Showcasing Unicorn Assessment

Demonstrations of Creativity, Inclusion, and Decolonization in Assessment and Evaluation

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TOTLC 2025

Land Acknowledgement

I am extremely grateful to be able to live, work, and play on the beautiful lands of Secwepemcúl'ecw as an uninvited guest, and to be here with you to share some of the work I do on my journey towards decolonization, and truth and reconciliation. I would like to respectful acknowledge the ancestral and unsurrendered territory of Secwépemc Nation and the generous Secwépemc people on whose lands we are gathered. I acknowledge that this has always been a place that honoured community, connection, relationships, and reciprocity in teaching and learning.

Agenda

- Engagement strategy

- My teaching context

- About unicorn assessment

- Decolonizing practices

- How to "unicorn"

- Unicorn creations

- Reflections & questions

FUN FACT #1: The word "unicorn" comes from the Latin, "uni" (one) and "cornu" (horn).

My Teaching Context

- Dr. Christie Fraser (pronouns she/her)

- Assistant Teaching Professor at TRU

- Teacher educator in BEd Elementary Program

- "Meta-modelling"

FUN FACT #2: Unicorns are the national animal of Scotland.

Unicorn Assessment as "Fill-in-the-blank"

- Expansion of alternative or multi-modal assessments

- *The Way Forward in Design Education: The Magic of 'Unicorn Assessments'* (Varma, 2022) – Toronto Metropolitan University Learning & Teaching Conference 2022
    - *"A unicorn assessment is beneficial for everyone involved, at all stages of the assessment's lifecycle. It's an assessment that evaluates student learning in a meaningful way."*

- **Freedom and inclusion through being able to "fill-in-the-blank"**, versus being given a series of choices (Alok Vaid-Menon)

FUN FACT #3: National Unicorn Day in Scotland is April 9th every year.

Characteristics of Colonized Assessment

- "One-ness":
  - One way to show learning
  - One chance to get it right
  - One right answer

- Singular view of knowing topic

- No Indigenous worldviews & ways of knowing

- Structure of power:
  - Teachers knows best
  - Teachers create the assessments
  - Teachers give grades

- Promotes fixed-mindset

Decolonizing Practices

- "Many":
  - Many opportunities to show learning
  - Many mediums for a task
  - Many chances to get it right – Isn't that learning?
  - Many "right" answers
- Multiple ways of knowing about a topic
- Opportunities for Indigenous worldviews, ways of knowing and being

- Dismantling of power structure:
  - Student voice matters – They know stuff too! ☺
  - Students can be co-creators of their assessments
  - Students can give themselves grades
- Supports meta-cognition and growth mindset

Course Application: EDLL 3100

- **Summative** – Project-based assignment

- **Experiential & Unique** – Teacher candidates were asked to design, develop, and self-assess an assessment product to showcase their learning

- **Collaborative** – Brainstormed together success criteria & grading approach based on the course learning outcomes

- **FUN** – Fun to design, fun to complete, fun to assess!

FUN FACT #4: Baby unicorns are called sparkles.

Stages of Development

1. Reviewed course learning outcomes

2. Discussion:

   • Characteristics of colonized and decolonized assessments

   • Unicorns – Unique and powerful

3. Brainstorm:

   • Success criteria

   • Grading approach

4. Co-construction of marking guide

5. Supported process in design, development, & self-assessment

6. Post-unicorn sharing & feedback session

FUN FACT #5: A unicorn's horn is called an "alicorn"; it is said to have magical healing powers.

Brainstorm: Success Criteria

- <u>Having fun with it</u>
- Multi-media
- BC curriculum
- Spend time thinking and working on it
- FPPoL
- <u>Include Indigenous ways of knowing and being</u>
- **<u>Everyone's project is valid</u>**
- Incorporate language & literacy

- Involves several resources
- Summary of learning
- <u>Linking content to teacher practice</u>
- <u>Critical reflection</u>
- Examples from classroom practice
- Hook & schema
- Technology
- Creativity & individuality

- <u>Clear connections to course content</u>
- Shows effort and engagement
- Reading strategies & engagement
- Related to thinking about the learning
- Topic is clearly defined
- <u>Communication conventions</u>
- Organized, visually appealing, cohesive, and coherent

FUN FACT #6: Unicorns, traditionally, do not have wings and do not fly.

Brainstorm: Grading Approach

- Encompass many grades

- Not about the grade but the feedback

- Use the BC proficiency scale

- Weighting – 20% per success criterion

- Pass/fail

- Checklist or checkbric

- Self-assessment (assessment AS learning)

FUN FACT #7: UniCRON, not to be confused with UniCORN, is one of the most powerful beings in the Transformers universe.

Unicorn Possibilities

- Essay
- Timeline
- Portfolio
- Unit or lesson plan
- Book
- Video workshop
- Blog
- Website
- Poster

- Digital book
- Artwork with statement
- Song or music
- Mind map
- Screen play
- Powerpoint or slideshow with voice over
- "How To" guidebook
- Skit
- Storyboard or storytelling

FUN FACT #8: The earliest known depiction of a unicorn-like creature comes from the Indus Valley Civilization (3300 – 1300 BCE).

Grading Approach

- Self assessment marking guide with success criteria, scoring, comments, and reflection

- Precursor success criteria:
  - ❑ My unicorn is complete.
  - ❑ My unicorn is related to reading.
  - ❑ My unicorn is: _____.

Success Criteria		Scoring		Detailed description of how the success criterion has been met:
		GOOD (2 point)	GREAT (3 points)	
CONTENT:				
1	My unicorn represents understandings about reading development covered in the course.			
2	My unicorn makes appropriate connections to the BC curriculum (i.e., core competencies, big ideas, curricular competency learning standards, and content learning standards).			
3	My unicorn is Indigenously inspired – There are connections to FPPoL and/or considerations for Indigenous ways of knowing and being.			
4	My unicorn presents suggestions for teacher practice.			
5	My unicorn shows a thinking about reading diversity in students.			
EXTRAS:				
6	My unicorn has a little something special about it – I have gone above and beyond in some way (extending in BC proficiency scale).			
7	My unicorn presents a personal and critical reflection about my learning in the course.			
8	The unicorn is fun – Fun to design, fun to complete, fun to assess.			
PREPARATION:				
9	My unicorn is polished, organized, and uses effective communication conventions related to the format.			
10	My unicorn demonstrates effort and engagement in the task.			
	TOTAL:		/30	

Critical Reflection About Learning:

Unicorn Creations

- Poster(s)
- Blog
- Games
- Essay
- One-act play
- Scrap book
- FPPoL video
- How to teach reading song
- Learning to read song

- Storytelling
- Diorama
- Children's book with instructional guide
- Language & literacy guide for "Dummies"
- "Recipe" box
- Book of poetry
- Encyclopedia
- Essay
- Unit plan

Did the students enjoy 'unicorning'?

No. No they did not. ☹

FUN FACT #9: The earliest written description of a unicorn is in Greek literature by historian Ctesias (400 BCE).

Reflections

- *"I don't super love the unicorn assignment, maybe giving more suggestions or examples so we can visualize expectations."* (**Course evaluation**)

- **Too challenging:**
  - Didn't want to have to think about what they had learned in relation to the course content, decide how they wanted to express that learning, complete a product, self-assess

- **Real learning is hard work**

- Unicorn were no short of outstanding and **some of the best demonstrations of summative learning**

Will I unicorn again?

Yes! ☺

FUN FACT #10: A pack of unicorns is called a blessing.

Thank you & Kukwstsétselp!

Drawing by Josie Rucinska Fraser (Age 5, 2022)