs available, opportunities to study research relevant to their communities as well as general academic expectations. Feedback from scholars identify IUSRS as positively influential in their understanding about and decisions to pursue graduate studies.

3. Workshops & Cultural Activities
The cultural activities led by Elder Kathy Knott and workshops by Indigenous guest speakers were overwhelmingly positively reviewed by scholars. Each scholar identified the cultural activities as a unique strength of IUSRS by offering opportunities to engage traditional Indigenous knowledges as well as connect with each other socially. Comments from scholars about the

“When I started IUSRS, I was thinking of not pursuing the [masters] program I had been accepted to, because I didn’t think I would be successful. I didn’t think I had the skill level required. But going through the IUSRS program helped me realize I do have the skill level and now feel I can be successful in a master’s program.” – Scholar 8
cultural workshop series indicated the activities helped strengthen connections to their Indigenous identity or were an opportunity to learn more about nations other than their own. Workshops led by Indigenous guest speakers were highly valued by scholars as opportunities to learn more about Indigenous research methodologies. IUSRS 2021 scholars were clear in the need to continue or, if possible, increase the number of cultural activities and workshops led by Indigenous guest speakers as integral to the success of the program. However, scholars were equally clear that the current format of one full day of virtual workshops and cultural activities should be reconsidered if IUSRS continues to be offered online.

Although the workshops and activities themselves were enjoyable, scholars frequently cited feelings of “Zoom fatigue” and recommended adjusting the format to allow for more time and thus deeper connection with workshop and activity content. Additional comments about the cultural activities identified challenges in receiving supplies. Scholars seemed understanding of this challenge as minor inconvenience that can be easily remedied in future cycles.

4. IUSRS Administration
   i. Program Staff
   Scholars reported interactions with IUSRS Program Coordinator Katelyn Knott were positive and encouraging. Scholars commended Katelyn for the diversity of workshops and guest speakers that enhanced their overall IUSRS experience as well as their understandings of Indigenous and mainstream research. Scholars appreciated Katelyn’s efforts to create connections and build an IUSRS community during official IUSRS activities and through Facebook.
ii. Program Start Date & Length

Responses from scholars indicate May is the appropriate month for IUSRS to begin. However, there were a few recommendations to start the program in the second or third week of May to allow for “breathing” room between final exams (end of the winter semester) and the start of the IUSRS program. Scholars felt starting the program one week later would provide sufficient time to rest while still maintaining the work mindset to begin their research assistanceships. When queried about the program length, five of the eight scholars interviewed recommended lengthening the duration of the program. Comments in favour of extending the program length expressed desires for a more fulsome research experience. These scholars were engaged in long-term research projects where the opportunity to engage in diverse research activities were limited by the current duration of the program. Scholars felt extending the program would increase their research skills by increasing opportunities to engage in the different stages of research.

iv. Stipends

Scholars rated the stipend provided to all scholars as satisfactory. Specific comments about the stipend acknowledge that this money allowed scholars to focus on their IUSRS research by not having to work during the program. Similarly, scholars who received the childcare stipend were satisfied, stating the childcare bursary positively impacted their experience. However, one scholar did note that the childcare stipend would not be sufficient in covering normal childcare expenses in non-COVID circumstances. This scholar suggested MIRI consider childcare bursaries that correspond with the number of children a scholar cares for.
v. Online or In-person

Scholars acknowledged both benefits and drawbacks to IUSRS being offered online. The offering of IUSRS online was a key influencer for scholars residing outside of the Greater Hamilton Area. These scholars identified uncertainty about their ability to participate in an in-person program. However, all scholars expressed not being able to gather in person as a significant challenge to building relationships with each other. For several, IUSRS is perceived as an opportunity to build community with other Indigenous scholars. The difficulties in building social connections online expressed by scholars was due to poor internet connections, lack of unstructured time to interact as well as feelings of being overwhelmed in Zoom gatherings due to the large number of participants. Despite acknowledging that offering IUSRS online may be more accessible to Indigenous scholars residing outside of the area, all scholars believe an in-person IUSRS program to be the most beneficial.

vi. Administrative Concerns

Concerns about the administration and framework of the IUSRS program were largely focused on the structuring of Mondays (workshops and cultural activities) and final presentations. As previously mentioned, scholars highly valued the series of workshops and cultural activities. However, scholars expressed that the 2021 format of one full day of online workshops and cultural activities was fatiguing. Scholars indicated the scheduling of Monday’s left insufficient time to engage with both the content and presenters of workshops. While scholars did not want to remove any workshops or cultural activities from the schedule, they did recommend restructuring the schedule to allow for more fulsome engagement of the material. Similarly, scholars’ comments regarding final presentations were positive but indicated a desire for restructuring. The 2021 presentation format allowed for scholars to present for five minutes, which scholars indicated was too short a time to adequately share their full IUSRS experience. Scholars recommended restructuring the final presentation format in a way that would allow for a more fulsome presentation of their experience. Additional comments regarding the administration of the program identified the potential inclusion of an Avenue to Learn orientation session for non-McMaster scholars.
Research Experience

i. Supervisor & Research Matching

Scholars expressed feeling very satisfied with their supervisor-research match and appreciated the process undertaken by MIRI to match them with their supervisor. Most scholars felt appropriately matched with supervisors and research projects that were related to their academic discipline and/or personal interests. The success of scholar-supervisor match is well demonstrated in the number of scholars who continue, or are offered the opportunity to continue, their research assistance-ship beyond the IUSRS program. Even when scholars expressed not feeling inspired by their IUSRS research experience, they indicated the experience was informative in understanding what graduate program they felt they would be more successful in. It is important to highlight the success factors of a match between a scholar and supervisor from very different fields of study. The scholar had contemplated dropping out of the program when first matched due to the perceived lack of connections between their area of study and the research area of their supervisor. The scholar of this match indicated the awareness of the non-Indigenous supervisor on Indigenous issues as well as the supervisor’s encouragement to take the research in a way that made sense to the scholar was critical to their decision to remain in the IUSRS program. Similarly, the supervisor commended the scholar on their outstanding work ethic and research capacity to develop a research project bridging the two distinct disciplines. The success of this match in particular highlights the strength of MIRI’s approach to matching scholars and supervisors/research project by taking multiple factors into account.

Although, overall satisfied with the scholar-supervisor matching process, two scholars offered suggestions to enhance the matching process. One scholar suggested providing scholars information about research projects to scholars prior to matching. This would allow scholars to

“I wish the workshops could have been longer. I had so many questions for the presenters, and it would have been nice to have had the time to dig deeper.” – Scholar 6
The second suggestion to enhance the matching process recommended the IUSRS Program Coordinator facilitate introductions between scholars and supervisors by coordinating a “warm” introductory meeting between each scholar-supervisor match. Supervisors offered similar suggestions to enhance the matching process (see 2.ii.).

ii. What did they learn

Overall, scholars highly value the hands-on research experience of the IUSRS program. Several scholars indicated their pre-IUSRS understanding of research was limited to writing papers in their undergraduate studies. These scholars stated that their IUSRS research assistantship enhanced their understanding of the general research process, including the time and types of activities involved (i.e., ethics applications, communications with community, etc.). Similarly, scholars identified participating in IUSRS increased their awareness of research opportunities in graduate studies. For some scholars, IUSRS provided their first introduction to key Indigenous research principles such as Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession® and the Two-Eyed Seeing approach. Several noted the program clarified concerns and questions scholars held prior to IUSRS about being able to pursue graduate studies in a way that embraced Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, which positively influenced their view of graduate studies. In general, upon completion of their IUSRS research assistantships, scholars felt more aware of the types of research and graduate programs that they would enjoy and be successful in.

“It’s [IUSRS] really informed how I will move forward in my Masters. … There is so much from my IUSRS experience that I have pulled out of the research that has been transformative for me.” – Scholar 8

5. Key Findings – Supervisors

1. Promotion & Recruitment

“IUSRS is doing really important work in making connections between Indigenous students and [McMaster] faculty.” – Supervisor 3

Supervisors new to the program learned about the opportunity to participate in 2021 IUSRS through faculty promotions with the exception of two supervisors, who had learned about IUSRS through their academic connections with Indigenous faculty at McMaster. Decisions to
participate were largely informed by pre-existing interest and desire to support Indigenous research. Supervisors who had previous participated in IUSRS indicated a strong commitment to program aims as well as their past positive experiences with IUSRS influenced their decision to re-apply. The positive experiences of scholars combined with the expressed desires of supervisors to re-apply to participate in IUSRS next year indicates promotion through faculty connections is an effective method in recruiting faculty invested in the aims of IUSRS.

In alignment with their positive experiences, all supervisors indicated they have or would recommend IUSRS to their colleagues. Responses to this question expressed confidence that the IUSRS supervisor experience is beneficial to supervisors themselves as well as their research. However, one non-Indigenous supervisor expressed hesitancy in responding to this question. They asserted the hesitancy is not about the program itself, but about the lack of cultural awareness and capacity of some colleagues. This supervisor indicated while eager to promote IUSRS, they would be selective in recommendations due to these concerns.

i. Perception of IUSRS
Supervisor comments about their overall IUSRS experience indicate all highly value the opportunity to participate in the program. MIRI’s leadership of the IUSRS program is trusted and viewed as critical to the success of the program. Non-Indigenous supervisors indicated the valuable service MIRI provides through recruitment and matching of Indigenous students with research projects. Non-Indigenous supervisors reported a strong desire to recruit Indigenous students but having limited awareness of how to appropriately connect with Indigenous students. Overall, supervisors feel confident the program provides a meaningful and culturally appropriate opportunity to engage Indigenous students in diverse research opportunities and support capacity-building. Non-Indigenous supervisors also view IUSRS as an opportunity to personally and collectively respond to the education-focussed Calls to Action put forth by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

“The IUSRS program is so appreciated that, in a way, one of the hardest pieces of engaging an Indigenous scholar is done for us. Many of us are really interested in and believe in the principles of capacity building, which fits with the TRC Calls to Action, and what we realize is our mission and duty to do, but many of us may not know where to start. It may not be obvious for some of us, but IUSRS is well positioned to be very deliberate and find those scholars and make these connections/matches.” – Supervisor 2
2. IUSRS Administration

i. Orientation & Preparation

The orientation session and materials were identified by supervisors as helpful in preparing for their roles as IUSRS supervisors. Non-Indigenous supervisors indicated the orientation materials helped better understand the goals of the program and enhanced their understanding of Indigenous research in general. Supervisors new to the program indicated a desire to view previous IUSRS projects to better understand the scope of the program in terms of the diversity and opportunity of research activities scholars might engage in. The suggestions for sharing of previous projects were connected to uncertainty about the scope of IUSRS research projects and need for more information about what was appropriate to expect of scholars.

ii. Scholar Matching

All supervisors expressed overall satisfaction with the scholar matching process with minor suggestions to enhance the process. Most supervisors believe the scholar they were matched with had the appropriate academic and research capacity to succeed in their placement. The timing of scholar matching was an area of interest for supervisors as several indicated being open to connecting with scholars earlier. These supervisors felt an earlier matching and introduction process would support relationship building between scholars and supervisors and strengthen the onboarding of scholars to the program and research projects.

Although, overall satisfied with their match, one supervisor expressed general concerns about enrolling scholars with only one completed year of undergraduate studies. This was the academic level of the scholar this supervisor was matched with. This supervisor stated the scholar struggled to complete and, in some instances, did not complete assigned research tasks. The supervisor indicated scholars would be more likely to enjoy and succeed in their IUSRS assistantship with a minimum of two completed years of undergraduate study. With a minimum of two years of undergraduate study, the supervisor felt scholars would have gained more research understanding and experience and thus be more successful in the program, which would lead to more positive feelings about pursuing graduate studies.

“The scholar I was partnered with has been outstanding in their work. Overall, fantastic experience and I would love to do it again. All thanks to the way the program is set up and to the scholar themselves.” – Supervisor 6
There was consistent desire among supervisors for increased opportunities to connect with scholars as well as each other through shared learning opportunities as well as social activities. Supervisors indicated the Monday sessions (workshop and cultural activities) provided time and space for scholars to build connections and desired similar opportunities. Several non-Indigenous supervisors expressed interest in engaging in cultural learning opportunities as well as leading appropriate workshops on Monday to connect with scholars. One supervisor indicated a need for guidance from MIRI on how to appropriately support scholars in sharing teachings from Monday sessions with their research team.

Supervisor comments recognize mentorship of scholars as significant component of their role in the program. However, non-Indigenous supervisors identified a need for more supports in fulfilling this responsibility. In particular, non-Indigenous supervisors expressed a desire for more guidance from MIRI regarding the media announcements of mass graves found at Indian Residential Schools. Non-Indigenous supervisors felt a need to better support scholars through these announcements but were unsure of appropriate ways to do so. One non-Indigenous scholar stated prior to IUSRS, they had begun an online course, “Indigenous Canada” (offered by the University of Alberta) that was helpful in their role as an IUSRS supervisor. This supervisor suggested MIRI recommend this course or other appropriate learning opportunities to non-Indigenous scholars as a resource to support them in their role as IUSRS supervisors.

iii. Online or In-person
Supervisors stated the shift to offering the IUSRS program online was not only the right decision to make but also well executed by MIRI staff. Despite this success, supervisors believe the IUSRS program would be of more benefit to all participants if offered in person (when appropriate to do so). Supervisors acknowledged the value in scholars being able to work from their home communities as well as the increased accessibility of the program for scholars living outside of the region. However, similar to the views of scholars, supervisors indicated the challenge in building relationships online. The informal in-person interactions (such as grabbing a coffee or going for a lunch together) are lost in a virtual format, which hinders relationship building. There are also logistical limitations to virtual assistantships for some types of research. One supervisor indicated that while keen to participate in IUSRS again, they would not apply to participate in a virtual IUSRS program due to the nature of their research, as the majority of their research activities are conducted in lab and not transferrable to a virtual environment.

“The overall objective of IUSRS is to foster admissions of Indigenous students to graduate level programs, to get Indigenous students thinking about research and to help them build their skills.” – Supervisor 1
iv. Administrative Challenges

While the supervisors expressed overall positive experiences in the 2021 cycle of IUSRS, some did identify important considerations for future iterations of the program. The most significant comments of concern relate to the length of the program, recommended entrance requirements of scholars, and clarifying scholar commitments to the program.

There was strong consensus among all supervisors for extending the duration of the IUSRS program. Supervisors believe a longer program duration would benefit scholars and supervisors. Supervisors indicated time as an important component to building relationships. A longer program would increase opportunities for connections with scholars as well as with other supervisors. Additionally, extending the program length would increase opportunities for scholars to engage in diverse research activities. Many components of research are time dependent. An additional two or four weeks would allow scholars to engage in more diverse research activities. Supervisors indicated that by extending the program and allowing for a more fulsome research experience, scholars will also have more experience to add to their curriculum vitae/resume, which will support future research opportunities.

In general supervisors were highly satisfied with the incoming research capacity of scholars. However, it was identified that scholars who have completed less than two years of undergraduate studies may not benefit as much from IUSRS as peers with more than two years of undergraduate studies. One supervisor voiced concerns that scholars with less than two years of undergraduate studies are less likely to have sufficiently engaged in research. Without adequate research experience, these scholars may experience feelings of being overwhelmed with graduate-level research tasks, which may then lead to negative feelings about pursuing graduate studies.

Additionally, one supervisor learned towards the end of the program that the scholar they were working with had taken on another job. The external employment the scholar had taken on

“A longer period for the [IUSRS] studentship could enable the student to make a more substantive contribution, and be more likely to contribute to something to add to their CV.”
- Supervisor 3

“IUSRS provides an opportunity for supervisors across campus to engage with Indigenous scholars as well as the Indigenous campus community to learn more about Indigenous research and to work with Indigenous scholars in their area of expertise.” – Supervisor 1
negatively impacted the scholar’s participation in research team meetings. The supervisor recommended strengthening the messaging around scholar commitment to the program in ways that would emphasize the real impact scholar’s have on their respective research projects.

6. Recommendations

1. Continue
   i. The overall structure of the IUSRS program aligns with program aims and meets the expectation of scholars and supervisors. Extension of the program duration (see 2. i.) may enhance program experience and impact. Scholars confirm May is an appropriate start date for the program. However, starting the program in the second or third week of the month was suggested as a way to ensure all scholars have a break between the winter term and beginning of the program.

   ii. The cultural component of the 2021 program was identified a strong positive component of IUSRS. Scholars identified that the workshops and cultural activities influenced the interest of scholars in applying to the program and provided needed space and time to engage traditional Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. The series of workshops and cultural activities provided for the 2021 IUSRS program were highly rated and valued by scholars. Minor scheduling adjustments (see 2.ii) were recommended by scholars to enhance engagement.

   iii. The 2021 matching process of IUSRS scholar to supervisor/research project is viewed as successful and a strength of MIRI leading the IUSRS program. The matching process is a highly valued and positively rated component of the program. MIRI’s unique insights and ability to match scholars and supervisors supports positive experiences for all IUSRS participants. Both scholars and supervisors offered minor suggestions to enhance the matching process (See 2. Iv.).

   iv. Offering IUSRS virtually for the 2021 cycle was viewed as a success by scholars and supervisors. However, both groups believe an in-person program to be the ideal format as in-person allows for more relationship-building and engagement. Nevertheless, scholars and supervisors acknowledge that offering the program virtually may support recruitment of Indigenous scholars beyond the Greater Hamilton Area.

2. Opportunity
   i. Extend program duration from eight weeks to ten or twelve weeks. There is strong consensus among scholars and supervisors for the extension of the IUSRS program length. Extending the program length would allow scholars to delve deeper into research projects, increase opportunities to build relationships with each other as well as their supervisor/research team and engage in a broader range of research activities.
Supervisors stated potential financial support could come from their faculties or their own research projects.

ii. Restructure the schedule of workshops and cultural teachings. The series of workshops and cultural activities are highly valued. However, the 2021 format of all day Zoom sessions for these workshops and activities was poorly rated. While highly rating the value of workshops and cultural activities, scholars felt the day was overscheduled and did not allow sufficient opportunity to engage with the material or connect with each other. Scholars also expressed feelings of “Zoom fatigue”. If IUSRS continues to be offered virtually, scholars highly recommend restructuring the schedule of these workshops (for example, over two mornings instead of one full day) in future iterations.

iii. Limit eligibility to Indigenous scholars with a minimum of two completed years of undergraduate studies will enhance the likelihood of scholars enjoying and benefitting from their IUSRS experience. The IUSRS program is an intensive hands-on graduate-level research experience. Scholars with at least 2 years of studies are more likely to have mastered basic research skills that will help them enjoy and benefit from the IUSRS program. The experience may be overwhelming and discouraging to scholars without at least 2 years of university level studies.

iv. Begin supervisor and scholar recruitment earlier. Scholars identified a desire to know more about research opportunities and, through a ranked ballot process, contribute to the matching process. Additionally, supervisors indicated a desire to connect prior to the start of the program to facilitate onboarding of scholars to their lab/research projects. Scholars also recommend the inclusion of a “warm” introduction, whereby the IUSRS Coordinator sets up and facilitates the introductory conversation between scholar and supervisor.

v. Clarify the IUSRS program purpose and goal. Supervisor responses indicate the IUSRS program should be tied into broader systems change at the university such as responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action. Developing clearer messaging about the IUSRS program aims should be promoted strongly with supervisors to enhance the reach and support of the program.

vi. Increase opportunities to socialize and network for both scholars and supervisors. Acknowledging the challenges of the virtual format, both scholars and supervisors desire more opportunities (structure and unstructured) for social interactions. Scholars might benefit from smaller group activities (in-person or online) to facilitate relationship-building. Supervisors identified a mid-program gathering or shared learning opportunity with all IUSRS participants as an opportunity to connect with other IUSRS scholars and supervisors.

vii. Enhance promotions by sharing posters and information about previous IUSRS projects on the MIRI website and in program promotions. Supervisors and scholars expressed the
sharing of previous projects would enhance their awareness of the breadth and diversity of research projects and activities scholars might engage in. Supervisors also recommended developing promotional materials (such as previous IUSRS project posters or video presentations) in the fall to stimulate interest amongst faculty and facilitate an earlier recruitment process.