

PERCEPTIONS OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IN A NORTHERN ONTARIO
COMMUNITY

By

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A Thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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Abstract

The Assembly of First Nations has maintained their emphasis on the importance of postsecondary education for strengthening self-determination in First Nation Communities. From my position as ally to an Anishnawbe community in Northern Ontario, I explored the relationships of community members to postsecondary education. Ten participants (including a teacher at the school and a band councilor) shared with me their experiences and their knowledge about the Community and its school system. The stories which emerged from the data were arranged into mindmaps, which allowed the connections between ideas to emerge.

Through the data, it became clear that in Northern Ontario, the transition from the on-reserve school system at any level is very difficult for Community members, and is exacerbated by family violence and tensions and a perception of lower quality teaching and resources in the community schools. From their stories, it was clear to me that the decisions participants were making about where to go to school and what to pursue were based on what degree of transition they thought they could handle. Participants also chose more college programs when first entering postsecondary education, and attended the college in the nearby town most frequently.

The increased emphasis on postsecondary education from the AFN is also evident in the Community. Suspicion of and isolation from the whitestream school system as a result of the impact of residential schools still exists, and continues to have an effect on community participation in education. However, analysis of participant interviews and Community policy clearly indicate the desire for community members to attend postsecondary education, especially among younger generations. Postsecondary education is seen as an essential tool to improve Community conditions as well as the life prospects of individuals within it.

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I would first and foremost like to thank the members of the Community I worked with for accepting me as a visitor to their territory, a researcher in their community, and a friend. Two families in particular provided me not only rooms to stay when I visited, but included me in their lives, and I will forever cherish my memories of their warm hospitality. I also would like to extend my deepest appreciation to the Postsecondary Councilor and the Band Council of the Community. The Councilor was very supportive of the project right from the beginning, and I enjoyed our time speaking and working together. Indeed, if it weren't for the Councilor's efforts and support, I would not have had the confidence to pursue the research. I was also struck by his/her dedication to family and the youth of the Community. I will always remember our conversations about education, especially those held late at night in the family home. Thank you as well to the Band Council for taking a leap of faith and trusting me to conduct this project in a respectful manner. Along the way, many offered advice and contacts, and their support has meant so much to me.

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Finally, I feel it is important to mention that in the midst of writing I was saddened to hear of the passing of one of the participants, who took their own life one day prior to when they were set to begin classes in college. This loss of such a thoughtful individual at such a young age profoundly affected many in the community, including other participants in this study. I was later told that this participant was careful with their words and would not have opened up to me lightly. I would like to express how grateful I am to have met them, and for the conversations we had, both for the project, and outside of it. I feel the responsibility of having his/her participation and I deeply hope that I did his/her words justice. To them, and to my godchild, a member of the Community, who was born during my second research visit, I dedicate this project and its results.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 A Conversation – A Realization

I can clearly pinpoint the exact moment the inspiration for the journey you are about to read about began. (Ahni, 2009) I am sitting in a booth at a local restaurant on a Friday, the last Friday of my first visit to a particular First Nation community in Northern Ontario. Across from me is a friend I made that summer, scouring the paper looking for apartments for rent. She had just received her secondary school diploma that June from the reservation school, and was planning to move to the nearby town, the same town we were resting in before I boarded a Greyhound bus to make the long journey to the nearest large airport. I was about to return home to Toronto after completing my two month-long summer job in her community as a camp counselor. My mind was on the Master's program I would be starting in a few weeks in the Higher Education program at OISE, and so I asked her what her plans were in terms of education in the coming year.

I do not remember the exact wording of her reply, but I remember it being vague, and geared towards employment. She would try a bit of college she said, see how it would go. I was struck by his conversation because it was so different from the ones I had had with my peers when I had graduated from high school in Southern Ontario six years earlier. I remember spending lunch hours with my friends in the cafeteria, plotting our next steps over program calendars and university brochures. That we were going to continue on to either university or college was a given. Over the summer in the First Nation community, however, I found that many of the friends I made were having

completely different conversations: some were having trouble finishing high school, others were seeking employment, and maybe considering a program or two at the college approximately 100 km. away in the nearest town.

After returning home from the community in the fall of 2008, I was struck with a powerful wave of culture shock (seeing the culture I grew up in seemingly for the first time), as well as an overwhelming need to somehow attempt to give back to people who had shared so much with me over the two months I was employed there. I had no fantasies upon my return of having “helped” any person or any situation. Rather, my eyes were opened to a set of Aboriginal circumstances which exist all over Canada, and to the overwhelming ignorance of these circumstances amongst the general population, as represented by the non-Aboriginal (however quite multicultural) family and friends surrounding me. I thus pulled an abrupt about-face on my program of study, and began the process of inquiry into a question which had slowly germinated in my mind over the course of that first summer in the community. Over the two years that elapsed between that conversation and the completion of this report, I dedicated my time to answering the following question: why are or are not members of the First Nation community I worked with deciding to pursue postsecondary education? Further I wanted to explore what circumstances contributed to these decisions and also what types of programs those going to postsecondary education chose and why. The conclusions which emerged from the data I collected suggest that in Northern Ontario, the transition from the on-reserve school system at any level is very difficult for Community members, and is exacerbated by family violence and tensions and a perception of lower quality teaching and resources

in the community schools. At the postsecondary level, participants almost always chose college programs when first entering postsecondary education, and attended the college in the nearby town most frequently so to diminish the effects of this transition.

The emphasis on postsecondary education by the Assembly of First Nations is evident in the Community. Suspicion of and isolation from the whitestream school system exists, and has an effect on community participation on education. However, analysis of participant interviews and Community policy clearly indicate the desire for community members to attend postsecondary education, especially among younger generations. Postsecondary education is seen as an essential tool to improve Community conditions as well as the life prospects of individuals within it.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I will provide an explanation of the theory, methodology, and procedures that helped me arrive at these conclusions. In Chapters 4 through 7, I will bring forth data and participant testimony which will reveal how and why I arrived at the conclusions I did. All that follows is my attempt to address my initial questions in a manner respectful to the community, and in a way that resonated with the people living there, in the hopes that this project and its results will somehow benefit them, especially the youth. To this end, I must note here that while I did originally have the idea for the specific question behind this research project, I approached school officials and the Band Council early on in the process to ensure that they too thought this line of inquiry was worthy of merit and relevant to their community. I made it clear that, if there was a feeling that a more important or relevant question to the community be pursued, I would undertake that project instead. While there were some concerns about the research

process and how the community would benefit, all with whom I spoke approved the question, and indicated that it was also an area of interest to them.

1.1 Objectives and Current Context

This project, then, was initiated to gain insight into the specific educational circumstances of the particular First Nation community with which I had developed a relationship. To this end, interviews were conducted solely within that community, but complemented with provincial and national reports and scholarly writing on Aboriginal experiences from around the world. The name and exact location has been omitted from this thesis to protect the identity of the community and the participants.

While my study and its results are limited to one particular community, the findings may be of interest to other First Nation communities across Canada who have concerns regarding postsecondary education. Indeed, in September of 2010, Chief Shawn Atleo of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), a national organization representing most First Nation citizens across the country, argued that over the last 14 years, education in First Nation communities has been underfunded (compared to provincial school systems) by 2 billion dollars. (Stone, 2010) Further, in July of 2010, the AFN released a report entitled “First Nations Control of First Nations Education 2010” which Chief Atleo called “an important confirmation of the clear priority every First Nation leader places on education.” (Assembly of First Nations [AFN], 2010b) Earlier in the year, the Chief asserted that education is “central to [the] agenda” of First Nations leadership across the nation, because it is “directly related to social and economic health and is a key to

pursuing our other priorities like stronger governing capacity and economic development.” (AFN, 2010a) Postsecondary education is an essential component in this push, and its significance to the self-governance and self-reliance of First Nations people today will be discussed towards the beginning of Chapter 4.

1.2 Terminology

Definitions of terms used throughout this document will clarify the context and flesh out any specific meaning used within my project. The terms used in this research include Community, Indigenous, First Nation, post secondary education, whitestream, and success.

One of the requests of the band council upon agreeing to the project was that I hide the name of the Community. To do so, I refer to it throughout the text as the “Community” and capitalize it as if referring to a proper noun. This underscores that the term refers to one specific First Nation. During my first summer working within the Community, I clearly remember an instance when I turned to one of my new friends, our designated guide during those first weeks, and asked him what he felt I should refer to people in the Community as. “Are you Aboriginal?” I asked. “Indigenous? First Nations?” “I’m Indian” he replied immediately, scoffing at the other terms. Through my conversations with Community members since then, I have learned that people from the Community use many terms to refer to their background, including Indian, Aboriginal, and Anishnawbe.

The term, “Indian” was never a term that the original peoples of Turtle Island used to refer to themselves prior to contact with Settlers from Europe. (Wright, 1992)

Indeed, because of its connection to past injustices, it is my understanding that many are offended by the term. As such, it is not one which is favored for use in academic writing. When referring to the specific Community, I sometimes use the term *Anishnawbe*, because it refers to the particular language group the Community is a part of. To refer the *Community*, but also the original people of Turtle Island in general, I use the term *Indigenous*, which, according to the Assembly of First Nations, *Indigenous* is a general term, used interchangeably with *Native* and *Aboriginal*, to collectively refer to various First Nations, Métis, and Inuit groups. (AFN, 2002).

Throughout this document I include the term *postsecondary education*. In Ontario, postsecondary education commonly refers to schooling at a level beyond high school. Within this Province, institutions of postsecondary education include universities, colleges of applied arts and technology, private colleges, and privately funded institutions with degree granting abilities.

Whitestream is another term I use frequently. I first encountered the word in Erwin's (2009) thesis regarding the experience of Aboriginal community college students.¹ She uses it in lieu of mainstream to highlight her belief that mainstream "perpetuates the idea that White society is the main society against which others are gauged and judged." (Erwin, 2009, p.11)

Finally, the notion of *success* is one which is referred to often, especially in the last half of my thesis. From the beginning of the research I was cautious not to impose any definitions of success upon participants. To that end, one of the questions I asked

¹ Erwin's (2009) thesis is entitled "The Experiences of Aboriginal Students in a Community College Setting: A Critical Analysis of Educational Practices."

each participant was “what does success mean to you?” Each had a different answer. One felt success was achieved when something new was learned everyday. Another thought he would be successful when he had an apartment, a job, and was able to play board games and video games in his downtime. One participant succinctly defined success as “Accomplishing the things that you need to do in order to live your life.” Some did not have a definition to share with me, but in general those that did indicated that having a job and being able to support him or herself was an important part of what they deemed to be success. Their definitions were markedly subdued as compared to the definition according to the Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2010), which pegs success as “the attainment of wealth, favor or eminence” which captures the whitestream emphasis on excess and prestige.

1.3 Preparing for the Project

In addition to reading on the topic itself, in September of 2008, I began to prepare for this project by researching Indigenous research methodologies. My studies included the history of research with Indigenous peoples and current ethical protocols when researching with Indigenous communities. I learned that Indigenous communities have a history of exploitation by researchers. In Canada, some Indigenous communities no longer allow researchers to enter as a result of disrespectful behavior and practices of outsiders. The James Bay Cree of Northern Quebec is one such documented case, as the community previously ejected all psychological researchers from their territory, citing lack of respect for local authority, and feelings of exploitation and mistreatment during

the course of research projects. (Darou et al., 1993) Indeed, non-Indigenous academics still benefit from the subjugation of Indigenous people in many academic disciplines. (Menzies, 2001) Given this history, I was concerned whether I, a non-Aboriginal Canadian citizen, would be accepted as a researcher by the community, and by Aboriginal scholars.

Some argue that Aboriginal scholars who currently hold advanced degrees from Western institutions, and who are at the same time grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous worldviews, are better positioned to conduct research which will challenge Western assumptions and respect their participants. (Brant Castellano, 2004) Others, however, point to the limited presence of these Aboriginal scholars within institutions, which is a direct result of the historically lower enrollment and graduation rates of Aboriginal peoples living in Canada. Currently, 0.7% of university professors identify as Aboriginal. (Holmes, 2006) Thus, if a community would like research to be done in a specific area, it is not guaranteed that a scholar who is employed at an academic institution and who specializes in the area the community desires, is available. This thought propelled me forward. If there was a need or desire for this research, and no one more appropriate than I to conduct it was interested, I would.

1.4 My Position as Researcher

As noted above, numerous problems with research conducted by non-Aboriginal individuals have been uncovered by Aboriginal scholars. For instance, research conducted by outsiders on Aboriginal communities has often contributed to the

rationalization of misguided judgments of inferiority of Aboriginal people. (Smith, 1999) Such theorizing has also supported the Canadian government's paternalistic control over First Nations communities. (Brant Castellano, 2004) Another concern regards the interpretation of research findings: Euro-centric perspectives clearly result in the misinterpretation of meaning (Steinhauer, 2002), which in turn supports judgments based on cultural standards not relevant to Indigenous communities. Becoming aware of these concerns and taking steps to avoid them in this project became a central focus of developing my methodology (see Chapter 3).

Stemming from her own research with Maori women in New Zealand, it was Smith's (1999) observation that there are multiple ways to be both an insider and an outsider to a community which inspired me and my work with the community forward. In her own research, Smith observed that her participants were more open and frank with her during informal interactions, but when placed in a formal interview session, they adopted formal protocols, and withheld information from her, using strategies which community members had developed to protect themselves from outsider research. (Smith, 1999) It became apparent to me that no matter where the researcher is located with respect to participants, the nature of the relationship between them would be altered during and perhaps after the process. Smith's words also affirmed for me what I felt to be true, namely that going into the research, I was mainly an outsider to the community. However, I was granted certain insider perspectives during my time living and working there before the idea of this project came about, and through my developing relationships with many of the community children and adults. Since that first summer, I have returned

to the community numerous times, including the subsequent summer to resume my employment with the child and youth summer camp. Smith's story made me realize that as the project unfolded, I would have to ensure, through constant reflection and communication with those around me in the community, that I was conducting myself as a researcher in a way which they felt was respectful. By entering the community as a researcher, my perspective on the community was altered from my previous experiences there, as did the view many community members had of me. Conversely, my informal relationships with community members, which were forged prior to my research intentions, also had an impact on the research project. It is important to note that none of the children who attended the camp where I was a counselor are currently over the age of 18, and so they were not able to participate in the project. Thus this specific power differential which exists in some of my relationships with particular children was ameliorated during this research.

1.5 Becoming an Ally

I am the first daughter of immigrants who came to Canada after the Second World War. While my identity as the first born daughter of Italian, Catholic immigrants, born in a large urban center (Toronto) in the mid-1980s has been a source of oppression for me, this has largely been at the hands of my own family rather than at the hands of a government, or a dominant cultural group. Nevertheless, I feel that my acceptance into the homes of friends on the reserve, as well as the acceptance of this project by the friends I have spoken with, respected members of the community, and the Chief and

Band Council have positioned me perhaps not an insider, but certainly as an “ally” to the community. In 2002, Karen Elisabeth Max completed a Master’s thesis at OISE/UT entitled *Joining the Circle: Working as an Ally in Aboriginal Education*. Based on her research, she argues that to be an ally to Aboriginal peoples, “it is not her place to speak for anyone else, or tell someone what they should do differently.” (p. 62) I considered this suggestion seriously. For example, rather than make up my own recommendations or conclusions, I have used the space in the last chapter to document positive steps currently being taken by the community and suggestions put forward by the interviewees. Max also asserts that a researcher from outside of a community must realize that s/he is always in the process of becoming an ally, and accept that s/he may make mistakes in her/his actions. (Max, 2002, p. 62) An essential component of this process is the decolonization of my self – the researcher, which I will discuss in Chapter 3 with regards to developing a methodology. This process includes recognizing and examining personal standpoints, stereotypes and assumptions, and communicating with carefully selected Aboriginal co-facilitators who have greater grounding in Aboriginal worldviews in work with Aboriginal peoples. (Max, 2002, p. 63) Max also highlights the unhelpfulness of dichotomous thinking, citing the flawed thinking in the statement “[a] non-Aboriginal [person] should never conduct training in Aboriginal communities.” (p. 62)

Throughout the project I strove to recognize when and how my privilege as a White, upper middle class person affected how I approached situations and how I incorporated information I received. I came to realize time and time again during this process how much in my life I had taken for granted, including economic stability and the

privileges of the community I lived in, such as having sidewalks, working streetlamps, paved roads and programs to attend after school. At the same time, I had lived most of my life separated from nature within my home and community, and had never developed the strong connection to the land upon which I lived as many in the Aboriginal community spoke about or demonstrated. The opportunities I had been afforded in my life differed significantly from those of the community members, and I brought this awareness with me into this project.

The following chapters will outline in more detail the process of securing the project (Chapter 3), the methodology used (Chapter 3), and the results of the interviews (Chapters 4 through 6). Chapter 2 reviews literature and history relevant to the findings.

1.6 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis encourages the reader to explore the experience of Aboriginal youth living in a northern First Nation community through the process of thinking about, researching, and transitioning to postsecondary education. It encourages the Community itself to view the hardships they encounter as a result of assimilative government policies and underfunding, rather than personal or collective deficits. In this chapter I have explained how the idea for this project came about, and who I am in relation to the work and to the Community. I have also discussed what steps were taken to prepare for the research, and the terminology that the reader needs to be familiar with as he or she reads on. Chapter 2 provides a brief history of the particular First Nation in which the research was conducted in order to provide context to participant comments as well as the findings

in general. It also contains a review of relevant literature regarding the residential school system, socioeconomic conditions in First Nations in general across the country, and the contemporary literature regarding Aboriginals and postsecondary education. The third chapter is dedicated to retelling the methodology I used in research, notably explaining the relatively new Indigenous Research Paradigm as well as my usage of it. A detailed description of the procedure of securing the project and conducting the research is contained within.

Chapters 4 through 7 draw upon my interviews with the participants, and document the findings from the research. Chapter 4 reveals the attitudes of the Community towards postsecondary education, how potential students chose programs, and what types of programs they desire to attend. Towards the end of the chapter, particular focus is placed on participant reactions toward postsecondary programs and services designed with Aboriginal content and methods. In chapter 5, I discuss the academic, geographical and cultural transitions which participants grapple with when leaving the Community to attend postsecondary education. The stories shared with me reveal how if Community members want and are able to attend school in whitestream institutions, they are sometimes met with a system which is not aware of and does not acknowledge their unique life histories, and may face overt racism from members of whitestream society. Chapter 6 looks at the various issues with the Community school system as told to me by participants, who negatively compared their experiences with those of whitestream institutions. Ultimately I connect these issues to the drastic disparity

in government funding between the two systems, which continues on to the government's persistent underfunding of the Aboriginal postsecondary education grants.

Chapter 7 contains a description of positive initiatives which Community members are already engaged in regarding education, as well as suggestions for further change given by participants. It also discusses how neoliberal notions of work and success threaten to further assimilate Community members into whitestream society. Finally, I acknowledge how without at equal funding to First Nations Communities, they may not find the resources to implement the changes members desire.

I conclude the last chapter with a discussion on the limitations of the thesis and suggestions for future research which were gleaned from this study. To conclude the thesis, I reflect on what aspects of my procedure I would change if given the chance, and also what I would repeat if undertaking a similar project in the future.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

PART 1

2.0 Introduction

One of the major misconceptions which I encounter among my non-Aboriginal family and friends regarding First Nations is that they share an identical past and uniform present. The truth is that the 642² First Nations across this country are as diverse as the people living within them. Each community has a different history and different set of natural resources and human capacities available to them. As a result, reserves close to one another often differ significantly with respect to their socioeconomic conditions, their spiritual and religious beliefs, their governing structures, and their access to opportunities outside of the community.

This second chapter in most thesis documents is where the relevant literature is reviewed so as to provide context for the following data and discussion. Because this study was grounded in a particular First Nation, it is necessary that this section also contain a brief history of that community. Part of the agreement between the Band Council and myself at the outset of the project was that the Community's identity would remain hidden. This not only protects the identity of individual participants, it also ensures that the community itself is able to maintain its privacy. To further maintain their privacy beyond hiding the Community's name, I will give a general overview of its

² Ahni, 2009.

history, which I will augment with relevant literature where experiences are common with other First Nations. Since the main focus of this study is education, I will place a particular emphasis on the history and current state of the community's education system.

The information included regarding the history of this First Nation has been shared with me over the course of working and living there for brief periods over the past two years. I have also learned about historical and present conditions through my own reading of both Native and whitestream sources. Some of what I document regarding the history of the education system was taken from another M.A. thesis written about the community approximately 15 years ago. (This thesis cannot be cited here because it did not conceal the identity of the community.) However, the majority of the information contained within was already known to me, and this work only served to confirm exact dates, which I only generalize here.

In the second part of the chapter, I will introduce the following topics which are relevant to the findings of the project: Indigenous knowledges, Aboriginal people and their relationship with postsecondary education, specific programs for Aboriginal students, and funding of Aboriginal postsecondary education. The contents of this chapter provide important context for understanding the interview discussions and of the topics addressed.

2.1. The Formation of the Community

Prior to contact with settlers from England, Aboriginal people lived throughout the land which now is known by the name given to it by its colonizers, North America.

Those indigenous to this land knew it as Turtle Island, and their spirituality and way of being and relating was grounded in the natural environment and a respect for the relationships which connect all things and all people. One of the participants in this study shared with me her knowledge that the ancestors of the Community did not just live on the land where the Community now stands from time immemorial. In her words, “[w]e were all over the place; we traded with people, we interacted with other nations, you know, hundreds of miles away.... [T]he Ojibway followed this big...shell, the Megis shell and came this way because we were starving ... and it lead us to this place.... [W]e did start off down south and we made our way this way.”

The administration of affairs related to this land’s First Peoples was transferred from the British Colonial Office to the Canadian government in 1860. (Stonechild, 2006, p.10) As the 1800s progressed, treaties were negotiated in what is now the province of Ontario, in a process that was viewed by the government as primarily a land transaction. (Stonechild, 2006, p.11) In some treaties, including the one which encompasses the community I visited, schools and teachers were included as provisions in the negotiations which saw the Canadian government receive control over large tracts of land. These pieces of land were set aside as “reserves” for the Aboriginal people. (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996) It is important to note that within these negotiations, Native leaders were often assured that in signing the document, they would not have to give up their traditional ways of life. (RCAP, 1996) To the Aboriginal people present at the negotiations, the understanding was that lands would be shared, not *ceded*, as was the understanding of the Canadian government. (RCAP, 1996) A very detailed

account of the negotiation process can be found in the final report of RCAP. It provides an astonishing look into the history of this country which is largely ignored in the whitestream education system.

At the time of the creation of the treaty which encompasses the community, the Anishnabe people primarily spoke the Ojibway language, and were engaged in their traditional activities, which they continued largely throughout the first 25 to 50 years of the 1900s. Oral history passed down from treaty negotiations suggest that at this time Aboriginal leaders in areas west of the Community were concerned about the stress that the fur-trade (in which members of the community were engaged) was putting on animal populations which they depended on for both food and other daily necessities. (RCAP 1996, Section 4.4) The lack of movement afforded them by the newly created reserve system meant that communities were not able to seek out the best set of natural circumstances for themselves as they used to. Similar patterns can be found in other parts of Canada (e.g. Lutz, 2009). While at this time, community members did have contact with Europeans, it was not on a day-to-day basis.

2.1.1 Residential Schools and the “60s Scoop”

In the 1940s, the functioning of the Community was interrupted, like that of many First Nations across the country, by the removal of children to attend residential schools. The existence and operation of these schools is one of the worst scars on the face of this nation. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2002) reports that, from 1800-1900, more than 130 residential schools existed, with operation peaking in 1931 at 80 schools. By the

1940s, 8000 children, approximately half of the student-age population of Aboriginal, Metis and Inuit communities, were enrolled in the schools.³ When Indigenous children were taken to live in these boarding schools, they were prohibited from practicing their culture, including speaking their languages, and were often subject to physical and sexual abuse. (RCAP, 1996) Early reports from the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission⁴ are also bringing to light the large number of children who died in the schools, and who now may be buried in unmarked graves. The TRC is hearing about their deaths related to poor living conditions, illness, and being overworked.

As children were leaving, parents were sometimes unaware of where their children were being taken, or why they were being apprehended. The children of school survivors tell stories of broken families, and how their parents were unable to show their love and affection for their children. (Fournier and Crey, 1997, p. 128) Children were only allowed to return home for brief periods of time, if at all. If they did return home, many were unable to communicate in the language of their parents at least initially because they had been told that it, along with their culture, was wrong and even evil.

In the mid-1950s, a day school was opened in the Community, which housed the primary grades while students in the junior and secondary grades continued to be taken away to attend residential schools. Teaching staff at the school were White and the curriculum taught was largely that of the whitestream culture.

³ (At the time of writing, a nation-wide Truth and Reconciliation Commission was conducting interviews with survivors and their families to document their stories about the schools.)

⁴ Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has a mandate "to learn the truth about what happened in the residential schools and to inform all Canadians about what happened in [them]." It began its 5 year mandate in 2009. More information is available at www.trc-cvr.ca.

Interviews with participants indicated that members of the community were also affected by a period now referred to as the “60s scoop”. Despite its name, this period actually spanned between the 1960s and the mid-1980s, and saw the adoption of thousands of Aboriginal children, 70 percent of whom were placed into non-Aboriginal settings in Canada, the United States and internationally. (Sinclair, 2007) Reports show this was often done without the permission and sometimes without even the knowledge of the families and the band councils. (Timpson, 1995; RCAP, 1996; Sinclair, 2007) That this community was part of the “scoop” was confirmed by one of this study’s older participants, who recounted for me his experience of being hurried into a vehicle and taken away for adoption one day while walking in his community; this occurred without the knowledge of his family. As with residential schools, many of those who were adopted through the Children’s Aid institution have since come forward with stories of “[p]hysical and sexual abuse, emotional neglect, internalised racism, language loss, substance abuse and [attempted] suicide.” (Kirmayer, Simpson & Cargo, 2003, p. S17)

The impact of residential schools and the “60s scoop” caused deep fissures in First Nations families, and continues to do so to this day. The effects on the Community were made clear to me as I spent time there, and during the interviews I conducted with participants. In my interviews, all of the participants knew many people who had been to residential schools, and the grandparents or parents of all but one participant had attended one of the schools. Because both attending residential schools and forced adoption resulted in children being isolated from their culture, these “scoops” have been identified

as major causes in the loss of self-esteem and personal identity as those affected were often relegated to the margins of two worlds. (Kirmayer, Simpson & Cargo, 2003)

2.1.2 Further Disruptions

Interruptions in family life and cultural practices in the community did not just result from residential schools and forced adoption. Other institutions also intervened for the worse in the mid-1900s when a waterway was permanently flooded as a result of the actions of a corporation. Despite large and permanent changes being done to their land, this occurred without consultation with Community members. As a result, part of the land occupied by houses was flooded, and those affected were forced to relocate to another settled area of the reserve. In the process, traplines, wild rice fields, and even a cemetery were submerged, and residents watched as coffins were uprooted and floated away. The residents whose houses were affected were given poor quality replacement dwellings and many who were unable to find new ways to support themselves in the new location and went on welfare. At this time, alcoholism is first mentioned as an issue in the Community.

Tragedy struck once more in the 1970s. As a result of actions taken by another corporation, the water in and around the Community was significantly polluted. This had a drastic impact on the community; not only were they advised not to eat fish from the water (one of the main staples in their subsistence diet), it was found that adverse health effects had already affected many members of the community. Indeed, some scientists argue convincingly that this episode continues to have a significant impact on the health

of the people. To compensate for their losses, the government did attempt to provide fish to the community, but accounts indicate that it was not enough to feed everyone and that it was not of good or fresh quality. Some residents continued to eat the local fish despite the warnings not to because fishing was (and continues to be) such a large part of their culture. They also, in some cases, did not have the financial resources to secure sufficient food for their families otherwise. This also affected those in the community who were employed as guides at sport fishing camps in the area. Because of the widespread news of the pollution, this industry almost completely came to a halt for many years and another form of economic prosperity and expertise was lost.⁵

2.1.3 Current Circumstances

Today the Community continues to be situated on one of the most beautiful tracts of land I have ever visited. As I have indicated, the First Nation is located in Ontario, some driving distance from the nearest town. It is populated mainly by the original families who are Anishnawbe. Over the years, marriages to outsiders, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, have expanded the Community. It currently has a population of approximately 1,300 members on reserve, and 320 members off reserve. One hundred

⁵ In her PhD thesis entitled, *Environmental Justice in a Toxic Economy: Community Struggles with Environmental Health Disorders in Nova Scotia*, Shirley Thompson (2002) describes how the Mi'kmaq land in Nova Scotia was repeatedly expropriated by the government for "toxic industrial development and extraction of renewable resources" (p.167). This was rooted in a history of aggression on behalf of the British settlers, who at times used poisoned food, germ warfare, and hired killers to exterminate the Mi'kmaq people (p. 164). This population of Aboriginal people is just one other example of communities across Canada whose land has been used for resources and/or made into a toxic site at the hands of settlers, who justified their actions based on racist attitudes towards Aboriginal people.

non-band members live on reserve. Non-band members may include those who have married residents, and outsiders employed in the community such as teachers and nurses.

Other than residential dwellings, the main buildings in the community include the band office (with adjoining community hall and arena,) school, daycare facility, family services office, community resource centre, water plant, Crises Response Center (located in a trailer), warehouse and police station. At the time of writing, four convenience stores of varying size were operating out of houses. There are no grocery stores in the community, and so most residents make the one and a half hour drive to town every week or every two weeks (on pay day) to purchase food for their families. Traditional activities such as blueberry picking, fishing and hunting still occur, but these do not act as more than a small supplement to the diet of most of the residents.

While the locations listed above do provide employment to some residents, there still remains many in the Community who are not employed, and currently rely on welfare. Because residents are dependent on the nearest town (which as I've indicated, is more than an hour drive away) for food and supplies, it is necessary that families have the use of a working vehicle or at least, money enough to contribute to gas for the trip, and these additional costs must be factored in when considering the cost of living. There are obvious psychological impacts of these challenges – mistrust of outsiders, mental stress and depression, all of which may result in family issues and escalated levels of suicide. (Kirmayer, Simpson, & Cargo, 2003; Personal Observation)

2.1.4 Socioeconomic and Health Conditions

Increased risk for such diseases as tuberculosis (Clark, Piben & Nowgesic, 2002) and diabetes among First Nations are attributed to low socioeconomic conditions and poor housing on reserves (Young et al., 2000), among other factors. For instance, tuberculosis occurs at a rate six to seven times higher, heart disease and hypertension at a rate three times higher, and long-term disability a rate two times higher than the Canadian average. (Kirmayer, Simpson & Cargo, 2003)

Diabetes is a serious problem in many Aboriginal communities, and the one this study is concerned with is no exception. It is currently known that female residents on reserves incur a risk of dying from diabetes at five times the national average, while males experience just under 4 times the risk as the Canadian male population taken as a whole. (Young et al., 2000, p.562) This concern is relatively recent, as it was not until the 1950s that type 2 diabetes began to grow to these levels within Aboriginal communities. The past 20 years has been of particular concern. In a 10 year period alone, the prevalence of diabetes in the Sioux Lookout Zone of northwestern Ontario increased by 45%. (Young et al., 2000, p. 562)

Lack of infrastructure, chronic underfunding in practically every aspect of community life as compared to the rest of Canadian society, poor health conditions, and low income levels contribute to social problems in First Nations communities. Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo (2003) observed numerous shocking disparities between First Nations and Canadians. In Canada, Aboriginal people are five to six times more likely to be incarcerated than the rest of society. A survey conducted with Aboriginal adults

reported that 39% identify family violence as present and a problem in their community, 25% identify sexual abuse, and 15% report rape as a problem. Depending on the community, it has also been found that suicide rates are 3 to 6 times that of the rest of the community (depending on the age bracket). Today, many view the overall reason for these problems to be the policies of “forced assimilation” that the government has imposed on first nations since contact. (Kirmayer, Simpson & Cargo, 2003)

The Community I visited exemplifies a host of circumstances which are common to many First Nations, a few of which will be highlighted in the following sections in this chapter.

2.1.5 Housing Concerns

According to a report issued by the Assembly of First Nations in 2005, “First Nations housing and infrastructure is in crisis.” (AFN, 2005, p. 2) The Report goes on to say that, in some cases, housing in First Nations communities has been compared to those found in the third world. Many of the conditions listed in the report by the AFN apply to the Community I visited, including severe overcrowding, lack of plumbing, poor insulation, toxic mould, substandard construction, and “a huge accumulation of units in need of major repair.” These conditions are amplified by the young and rapidly growing population found on many reserves. While there are no exact figures available, waiting lists for a new house can be years long, depending on the circumstances of the individual looking for one. In the Community in question, they have recently begun to award houses through a process of public testimony in order to hear individual concerns, and hear

requests on a case-by-case basis. The sad news is that the newly built houses are not free from concerns; mould and poor insulation are persistent problems.

2.1.6 Environmental Concerns

Another issue is in maintaining traditional growing and hunting practices which are respectful to the earth, and the express focus on preserving the land for future generations which is part of Aboriginal belief systems. (Cajete, 2000) As a result of the poisoning of the waterway, today the Community is one of the many examples, both historical and current, of First Nations communities in extreme environmental distress. Currently, there are “4,464 toxic sites within the treaty territories of Indigenous People” in Canada, which amounts to approximately 1.5 toxic sites on average for each of Canada’s reserves, with some communities dealing with more than a dozen sites, while others have none. (Ahni, 2009)

For those living in the cities and rural communities of Canada, laws have been developed by municipal and provincial governments to monitor environmental threats (for instance, laws which govern water and housing quality, air quality, and the operation of landfill sites). These laws are put into place to protect people from the various hazards which could develop if, for instance, raw sewage were allowed to flow freely into drinking water sources. In addition to these laws, provincial governments have developed processes to monitor compliance and address emergencies. (Ahni, 2009) Such laws, regulations and processes do not exist for First Nations communities, since the federal

government has neglected to put them in place despite having the jurisdiction to do so. (Ahni, 2009)

In 2009, the Auditor General of Canada focused a whole chapter of its annual report on the state of land management and environmental protection on reserves. The Report included four main findings regarding First Nations communities in Canada, which reveal large policy gaps between the environmental regulations which exist in First Nation communities and those that govern the rest of the country. These include a lack of regulations regarding environmental threats on reserves, little to no resources dedicated to monitoring and enforcing compliance with existing regulations regarding areas such as garbage disposal, water and air quality as is done off reserve; a lack of training to the small number of First Nations who have taken partial or full land management control from the federal Indian and Northern Affairs Canada [INAC], limited access to available alternative land management regimes, and a lack of overall funding preventing them from meeting shirked commitments. (Office of the Auditor General, 2009)

The third major issue facing First Nations is land management control. These problems can be traced to INAC's other role of managing First Nations land, which has often resulted in permission being granted to corporations to take resources such as lumber, minerals, oil, and uranium and accrue profits from them, while the residents of the land are left to deal with the negative health repercussions of the environmental damage. (Ahni, 2009) The councilor I interviewed estimated that over the years, \$35 million in resources have been extracted from the lands belonging to the community, with no financial compensation having been received by the Community as of yet. This

situation is a far cry from the circumstances surrounding the original treaty negotiations where it is noted that the Ojibwa had a “clear sense of ownership” and “would not allow the use of their lands, timber or waterways without compensation.” (RCAP, 1996)

2.1.7 Education in the Community Today

Today, children living in the Community attend school there, anywhere from junior kindergarten to grade 12. While exact numbers are not available, some students do attend school in town for various lengths of time. This will be discussed in upcoming chapters.

The main language of instruction in the school is English, but students receive several hours of instruction in Ojibway per week. Teachers are hired from both the Community and outside the Community. Currently, most of the teachers in the elementary school are from the Community and of Aboriginal ancestry. They are not required to be certified by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) or to have attended teacher’s college as directed by INAC and the school.⁶ In contrast, the high school teachers are primarily hired from outside of the Community because, unlike in the elementary school, high school teachers are required to be certified by OCT because the school is audited by INAC. Both the elementary and high school follow the Ontario curriculum documents.

⁶ These requirements are set to change, which will be discussed in Chapter 7.

2.1.8 Community, Joy, Success and Humour

It is unfair and misrepresentational to solely document the inequitable conditions on reserves. While it is true that First Nations embody many troubling statistics, it is also true that they are bastions of Community living. My first summer in the Community left me with many happy and positive memories of experiences that I otherwise had not had while growing up in whitestream society. My coworkers and I often spent nights playing cards at the crises centre with the workers there or with other friends we made in the Community. Some days we went swimming or cliff jumping; on other days we visited sites around the Community such as beautiful and isolated beaches, where we returned at night for bonfires. Whole weekends were filled with attending large family birthday parties and barbeques. Becoming familiar with various adults and children meant that I began to feel part of the Community, which brought along with it a keen sense of belonging that I had never felt growing up in the suburbs of Toronto. Now whenever I walk down the road in the Community, I am scarcely able to do so without hearing shouts of “HI ANGELA!” from children whom I have watched grow over the past two years, and I happily return waves and nods from both those I know and those I am not familiar with. All this is to emphasize that despite the numerous injustices the members of this particular community have felt at the hands of both corporations and various levels of government, and the resulting socioeconomic concerns that exist there now, there remains a great sense of positivity and a pride in the Community among many residents, young and old alike. Testimony from participants included in the following chapters will document the strong ties to the Community that those born there often feel.

PART 2

2.2 Indigenous Knowledges

It is important to discuss Indigenous Knowledges here to center their importance and to acknowledge that Aboriginal traditions value sources of knowledge which are outside of those recognized by the whitestream culture. In some of my interviews, participants discussed knowledge which came to them from their Elders, and from traditions, dreams, and cultural ceremonies. Not being of Aboriginal descent, I took great care to learn as much as I could about Indigenous philosophies of knowledge prior to beginning the project, and throughout the research so as to ensure that my efforts would not inadvertently support epistemological colonization. Below represents a short discussion about Indigenous Knowledges to provide context for this research.

How do Indigenous Knowledges differ from the Western conception of knowledge? According to Wilson (2003), within a Western paradigm, knowledge is traditionally seen as valid when approached through the intellect, whereas in many Indigenous traditions, knowledge which originates from the senses and intuition is also highly valued and taken as true. Sources of this knowledge may be traditional teachings, empirical observations and revelation. (Brant Castellano 2000) More specifically, this knowledge may emanate from dreams, visions, oral storytelling, cellular memory, and knowledge from Elders. (Steinhauer, 2002) Dei, Hall and Rosenberg (2000) assert that “Indigenous knowledges are unique to different cultures, localities, and societies” (p. 19), meaning that knowledge cannot be generalized beyond one particular community, given that each community is based in a particular set of historical and natural circumstances.

Neither are Indigenous Knowledges static, and truths are constantly tested by Aboriginal peoples living their experiences today. (Brant Castellano, 2000) The people of the Community, many of whom have lived there all their lives and can trace their family connection to the land back through the generations, have a unique body of experiences which are informed by both an Anishnawbe worldview and the Western worldview. Brant Castellano (2000) acknowledges that the transmission of Indigenous Knowledges has suffered because of residential schools and the subsequent continuation of assimilative education, and economic and social oppression at the hands of the government and dominant society -- experiences which are familiar to the residents of the Community, as revealed above. As discussed, these events continue to have a significant impact on the health and socio-economic status of residents.

Today, adults and children in the Community watch TV, surf the internet, and interact with non-Aboriginal society on a daily basis and thus have incorporated non-Aboriginal worldviews. Until it burned down, there was a Christian church in the community, and as in many Aboriginal communities, some families follow Christian traditions. Many people, however, still speak Ojibwa, attend ceremonies, learn traditional dance, and listen to and respect traditional teachings and teachings from Elders. These groups are not mutually exclusive, demonstrating that it is impossible to stereotype or easily categorize the beliefs of Aboriginal people today.

Despite not being of Aboriginal descent, my own reading and research, and especially my conversations with people from the community and my subsequent careful reflection on any judgments I may have made, have rendered me open to the presence of

an Anishnawbe worldview and Indigenous knowledge. Because of this, knowledge that is shared in the interviews which emanates from sources traditionally honored by Indigenous communities was valued in the analysis. Sharing preliminary analysis with the interview participants and informally consulting with people from the Community (while keeping participants and their information confidential) assisted me throughout the research process to ensure that I did value this knowledge.

To reiterate, Brant Castellano (2000) and others emphasize that Indigenous Knowledges do not claim to be universal, and indeed, neither do I make this claim for the findings of this report. Rather, my goal in writing was to ultimately produce something of use for the Community which has given, and continues to give so much to me in terms of acceptance, friendship and healing. This is in accordance with the statement “the ultimate test of the validity of knowledge is whether it enhances the capacity of people to live well.” (Brant Castellano, 2000, p. 33) Only time will determine whether or not the knowledge collected in this report as well as the findings will contribute to the education system in the Community. That being said, I have included positive developments which are currently occurring as well as my own suggestions and those from Community members on how to further improve postsecondary education attainment in the final chapter of this thesis.

2.2.1 Aboriginal People and Postsecondary Education⁷

Aboriginal peoples in Canada have historically attended and graduated from postsecondary institutions at rates far below those of non-Aboriginal Canadians. Statistics suggest that this disparity has deepened in recent years and is rooted in differences in high school graduation rates. In 2008, Statistics Canada (as cited in Preston, 2008) reported that “approximately 50% of First Nations people, aged 25 to 64, living on-reserve and 38% of First Nations people, aged 25 to 64, living off-reserve do not have a high school diploma. (Preston, 2008) Fifteen percent of Canada’s total population, aged 25 to 64, do not have a high school diploma. (Preston, 2008) It is difficult to determine exact population numbers for the Community since Statistics Canada reports a lower population number than is featured on the official Community website. Based on the numbers collected by Statistics Canada in 2006, however, 70% of people in the community 15 and up do not have their high school diplomas or an equivalent.⁸

Currently Aboriginal people have almost equal attainment rates as non-Aboriginal Canadians in terms of college attainment (19% versus 20%) and trades credentials (14% versus 12%). (CCL, 2009a) A larger discrepancy exists with respect to university attainment. In 2006, 8% of Aboriginal people had a university degree up from 6% in 2001. (Preston, 2008) Numbers for university attainment of Aboriginal people are significantly lower than non-Aboriginal people in Canada. In 2006, 23% of non-Aboriginal Canadians reported having a university degree. (Preston, 2008) In 2008 the

⁷ In Ontario, postsecondary education commonly refers to schooling at a level beyond high school. Within this Province, institutions of postsecondary education include universities, colleges of applied arts and technology, Aboriginal-run (unfunded) postsecondary education institutions, private colleges, and privately funded institutions with degree granting abilities .

⁸ Email has the website.

Canadian Council on Learning reported when all categories are taken together, non-Indigenous people currently hold post-secondary degrees 1.4 times more than Indigenous peoples. (CCL, 2008) This number is confirmed by Stonechild (2006) who reported that based on numbers from the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, First Nations participation in higher education continues to be approximately 60% that of the rest of society. (p. 125)

Attainment rates in the Community with respect to the categories of trades, college and university attainment are lower than the national average for Aboriginal people, as is the case for many remote reserves. According to Statistics Canada, as of 2006, 9% of people in the Community had a trades certificate (versus 19% of the Aboriginal population), 7% had a college diploma (versus 14% of the Aboriginal population), and 4% had a university certificate, diploma, or degree (versus 8% of the Aboriginal population).⁹

This disparity has its roots in the history of the Canadian education system, and its treatment of Indigenous peoples. Residential schools, for instance, provided a mediocre education, and all the injustices faced by the students and their communities have resulted in a strong mistrust of whitestream institutions of education. Higher education may have also been avoided when it first became accessible to Aboriginal people because, as a matter of policy, it was used as a tool by the Canadian government in the attempt to assimilate them into dominant society. In 1876 the *Indian Act* was passed which legislated that any Indigenous person who graduated from a higher education institution

⁹ Website in email.

would immediately lose his or her Indian Status, as well as accompanying rights under the Status title, including any claim to reserve land. (Brant Castellano, Davis & Lahache, 2000; Stonechild, 2006)

Additional research has been published which suggests that Indigenous peoples do not access postsecondary education at the same rate as non-Indigenous youth because most institutions are based on non-Indigenous conceptions of education, community, and research. (Kirkness and Barnhardt, 1991; Battiste, Bell and Findlay, 2002) The next section will detail this.

Despite a justified distrust of Canadian postsecondary education institutions, and the history of oppression of their children at the hands of the school system, in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report (1996) cited above, Indigenous peoples from all over Canada articulated the great value they place on the education of their children. They asserted that they value education, and that they hope it will help their people increase their participation in the economy of both their communities and of greater Canadian society. (RCAP, 1996; Stonechild, 2006)

2.2.2 Specific Programs for Aboriginal Students

By the early 1980s, Aboriginal students were enrolling in postsecondary education at a rate “comparable” to that of non-Aboriginal students. (Stonechild, 2006 p.64) However, as indicated above, while college and trades enrollment rates were gaining parity, a disparity did (and continues to) exist in university enrollment, with Aboriginal students one-third as likely as the rest of Canada to be enrolled in university

in 1987. (Stonechild, 2006 p.81) Also it was found that, at the time, Aboriginal students actually completed their postsecondary programs far below the national rate. Students not being adequately prepared academically for higher education and difficulties adapting to mainstream society were cited as the major reasons for this disparity. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 64) By 1989, one quarter of the students being supported by government postsecondary funding programs were in university while the remainder were enrolled in college. Those most likely to succeed were students enrolled in short-term college programs, and those who were married (Stonechild, 2006, p. 88).

Prior to the 1990s, in much whitestream literature, the blame for low participation and success rates of Indigenous students was placed on their own academic incompetence. But in 1991, Kirkness and Barnhardt published a seminal article which recast these problems as a failure of post-secondary institutions in Canada to create educational spaces which are welcoming to Indigenous students and which reflect their cultural realities and lived experiences. (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, p.4) They characterized the response of institutions to issues of student success and completion as a “blame-the-victim” approach, arguing that universities normalize Western methods of knowledge production and dissemination, and as a result, deal with those who do not conform by redoubling their efforts to socialize them to dominant attitudes and behaviors. (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, p.3) The authors thus questioned the wisdom of programs designed by the university to place Indigenous students on a level playing field by simply targeting skill development (p. 3), and instead, called for a fundamental restructuring of curriculum and program delivery, grounded in a dialogue with Indigenous peoples.

(Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, p. 6-13) Kirkness and Barnhardt believed this conversation should be based on a respect for First Nations cultural integrity, be relevant to First Nations perspectives and experiences, and should develop from reciprocal relationships between Indigenous students and their university professors, where Indigenous cultural knowledges, lived experiences, and the worldviews of the students are valued as much as Western knowledge systems. (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, p. 6-13)

In the 17 years since the Kirkness and Barnhardt article was published, the university has been identified by Indigenous scholars as a site of continued colonial dominance and cognitive imperialism. (Smith, 1999; Shiva, 1995) Scholars representing various marginalized groups have long recognized that higher education is not a value-free exercise in knowledge transmission. (see Henry, 1993; Hoodfar, 1992; Ng, 2003) Rather, knowledge has been examined by critical scholars as the product of ideological assumptions shaped by relations such as gender, culture, sexuality, class, ethnicity, language, and religion. (Henry, 1993) Based on critical analyses, the differences between Western and Indigenous systems of knowledge have been explored extensively in recent literature. As noted above, in Indigenous cultures, knowledge is grounded in and cannot be separated from place, time, or experience, in contrast to Eurocentric theories that valorize abstract laws as the highest form of knowing. (Ignas, 2004) According to this mainstream Western worldview, theories are considered to be reliable if they can be shown to be universal, or generalizable beyond specific circumstances. Moreover, the Western tradition of education sees the classroom structured in a hierarchical fashion,

with the teacher cast as the expert and the transmitter of knowledge, and the students cast as the recipients. (Freire, 1970)

This model represents a sharp contrast with the way Indigenous cultures view knowledge. As stated earlier, a common element among many Indigenous cultures is the belief that valid knowledge can originate from sources such as the land, dreams, and intuition. (Steinhauer, 2002) Information is considered not apart from circumstances and contexts, but rather with respect to its impact on the multitude of relationships a person is involved in including those with friends, family, nature, and the spiritual world. (Wilson, 2008) Thus, when Indigenous students enter the university, the knowledge they value and the experiences they relate to may actually conflict directly with what is being taught and how it is being transmitted. (Harris, 2002)

2.2.3 Pedagogical Interventions

In response to this situation, Indigenous scholars have articulated a number of ways to counter the “strong assimilative forces” (Brant Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000, p. 171) of the academy, and create more culturally appropriate university experiences. There are many who have dedicated their efforts to writing about Indigenous approaches to higher education, as well as putting their writings into practice. One level of intervention has been through curriculum and pedagogical reform. While many pedagogies challenge the dominant Western one within institutions, these approaches were developed according to the values and needs of other groups, and thus do not directly address the experiences of Indigenous people within academia. (Harris, 2002)

Scholars have consequently engaged in the process of articulating an Indigenous paradigm which represents unique Indigenous sets of assumptions regarding knowledge.

At the level of the classroom, there seems to be a degree of agreement on several aspects of an Aboriginal-based pedagogy. (Cajete, 1994) This pedagogy is inherently more wholistic than the one currently employed in academic institutions in Canada. It also can use many traditional sharing and teaching practices of Aboriginal cultures, such as beginning each session with a smudge, using talking sticks, and arranging students and teacher in the circle. The medicine wheel is one long-standing teaching device, which originated with the Plains peoples of Saskatchewan. (Battiste, 2000a) The medicine wheel is used to demonstrate the interrelatedness of all aspects of life, which translates into an interdisciplinary approach to subject matter. (Battiste, 2000a) The use of the wheel also represents a departure from the singular focus on the intellectual development of students, towards a more balanced approach to learning which considers the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual dimensions of personal development. (Battiste, 2000a)

It is also widely agreed upon that a system of higher education which is better suited to Indigenous practices would incorporate an exchange with the outside community. (Erwin, 2009; Naokwegijig-Corbière, 2007) One of the common aspects of the different Indigenous worldviews within Canada is the concept of relationality -- that is, the belief that all things are related, and thus all have duties and responsibilities towards one another. (Wilson, 2008) Given this, a large emphasis is placed on the duties and responsibilities a person holds towards the community he or she is from. (Wilson,

2008) Thus, a higher education better suited to the needs of Indigenous students and communities recognizes this responsibility to the greater community, and actively facilitates an exchange between the two. (Monture-Angus, 1999) This most often includes the involvement of recognized Elders in the program, perhaps as advisors on curriculum and planning. (Ball, 2004; Naokwegijig-Corbière, 2007)

Indigenous approaches to higher education do not necessarily exclude mainstream perspectives. Given that one of the main expectations articulated in the RCAP report is that Indigenous students who graduate with a post-secondary degree will be able to function and thrive in the Canadian economy, it is recognized that students will need to incorporate knowledge from dominant worldviews to be “successful.” (Monture-Angus, 1999) This weaving of knowledge is referred to as walking in two worlds, and as will be shown below, has been a guiding principle in many programs created with Indigenous students in mind.

Scholarly writings such as published journal articles can be considered another level of intervention in addition to curricular and pedagogical reform. Currently, there exist many academic journals aimed specifically at publishing content related to Indigenous peoples, which accept work by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. Titles include the *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, the *Journal of Aboriginal Health*, *American Indian Quarterly*, and the *Journal of American Indian Education*.

2.2.4 Curricular Interventions

A significant amount of progress has been made within universities to create programs and services which address Indigenous communities in Canada. This vision was reflected by Kirkness and Barnhardt (whose important article published in 1991 was referenced earlier). A list of such programs found in Ontario can be found in Appendix A.

In Ontario, for instance, most universities have some academic programming specifically for Indigenous peoples. (Naokwegijig-Corbière, 2007) These may be housed at the university itself, or may take the form of partnerships with Aboriginal Postsecondary Institutes within the province. (Naokwegijig-Corbière, 2007) According to Naokwegijig-Corbière, programs regarding Native higher education in Ontario have arisen from two main sources, requests from Aboriginal communities, and the interpretation of these Aboriginal “needs” by postsecondary institutions.

Despite these efforts, the Auditor General’s report from 2004 argued that INAC must take further action to eliminate the wide education gap which was discussed earlier between First Nations and the rest of society. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 130)

2.2.5 Funding of Aboriginal People’s Postsecondary Education

As mentioned earlier, access to high quality education for Aboriginal peoples was negotiated into some of the treaties First Nations signed historically with the British Crown. The decades since these documents were signed have seen debate continue on the exact meaning of what was promised. Based on the stories from negotiations passed on

through Elders, Aboriginal people have largely maintained that they were promised access to the highest quality of education. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 102) The government of Canada, however, has maintained that access to *postsecondary* education is not a treaty right. As the discussion of residential schools indicates, the two groups have also held differing interpretations of what type of elementary and secondary education should be provided to Aboriginal children.

Paul Picard, one of the first Native persons to obtain a postsecondary degree (which he completed at Laval University in 1866) wrote in the late 1800s that it was “not lack of talent, but the means” to obtain a postsecondary education which resulted in low levels of Aboriginal people entering the professions. (Stonechild, 2006, p.25) Around this time there rose a concern amongst Indian Agents and other government workers overseeing Indian Affairs about the lack of Aboriginal people entering postsecondary education. Stonechild (2006) gives an exhaustive and engaging history of many aspects of Aboriginal peoples relationships with Canadian postsecondary education, which forms the basis of this discussion regarding the history of funding postsecondary education for Aboriginal peoples.

Up until World War II, a small number of Aboriginal people who appealed to Department of Indian and Northern Affairs were funded to pursue postsecondary education on a case by case basis. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 24) In an attempt to encourage and help Aboriginal peoples assimilate into the rest of Canadian society, the Diefenbaker government was the first to instate a program of scholarships for Aboriginal people to encourage them to pursue higher education. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 31) In the 1957-58

period, \$25 000 in scholarship monies were set aside for outstanding students of Aboriginal identity. These were to be distributed to those attending a variety of professional programs. The year 1958 saw enrollment numbers of Aboriginal people in professional programs reach at least 84 students. (Stonechild, 2006, p.41) Despite this number, by 1963, only 22 scholarships had been awarded, for a total of \$40 000. (Stonechild, 2006, p.41) Grants were thus difficult to obtain.

In 1976, the National Indian Brotherhood (the predecessor of the Assembly of First Nations) put forward their belief that government funding for all levels of education for Aboriginal students, including college and university was a treaty right. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 48)¹⁰ In 1977, the Department of Indian Affairs instated the Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program (PSEAP) in order to fund the “maximum number of students qualified for entrance.” (Stonechild, 2006, p. 63) By the 1978-1979 year, post-secondary training for Aboriginal students was funded to the tune of \$10.3 million. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 64) This occurred at the time of a rapid enrollment increase which saw the number of Aboriginal students enrolled in postsecondary education rise from 800 in 1972-1973 to 2606 in 1978-1979. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 64)

The momentum gained during the 1970s towards funding for Aboriginal students came to a sudden halt in 1987, when as part of a larger initiative to cut government spending, the federal government attempted to put a cap on funding for Aboriginal

¹⁰ That postsecondary education is a treaty right was reinforced by the RCAP Report (1996) which stated in recommendation 3.5.20 that “[t]he government of Canada recognize and fulfill its obligation to treaty nations by supporting a full range of education services, including post-secondary education, for members of treaty nations where a promise of education appears in treaty texts, related documents or oral histories of the parties involved.” (Stonechild, 2006, p. 144)

peoples postsecondary education, while simultaneously claiming that access to postsecondary education was indeed not a treaty right. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 71) Despite organized protests on behalf of Aboriginal students, funding was capped at \$93.7 million dollars. (Stonechild, 2006, p.75) Because of this cap, limitations were then put into place regarding who was eligible for funding. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 77) This occurred around the same time that Bill C-31 was passed, which reinstated status for many Aboriginal people who had lost it under the old rules enforced by the federal government. The enfranchisement of many people who had lost status because of the old laws meant that more Aboriginal people were now eligible for postsecondary funding. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 81)

From 1984 to 1988, consultations were conducted across Canada for the “Tradition and Education: towards a Vision of Our Future” report released by the Assembly of First Nations in 1988. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 5) One of the major recommendations of this report was that control over the funding of all levels of education be passed along to the First Nations themselves. (Stonechild, 2006, p.111) This report was notable because of its assertion of the jurisdiction and sovereignty of First Nations regarding the postsecondary education of their people, and signaled a turning point for discourse used in policy. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 116)

Between 1975-1976 and 1988-1989, the numbers of Aboriginal students enrolled in postsecondary education programs grew from 2 500 to 15 000 and INAC concluded PSEAP to be a success. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 87) In 1989, the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) replaced PSEAP which at that point funded Aboriginal

students seeking postsecondary education to the tune of \$130 million (which exceeded the intended cap of \$93.7 million dollars. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 83) At this time, the government asserted that the cap would remain with an additional \$320 million added over the next five years. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 85) All the while, then Minister of INAC Cadieux continued to reiterate the government argument that postsecondary education was not a treaty right, and that, as such, the government had no obligation to ensure that all Aboriginal people had access to the funding. (Stonechild, 2006, p.32) It was also during the late 1980s that improvements to the funding program were made, such as flexibility for adding emergency travel, and support for graduate programs. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 86)

There has been very little funding increases given to the PSSSP program since 1995-1996, including no adjustment for the increase in the cost of living. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 129) The AFN has called for the amount of funding to be tripled to \$1 billion annually so that the amount can adequately address demand and properly serve Aboriginal students. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 129) The Liberal party's "Red Book" which was published in time for the 1993 election did promise to eliminate the cap on funding; however the Party did not follow through after it was successful in that election. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 129) Funds to First Nations post-secondary institutions were also promised in the Kelowna Accord which was signed in November 2005, but when the Conservative party gained power, the Accord was dropped and the promise of funding along with it. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 130) In 2004, the Auditor General's report called upon INAC to bring parity to postsecondary attendance rates, and further revealed

weaknesses in the PSSSP program with respect to management and accountability. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 130)

Beginning in 2006, and continuing on into 2010, rumours regarding postsecondary education funding for Aboriginal students spread in the media. This occurred around the time that a “think-tank” based in Ottawa, named the MacDonald-Laurier Institute, revealed that the PSSSP program was failing, in part because of the failure of some bands to properly transfer funds to students. (CBC News, 2010) It confirmed that approximately \$300 million dollars continues to be the amount given to the PSSSP program by the government on an annual basis. This used to serve approximately 30,000 but now is only able to send 22,000 Aboriginal students to postsecondary education per year, and is increasingly unable to meet growing demands and a population expanding at a rate far exceeding the rest of Canada. (Scofield, 2010) In the early months of 2010, the chiefs of the AFN came together to state that all other priorities were second to education of their people, in order to stress its importance to the federal government. (Scofield, 2010) Despite this, in 2010, no further money was pledged towards the PSSSP and members of band councils, including the one interviewed for this study, expressed their great concern that the program might be at risk in the future. (Scofield, 2010)

2.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter was divided into two parts. The first explored the history and current conditions of the Community, with a look to circumstances in First Nation communities

in general. The harsh program of isolation and assimilation which the government of Canada forced onto Aboriginal people, and in the case of the Community in question, large scale tragedies at the hands of both the government and private corporations have created poor health, housing, environmental, and educational conditions on reserves today. These conditions set the backdrop for the participant comments included in the following three chapters.

In the second part of the chapter, Indigenous Knowledge was discussed because of its relevance to the formation of the research methodology. It was also revealed that while, on a national level, a disparity exists between the proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people attending university, the rates of postsecondary attainment for the Community in particular are half that of the national Aboriginal population, in all three categories (trade school, college, and university.) A brief and selective history of programs for Aboriginal students is also provided, along with short descriptions of pedagogical and curricular interventions which have been implemented at the postsecondary level in Canada. Finally, I explored the tumultuous history of postsecondary funding for Aboriginal people. Despite a growing population and increased interest in postsecondary education, funding from the government has not increased since the mid-1990s. Today, the very future of the program is uncertain, as media reports speculate on the use of the funds, and the amount of money dedicated to the program remains unchanged. The topics in this part of the chapter were included because they are discussed in the next chapter, or because they were deemed as priorities by the research participants and will be discussed in chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Because this project was born out of a pre-existing relationship with Community members, I was determined that the relationships I held going into the project be honored as the research and writing process unfolded. As indicated above, this desire necessarily affected how the methodology of the project was developed. In this chapter I outline the research paradigm used to craft the methodology, the methodology eventually used to conduct the research, and the nature of the Community involvement in the study. Finally, I include a more detailed account of the actual events which led up to the study being accepted by the Community.

3.1 The Indigenous Research Paradigm

In 2009, just months after I returned to the Community to begin to gauge interest in this project, I came across Shawn Wilson's *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (2008). In it, Wilson articulates an Indigenous Research Paradigm after discussions and research with Indigenous scholars from Canada, and Australia. After reading the work, I realized that the Indigenous Research Paradigm fit my own values and approach to research, and was the most appropriate choice for this project.

The fundamental principle which grounds the Indigenous Research Paradigm is acceptance of the existence of relationality, or the belief that reality is built on relationships. (Wilson, 2008, p.7) From this, it follows that the accountability to

relationships is what defines an Indigenous axiology and methodology -- that is, informs how the research topic is chosen, how the data is collected and analyzed, and finally presented. (Wilson, 2008, p.7) As documented in Chapter 1, it was my relationships to youth in the community, specifically conversations that I was a part of regarding postsecondary education, that led me to pursue this project, and it is these relationships that I sought to honour by conducting the research and analysis within the project in a respectful manner. The Indigenous Research Paradigm acknowledges and makes room for these pre-existing relationships, as well as for the perceptions and biases that I had already formed of the community, which is articulated by Wilson (2008) as the belief that “we can not remove ourselves from our world in order to examine it.” (p. 14) As the methodology section continues, I will describe the actions taken as the research unfolded in order to reflect on my observations, opinions, and the decisions made to better understand my relationship to the research, and represent the information gathered in a way so as to resonate with the people of the Community.

After I had the idea for the project, but prior to returning to the Community to pitch the idea, I began to think through the way in which I would theoretically approach it. Despite my recognition that Wilson’s Indigenous Research Paradigm fit well with my goals and values as well as those of the project, I was initially unsure if I, a non-Aboriginal woman, had the authority according to Wilson, to take it up in my research (though Max, cited in Chapter 1, has made this argument). Wilson (2008) never specifies in his book whether non-Aboriginal people can or cannot adopt the Indigenous Research paradigm being proposed. He does, however, state that “research by and for Indigenous

peoples is a ceremony that brings relationships together.” (referring to the Indigenous Research Paradigm, 2008, p. 8) Part of my learning involved reading about Native perspectives on ceremony and coming to understand how this fits into practices of gaining knowledge. Reading Cajete’s *Native Science* (2000) was crucial in this endeavor. Cajete explains that ceremony “evolved [in Native culture] as techniques for accessing knowledge.” (2000, p. 45) To illustrate this point, he describes the example of the pipe ceremony, “wherein a person takes in breath, thinks, and reflects.” (p. 45) He fully defines ceremony as “both a context for transferring knowledge and a way to remember the responsibility we have to our relationships with life.” (Cajete, 2000, p. 70) Thus I came to understand that, from a Native perspective, research is not an act of creating knowledge, but rather, one of uncovering and coming to understand knowledge while considering the various relationships between all parties involved, including the knowledge itself. What follows is a careful consideration of the paradigm and its corresponding beliefs, and their alignment with the project, the community, and who I am as a researcher.

By ascribing to Wilson’s research paradigm, I was able to make room to respect the wishes and circumstances of the Community. For instance, I was able to address one of the main concerns of the Band Council, namely, the extent to which the project would benefit the Community. One of the actions I took to fulfill this goal was to represent the stories and knowledge of Community members in a way which honored their own beliefs and worldviews. In the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Research Involving Humans, it is recognized that “Aboriginal peoples have distinct perspectives and

understandings embodied in their cultures and histories.” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 1998, sec. 6.2)¹¹ Because of this, Wilson (2008) argues, many of the assumptions of dominant research paradigms are incongruent with the beliefs of many Indigenous cultures, and thus provide tools which may not be fully compatible with Indigenous worldviews. (p.13) Using this Indigenous Research Paradigm, I believe, allowed me to honour the culture of the Community, especially its emphasis on the importance of relationship and helped me analyze the results of the interviews in a way authentic to preserving the voice of the participants.

3.2 Molding Methodology to the Community

Scholars writing on Indigenous Research Methodologies are reluctant to define a methodological research and analysis formula which should be applied in all cases. (see Steinhauer 2002; Wilson, 2003) Instead, the historical and cultural differences both between and within various First Nations requires that a methodology be developed specific to the spatial and temporal location of the Community, as well as the position of the researcher. (Menzies, 2001; Stewart, 2008) Wilson’s Indigenous Research Paradigm provided for me a set of guidelines which I then adapted to the situation. Given this, in undertaking a research project which engages a specific Community, I first and foremost considered the particulars of that Community when developing the research methodology.

¹¹ Here I cite the 1998 Policy Statement which was in usage while I conducted my research. A new Policy Statement was released in 2010.

Steinhauer (2002) argues that to begin, a researcher must come to know the cultural protocols, values, and beliefs of the Community within which he or she is working. One important action which I took consistently was to clearly state my name, where I was from, and my purpose in the Community to everyone I met, so as to make myself and the project transparent, and so that Community members could take caution in what they said to me if they wished. I was also careful to offer tobacco to the Band Council upon my initial meeting with them, to assure them that I approached the project with respect and good intentions. I also frequently consulted with trusted allies within the community, such as the vice-principal and the Postsecondary Councilor to ensure that proper protocols were respected at all times. Once people around the Community, especially at the school, became aware of the purpose for my visits, they began to offer me their assistance, whether it was the use of a room or a printer, or offering to connect me with family members as potential participants.

3.3 The Role of the Community Liaison

Creating meaningful partnerships with members of the Community is an essential component of adhering to both the Ownership Control Access Possession (OCAP)¹² principles (Schnarch, 2004) and Wilson's Indigenous Research Paradigm. While many in the Community assisted in the research, my main partner was the Postsecondary Councilor, who works in the high school. I met with him/her in October 2008 and again in April of 2009; s/he was supportive of the project, and arranged for me to meet the

¹² The OCAP principles will be described more in detail later in this chapter.

Band Council to introduce myself and the proposal. Because of his/her role in the Community, and my hope that the results of this study will ultimately be of use in his/her work (as well as perhaps to the Education Director and the Band Council) it was important for me that decisions such as who to interview and how to best make the results known to the community be made in conjunction with him/her. This aligns with the OCAP principle of control which asserts the rights of First Nations “to control all aspects of research and information management processes which impact them.” (First Nations Centre, 2007, p.5) After discussing the confidentiality of the participants, the Postsecondary Councilor and I agreed to not reveal to others who was approached with regards to the project. After I met with potential participants and they indicated to me whether or not they wanted to be interviewed, the Councilor and I also never discussed who had agreed to participate and who had refused

When embarking on the main period of research for the project in April of 2010, I was aware that the actual amount of “Control” or active participation members of the Community would want in the project would be severely limited because of other commitments. The Band Council and the Postsecondary Councilor already have significant responsibilities. In a meeting with the Band Council (which will be discussed in the section outlining the Preliminary Phase of the project below,) I offered to include the Chief and councilors in the formulation of the interview guides and research methodology. They, however, responded that they trusted my intentions and the guidance of the Councilor to produce a respectful process. As the project proceeded, I constantly monitored the state of the Community and the commitments of the Councilor, and

adjusted my own actions accordingly. I believe my approach was based on a realistic assessment of the time Community members were able to dedicate to this project. In her writings on research design, Smith (1999) comments that

idealistic ideas about community collaboration and active participation need to be tempered with realistic assessments of a community's resources and capabilities, even if there is enthusiasm and goodwill. Similarly, the involvement of community resource people also needs to be considered before putting an additional responsibility on individuals already carrying heavy burdens of duty. (p.140)

In summary, I have observed that the Postsecondary Councilor is one of the most dedicated and hardworking people I know, holding numerous roles both within and outside of the community and that while s/he was an integral part of my project, I was sensitive his/her to responsibilities. While we did have formal meetings, some of our conversations took place informally around the Community, including at his/her house after school, when I would visit with one of his/her children who is a good friend of mine.

3.4 Decolonization of the Research

An important consideration when developing my methodology was how to build in decolonization of both myself and the research. Because of the historical roots of research on Indigenous communities, research must be committed to the process of decolonization. (see Menzies, 2001; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2003) This means that as a result of a research project, more knowledge and power should accrue to the Community, rather than the research methodology expanding the knowledge of the dominant Western academic institution at the community's expense. (Menzies, 2001) This point was

considered in the drafting of the goals and purpose of the project, which are open to benefiting the Community. Wilson (2003) further believes that the decolonization of a project requires the researcher to develop a thorough awareness of the history of colonization of the community, and the sincere belief of the researcher that Indigenous peoples have their own worldviews and perspectives. As I have explained, my own decolonization with regards to the Community began the first summer that I spent living and working in the community. In getting to know my friends there, many shared stories emerged about the history of the Community, such as the pollution and flooding of waterways on the reserve which occurred because of White businesses and government. These stories inspired me to do my own research, and I have spent time reading about the history of the community, as well as keeping up to date with friends and news stories when I am away. The process continued throughout the research and writing phase as I identified indications of colonization within the interviews, such as mention of Community members who wish to disallow the discussion of traditional values in school, comments regarding the work ethic of community members, the lack of recognition of the impact of residential schools on Community members, constant comparisons to the education system in town, and frustration at the negotiation between white and traditional values in the fabric of the Community. I was able to gain a better understanding of these comments by reading the theories Aboriginal authors have put forth regarding colonization and decolonization. (e.g. Yazzie, 2000; Henderson, 2000; Battiste, 2000b)

3.5 Developing a Method

Stewart (2008) points out that articulating a methodology is an evolving process, which develops not only theoretically through scholarly research and writing within the institution, but necessarily through community-based praxis. This reflects the reality of my field work. Below, I will give an account of the numerous events in the Community which had an impact on the research, and also of how I remained engaged with the Community, even when events necessitated that I pause the recruitment and interview process. It is also worth noting here that the individuals who participated had control of the decision over engaging in the research. For instance, one participant insisted on being interviewed while driving her car because she felt the most comfortable and the least distracted when doing so. Another made a plan to meet with me at a certain time, but delayed again and again throughout the day until he felt the time was right for him. One participant played his guitar throughout the whole interview. It was very easy to accommodate these unforeseen requests that contributed to the comfort of the participants.

3.6 Methodology

Similar to Stewart's point, rather than having a predetermined methodology, Wilson (2008) also suggests that a researcher have a strategy of inquiry that outlines what the project is intended to address, and which allows for change as the process unfolds. For this project, I knew that the end goal as agreed upon by myself, the Postsecondary Councilor and the Band Council was to get a better sense of attitudes towards

postsecondary education in the Community, as well as to identify any challenges faced by those who wished to pursue it. As noted above, whatever shape the methodology takes, in an Indigenous Research Paradigm, it must “adhere to relational accountability.” (Wilson, 2008, p. 77) That is, the methodology developed for the process had to recognize my roles and responsibilities as a researcher, and ensure that both myself and the participants benefited from the “sharing, growth, and learning” of the research process. (p. 77)

Steinhauer (2002) and Wilson (2008) argue that most Western research methods can be used in research projects involving Indigenous communities, as long as the research keeps central this Indigenous worldview in his or her implementation, and respects its place in the lives of his or her participants.

My general methodology could be characterized as qualitative research, defined as “a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” and which “transform the world.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.3) The main qualitative method which the Postsecondary Councilor, the Band Council and I agreed upon to gather this knowledge was one-on-one interviews. According to Wilson (2008) who uses them in his own study, interviews are “focused discussions that allow the researcher to gather information directly from the point of view expressed by the research subject.” (p. 41)

Fontana and Frey (2000) observe that interview contexts consist of interaction and relation, and that the knowledge which results can be considered “as much a product of this social dynamic as it is a product of accurate accounts and replies.” (p. 647)

Interviewing thus fit in with the axiology and ontology of an Indigenous Research Paradigm, because it called for the building of relationships between researcher and

participant. I took steps to build a relationship based on respect and reciprocity with each participant (Steps in the analysis process which will be discussed later, further helped to strengthen relationships between participants and their ideas). Some measures which I took to build these relationships were to offer tobacco when I was assured it was appropriate, to respect the wishes, privacy and overall demeanor of the participants before, during and after the interview, and to offer a \$20 gift certificate for their time.

My interviews were based on structured interview guides which were approved by my committee at the University and the Postsecondary Councilor I was working with. They were also given to the Band Council prior to the interviews beginning. A few participants requested to read over the interview guides before beginning the interview. My previous experiences conducting interviews, as well as my previous relationship with some of the participants, assisted me in engaging the participants beyond the guide, and in most cases allowed an open and easy exchange of ideas.

One strategy which I hoped to employ before beginning the research was the examination of quantitative statistical data based on records kept by the school, (for instance, the number of graduates each year, the proportion of students finishing secondary school, and other related figures of interest). I also hoped to access the postsecondary policy which, at the time of research, was being developed by the Community. While both of these would have helped create a fuller picture of the situation of the community, they were not available to me.

3.6.1 Research Participants

When the project began, I had settled on three criteria for possible participants – each must be Aboriginal, over the age of 18, and raised in and currently living in the Community. As the process unfolded, I found it quite difficult to abide strictly by the guidelines of “living in the Community”. Many people who were approached had moved between the Community and nearby towns and cities throughout their lives. Others considered the Community home, but currently lived outside of it to attend either secondary or postsecondary education. Some were born elsewhere, but had family connections to the Community, and had moved there later in life. In the end, participants were largely determined by who had the time, felt the project had relevance and was willing and able to speak to me. All were Aboriginal and had family originating in the Community, and all had lived at least a part of their lives there. In total I conducted eight interviews with school-aged individuals, all of whom were between the ages of 18-23, except one in their late 30s. In order to protect the anonymity of participants, I will not provide a personal history of each. Rather, details regarding specific individuals will be revealed as part of observations to which they are pertinent.

Out of the eight participants interviewed with regards to their experience in school, all but one had strongly considered postsecondary education. One had spent years attending various postsecondary programs in college and university, two had already spent some time enrolled in college, and three were in their last years of high school and planning on advancing to college. The remaining two had both not attended college up until that point but were currently employed full-time in the Community. At the time of

writing, one had graduated from high school, and one had not (but was planning on taking the General Equivalency Degree exam at some point in the next five years). While the experiences and opinions of the participants, then, were quite varied, there were no participants who had not graduated from high school and not gotten a job; or who had begun but dropped a postsecondary program. However, one participant did have children and spoke about balancing responsibilities throughout her educational journey.

Formal interviews were also conducted with one band counselor, and one high school teacher. Also, many conversations, both formal and informal, were held with the Postsecondary Councilor, one of the vice principals, the education director and other members of the community. Those conversations were not recorded on tape, though field notes were taken. Regarding general community members, it was often the case that after meeting informally with people I was unfamiliar with in the Community, I was asked who I was, and what I was doing there. After I introduced myself and the project, many proceeded to give me their opinions about postsecondary education. I recorded these encounters in my thesis diary, and considered the information anonymous data.

3.6.2 Ethical Considerations

One of the most important tools available to Indigenous researchers, non-Indigenous researchers, and the First Nations communities that they are working with are the principles of Ownership Control Access and Possession (First Nations Centre, 2007) with respect to research and data, as defined by the National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO). As a researcher and one who cares about the community, I sought

to ensure throughout the research process to use the OCAP principles as the foundations of my project. For example, I included Community members in the process of developing the project, and now that the writing process is complete, I will make the thesis summary accessible to community members who would like to read it, and I will consult with the Postsecondary Councilor and the Band Council should I use the information in any scholarly publications or presentations. In presentations to the Community regarding the project, I will mention OCAP principles and Aboriginal rights under them, so that there is an awareness about what standards can be expected from future researchers. These rights and standards include that researchers entering the community “take a more holistic approach to research; improve data quality, relevance and value to the community; [and] support meaningful capacity development and empowerment among First Nations” among other things. (First Nations Centre, 2007, p. 5)

It must be noted that while my intention was to fully follow the OCAP principles, I realized as the research progressed that it was impossible for me to do so in practice. As recounted earlier, I was able through the research design to grant a degree of control over the project to the Community, mainly through the role of the Postsecondary Councilor. I also made it clear to the band council that interview guides and participant letters were subject to their review. I did not receive any feedback on those documents in particular, nor did I receive any requests for progress reports on the project at any time. I did receive encouragement and cooperation from the band council, however, which led me to feel

that the project was accepted and that I was trusted to respectfully carry out the work I was conducting, with minimal supervision or intervention.

While initially crafting my research methodology and as the data was being collected, I realized that strictly adhering to the principles of Ownership and Possession was impossible. In their report on the Principles, the National Aboriginal Health Organization [NAHO] states that Ownership as applied to research means that “a community or group owns information collectively, in the same way that an individual owns their personal information.” (First Nations Centre, 2007, p.4) To follow this statement, I would have had to turn over the tapes and transcripts of the interviews given by each of the participants. However, each participant had signed a form before being interviewed indicating their desire to remain anonymous, and for their testimony to be confidential. Being that the size of the Community is relatively small, individuals would no doubt be able to be identified by their voices if the tapes were reviewed and/or by the details of their personal histories documented in the transcripts. Moreover, many interview participants had included tangential stories during our taped conversations, which they clearly indicated should not be included in the final writing, even if their name was not attached to the statements. I concluded that there was no way for me to ethically turn over the information I gathered to the Community, and instead decided that transcripts and audio files would be given to each individual after the five year period (after follow-up publications had been written,) for the individuals to dispose of themselves.

In keeping with the Access principle, I will gladly grant individuals access to their personal data if they desire it. (First Nations Centre, 2007, p. 5) Adhering to the Possession principle, however, is much more problematic. The NAHO document states that Possession is the more literal counterpart of Ownership, and dictates that the First Nation itself must be in physical possession of the data. The confidentiality issues discussed with respect to the Ownership principle apply to this principle as well. Also, as I was the primary researcher named on the ethics application given to the university, according to that institution, I was responsible for maintaining all ethical protocols. Other questions also arose, such as who in the Community would be responsible for keeping this data, where would it be stored, how would it be ensured that it would be kept private, how would I, as researcher, have access to it while writing the thesis, since I live far from the Community. In summary, I found that not being physically present in the Community as well as being unaware of any formal Community protocol to keep research data confidential, applying the OCAP principles to the actual research was a highly imperfect process.

Given the small population of the community, it is also important to ensure that, within the thesis itself, the identity of the participants in this project have been protected. Thus all have been assigned pseudonyms, and the genders of some have been switched or made ambiguous (as is the case of the counselor and the teacher). Given the small amount of people who hold these positions in the community, they could otherwise be easily identified. I have also left out biographical information which may easily identify participants to readers and other Community members. To protect the participants,

comments are woven together under themes, and individuals are not always identified when discussing personal experience.

3.7 Procedure

3.7.1 Preliminary Phase

As summarized in Table 1 (please see Appendix B), the preliminary phase of this project began in October 2008 when I returned to the Community to speak to the longstanding elementary school vice-principal and the Postsecondary Councilor to propose the project. Because of my close relationship with the vice-principal which developed over the summer of 2008 when I first lived and worked in the Community, the discussion I had with her was informal, and was preceded by phone conversations prior to my visit. I spent the majority of my week-long visit reconnecting with friends and telling them about the project, in an effort to gauge their reactions. Their responses were all positive and supportive, which further encouraged me to approach the Postsecondary Councilor. Having never met her, this would be a more formal conversation than the ones I had had with the vice principal, and I knew that according to Anishnawbe protocol (and other Aboriginal peoples), I should offer tobacco to her at the very beginning of our meeting. Because of the presence of both traditional Aboriginal beliefs and Christian beliefs among the people of the community, I consulted the vice-principal prior to my meeting, to ensure that she would appreciate the tobacco, and I was told she would. I had developed a strong friendship with her son during the summer previous to our meeting,

so I also brought her pictures of us on some of the outings on which he took me and my coworkers.

I began by explaining to the Postsecondary Councilor my experience in the community and told him/her about the inspiration for the project. I proposed the research question, but insisted that if s/he felt that another question would better serve the school I would pursue that instead. The Postsecondary Councilor, however, agreed that the topic was worth pursuing, and we discussed our impressions of the youths we knew in the community, and their educational trajectories, as well as their attitudes and opinions towards postsecondary education.

After spending the winter back in Toronto and further developing the ideas for the project, I returned to the Community in April of 2009, this time to seek the permission of the Chief and Council to begin the project. I returned to see the Postsecondary Councilor, and handed her a draft outline of the research topic, the purpose of the project, the proposed methods of gathering data, and ethical considerations. The Postsecondary Councilor approved the project, and immediately phoned the Band office to inquire if they would see me. It turned out that they were in caucus at that moment, and the Postsecondary Councilor walked me to the Band office right away to introduce me to them.

I will never forget that morning. Despite the grey weather which had clouded the trip up until that point, the sun was out overhead, and as we walked by her house, the Postsecondary Councilor pointed out an eagle circling overhead. My friends in the Community had previously mentioned that an eagle is a good sign, and the Postsecondary

Councilor's excitement, along with the beautiful creature circling above gave me a wonderful feeling that everything was falling into place, and that I was meant to be exactly where I was.

At my meeting with the Band Council, I was accompanied by the Postsecondary Councilor into the room, and she was able to stay for the first 15 minutes of my half-hour meeting. Before I was seated, I handed the Chief a pouch of tobacco and a gift bag which contained coffee and tea for the band office. He noted the tobacco to the other councilors, and then I introduced myself, beginning with my name and where I am from, a protocol which has been taught to me by many of my Aboriginal professors and friends as a good way to begin a new relationship. I then went on to tell them about my employment with the literacy camp during the previous summer, my impressions and relationships that were forged in the community, my current educational experience and finally the idea for the project. At the end of my talking, the Chief asked if anyone had questions, and I was asked what ethical protocols would be followed in the research, as well as how the Community would benefit from the research. I discussed the reading I had done on the past history of unethical research in Aboriginal communities, and told them that I would not only have to apply to the University of Toronto ethics board, but that I would also follow the OCAP principles to ensure that the research did not negatively represent the community in any way with which they did not agree. I also discussed my intentions of not just leaving with the research to receive my MA, but to return to the community on more than one occasion to discuss the results, and to help think of ways to implement changes if they wished for my input. I then handed the council drafts of the project

information for them to review (See Appendix C). The Council judged that they were satisfied with my presentation and the draft letter. At the conclusion of the meeting the chief commented on the benefit of programs such as the one I had worked for in the previous summer in introducing new people to the Community, who could then act as resources to the Community. He also welcomed me to visit and stay in the Community at any time I wished.

This preliminary phase consisted of communicating with community officials, and research, as well as writing in a field journal and a personal journal to keep a record of dates, events, and my impressions. This was in accordance with Wilson (2008) who points out that learning comes from “watching and doing” at all times (p. 40). The field notes specifically focused on interactions during meetings related to the project, and later of participants during the interviews. The personal journal was used to record events, my feelings and emerging ideas. After this phase I formed an M.A. committee with Dr. Linda Muzzin who is affiliated with the Higher Education Program in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies as my primary supervisor and Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule, who is in the Department of Adult Education and Counselling Psychology, as a committee member. My ethics application was submitted to the University of Toronto in March 2010 and approved in April of 2010 (see Appendix D for Ethics Certificate).

3.7.2 Phase One

In April of 2010 I returned to the Community for six weeks to recruit and interview participants. At this time the letter of consent, which had since been approved

by the University ethics board, was presented to the Band Council and signed.

Participants were approached by both myself and the Postsecondary Councilor, depending on the availability of the Councilor, and my familiarity with participants. In some cases, participants approached me after hearing about the study. In all cases, a preliminary letter was given to possible participants, introducing the project. If he or she indicated interest to the Postsecondary Councilor, the Postsecondary Councilor asked permission for me to contact them, and the message was relayed to me. I then approached possible participants, usually in the school during school hours, and spoke to them about the project. If participants were interested, we then set up meeting times and places which were convenient for the participants. In a few instances, I had to travel to the nearby town to interview people who were living there to attend school. It was made clear to all who agreed to meet with me that they would suffer no negative consequences if they did not want to participate, or if they chose to withdraw from the study at any time.

Interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes in length. Written consent was secured from each participant before interviews started. All participants agreed to be audiotaped, and were made aware at the start that I would be transcribing the interviews. I also took field notes after each interview, and wrote in a diary during my research trip, to remember my impressions and experiences to use in analysis. While I had planned to record field notes during interviews, I noticed that many interviewees eyed my pen and paper suspiciously when I began writing, and so to maintain their comfort, I thought it wise to cease this practice. As the research unfolded, I used my time between interviews to begin transcribing the audiotapes. At this point, I also began construction of flow

charts and mind-maps (described in greater detail in the Methods of Analysis section later in this chapter).

At the outset of the research, I had planned to interview between 10 to 12 students. When I decided it was time for me to return home, my final number fell two short of the minimum, despite having been in the community for six weeks. I decided to leave at that time and explain here why I made the decision to leave when I did. As I outlined in earlier chapters, previous to this project, I had spent two full summers in the Community, working as a camp counselor. On both of these occasions I lived and worked with two or three co-counselors who eventually also became very close friends. All of us not being from the Community, we spent many hours together, especially in the first summer, discussing and dealing with the various experiences we encountered on a day to day basis. On my research trips, I was again confronted with experiences not common to where I grew up (a large metropolitan city in Southern Ontario), some of which were completely new to me. Aware of my position as outsider and researcher, but also cognizant of the high degree of familiarity I have with many of the residents, and the overall understanding I have of the pace and pattern of daily life within the Community, I found myself always attentive to my behaviour. With no one in a similar position as I was to discuss the appropriateness of my actions as I had in previous visits, I began to question myself at a greater frequency as the visit progressed. Circumstances within the community itself contributed to the number of interviews I was able to conduct during my time there. Towards the beginning of my stay, two people passed away, one from the Community, and one related to Band members. It is the custom of the Community that

some activities such as fishing derbies and radio bingo be suspended until an appropriate amount of time has passed. The school is also closed on the day of a funeral within the Community, and sometimes one is held away from the Community where it is expected many will travel to attend. In this instance, one of the two funerals took place in the Community hall attached to the Band office, and as I was instructed by my community advisor (the Postsecondary Councilor) that any recruitment of participants should pause at that time, I decided to direct my efforts to helping the ladies in the kitchen prepare some of the numerous meals which were served around the clock at the wake, also held in the Community hall. Around the time of the second death, a homicide took place in the Community, following which a contingent of OPP officers came for a week to conduct investigations. It was also around this time that a portion of the road to town washed out, and all were forced to take a much less traveled (and much less developed) road for such necessary errands as getting groceries. The particular weekend the road was unusable was cold and rainy, making the drive treacherous, and putting strain on all who took the three and a half hour trip (one way) to town.

The amount of stress on the Community as a result of these events was palpable. Both my community advisor and a community nurse whom I visited commented on the negative energy pervading the Community as a result, and the nurse especially validated that it was having noticeable effects on the residents and on myself. It was after this conversation that I realized that asking for more interviews would be disrespectful to both members of the Community and to myself. Feeling that we had all done the best we could under the circumstances, I booked a flight back to Toronto.

3.7.3 Constructing Mind-Maps and Analyzing the Data

Analysis began after departing from the community in May of 2010. After interview transcriptions were complete, I re-read each interview and created flow-charts by arranging every piece of information (statement, idea or detail) from the interview on a piece of paper, and connecting them by lines with arrows based on how they were related according to both the participant's interview and my own thoughts about how ideas and statements connected. After I completed all of these, I then created a second flow-chart for each interview, to be used as the mind-map which was shared in the second set of interviews. To do this, I re-read the first flow-chart I made, and combined pieces of related information to create a series of statements which I felt represented what the participants said. These statements were written in the first person. They were arranged on the page in a fashion similar to the first flow chart. I decided on this final version of the mind map because I felt the format was accessible to participants – they would be able to read the first person statements and easily identify whether the statements represented their own experiences and beliefs or not. In keeping with ethical considerations, these flowcharts did not include any names or biographical information which would identify participants to my supervisors or to fellow community members. This aided in both my construction of themes as well as in creating questions for the second set of interviews. An example is included along with the interview guide (Appendix E).

I adapted the idea of a mind map from two different sources to fit this study. The first is the work of OISE/UT professor Dr. Suzanne Stewart, with whom I worked during

the 2008-2009 school year. Story maps were used in her Ph.D. thesis, as well as in a study on which I worked with her last year, entitled “Indigenous Postsecondary Education: Exploring Indigenous Pedagogy Through Students’ Narratives.” This method utilizes a chart which organizes participant statements under themes and separates them into past, present and future. In the follow-up interview, participants are then asked to add, delete, or comment on the story map as presented to them. The “mind map” analysis method I used does record themes and does include a follow-up interview for participants to verify and comment on statements from their map. However, the map is less structured, with interviews being organized into a network of interconnected themes, ideas and statements. This less structured approach is adapted from Wilson (2008). He asserts that authenticity and credibility in a research study can be ensured through “continuous feedback with all the research participants” (p. 121). In a circle discussion with the co-researchers on the Indigenous Research Paradigm, Wilson puts forward his belief that this process should be extended to other research participants. This allows them to elaborate and learn from the ideas of other participants as well, “so they are not only given back the ideas they presented to review, they also get the opportunity to listen and interpret concepts presented by others” which in turn builds relationships between participants (p. 121). The purpose of this exercise is to build relationships between the ideas and to build upon and strengthen themes. Wilson’s comments on analyzing results influenced me to seek a more personalized way to organize data than in themes which would honour the overall message of the interviews, and would emphasize the

connections between ideas. Instead of sharing the mind maps during the second interview, I revealed emerging themes to participants and asked for their comments.

3.7.4 Phase Two

In the second phase of the project, a follow-up interview was conducted with each participant (see Appendix F). These interviews occurred during a three week visit to the community in July of 2010. Participants were asked to verify the statements on their mind map (see analysis section), to ensure that I had properly represented them within the themes I was synthesizing. To do this, I read them statements from their map and asked them to verify, change, or delete as they saw fit. They were also invited to expand on any statement as they wished. Finally, a few questions of clarification were asked of each participant. Field notes and personal journal notes were again recorded. Initial themes were altered, depending on the feedback from the participants. I had initially intended to share the anonymous mind maps of each participant with one another, so that each may make comments. Because of the vast amount of information gathered, and the sensitive nature of much of that information, I decided that it was best to omit this step. During the follow-up interviews, however, I did reveal some of the common themes that were emerging with participants and asked them to share their opinions.

All but three participants were available for follow-up interviews when I returned to the community in July. Two of the three unavailable offered to answer any additional questions by email.

3.7.5 Phase Three

After returning home from the Community, the final analysis and writing of the project began. In this phase individual themes were refined and emerging themes were mapped.

3.7.6 Phase Four

Ultimately participants will be given an accessible summary of the results of the study. Also, a report of the study will be published in a community newsletter and distributed within the Band Office as well as the high school. The Band Office as well as the Postsecondary Councilor will be presented with a full copy of the thesis.

3.8 Compiling, Interpreting and Writing the Results

After this process was completed, the writing up of the project began. Both Brant Castellano (2000) and Wilson (2008) agree that to interpret research using an Indigenous paradigm is to look at the results as a whole, rather than breaking themes apart from each other. According to Wilson (2008), “logic needs to become more intuitive as the researcher must look at an entire system of relationships as a whole.” (p. 120) To accomplish this, I read and re-read all of the information, and only then began to pull out themes suggested by my holistic reading, connecting them to each other in a mind map format.

Finally, I intended the analysis I did to be subject to the scrutiny of others related to the project. I envisioned that at various points during my analysis, I would check in

with others, to ask, as Wilson (2008) recommends, “am I on the right track?” (p. 122) My analysis was presented to and commented on by my committee, however because of distance and lack of time, I was not able to make it available to the Community during the writing of the thesis. Brant Castellano (2000) argues that one of the legacies of oral culture is a strong belief in knowledge which has been subject to the analysis and judgment of a community, since “immunity from collective influence renders suspect any outsider interpreting insider knowledge and, indeed, any writer whether a member of the community or not.” (p. 31) My goal for this project was to create a document useful to the Community. If in the end the Community does not find it useful, for me the project would lose some meaning. That being said, I do feel that in conversing and exchanging ideas with participants and other Community members, some good was done at the time. An indication of that sort was given to me directly after I had completed the last interview during my first research trip. Finally finding myself with some free time, I went for a walk by a river with a friend. While there, I saw an eagle feather laying on the rocks by the water. I took it with me, (and left tobacco on the spot on a subsequent trip,) and was told by my friends in the Community that I had been given the feather by the eagle, perhaps for listening to the stories of others. I have since then come to understand this event as an indication that the project has done some degree of good.

As mentioned earlier, copies of the thesis will be presented to the Community, and an accessible summary will be distributed through a newsletter. I hope that there will be an ongoing discussion between myself and members of the community about the

findings of this study, and in no way believe that this document closes the door on the data gathered.

3.9 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I introduced the Indigenous Research Paradigm as outlined in Shawn Wilson's book *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods (2008)* and described how the paradigm's focus on relationality fit with my approach to the research. I also documented the crucial role of the Postsecondary Councilor, who agreed to be the project's Community Liaison. The Councilor was an important source of information, and one of the intended beneficiaries of the research, and was included in the research in accordance with the OCAP principles of research with Aboriginal communities, specifically "Ownership" and "Control."

This chapter also includes a discussion on the importance of the decolonization of the research process, and the development of the process itself. I documented how the participants were recruited, and gave a general outline of their current circumstances within the Community and/or with regards to postsecondary education. Finally, the actual research and writing procedure as it unfolded over two and a half years was recorded. The chapter illustrates how my pre-existing relationship with the Community, the conditions in the Community itself and my academic experience all in turn influenced the resulting methodology, procedure, and documenting of the research project.

CHAPTER 4

THE DESIRE FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

In the past, the buffalo met virtually every need of the North American Indian from food to shelter; this animal was considered to be a gift from the Creator, intended to provide for the peoples' needs. Today, elders say that education, rather than the bison, needs to be relied upon for survival. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 1-2)

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to report the first layer of findings regarding the Community's relationship with postsecondary education. To gauge the desire for postsecondary education within the Community, I will look at Community policy regarding education, and situate it within policy emerging from the national level. I will also identify attitudes towards postsecondary education which emerged from participant interviews, and their perceptions of the attitudes held by others, and will include a look at the perceived level of parental engagement with the education system. I also will explore the mechanisms presently used to promote postsecondary education to potential students. This will include a look into where potential students get their information about postsecondary education, the conversations about education they have with family and friends, and the role of the Postsecondary Councilor in the Community. Finally, I will document what postsecondary programs the participants are attending or considering, and their attitudes towards postsecondary services and programs specifically designed with Aboriginal teaching methods and content.

4.1 Education as “The New Buffalo”

In the above quotation from the book “The New Buffalo,” Aboriginal scholar Blair Stonechild refers to education as the new means through which Aboriginal people may continue to survive against the constant force of assimilation and to “ensure a strong and prosperous future for First Nations.”(2006, p. 1) Interest in postsecondary education for Aboriginal people was a prominent issue in the media at the time of writing. This is evident in the previously mentioned decision by the chiefs of the AFN to stress postsecondary education above all other priorities (such as housing, healthcare and mental health) to the federal government. (Scofield, 2010) The reasoning goes that by increasing the capacity of Aboriginal people themselves to address the disparities that their communities face, there is a much greater chance that the solutions they reach will be better suited to the needs and desires of the people living within them.

The increased emphasis on postsecondary education from the AFN is also evident in the Community. Analysis of participant interviews and Community policy clearly indicate the desire for community members to attend postsecondary education. Postsecondary education is seen as an essential tool to improve Community conditions as well as the life prospects of individuals within it.

4.2 Views of Postsecondary Education

4.2.1 Interest in Postsecondary Education

During the interviews, each participant revealed that he or she had at least considered postsecondary education, and how it figured into his or her future. This is obviously true of the three who were currently enrolled in postsecondary programs. It was also true though, of the three students currently graduating from high school, as well as the person who had graduated and not gone on to any form of postsecondary education. Only one participant who had not yet graduated from high school, but instead held full-time employment in the community did not see postsecondary education fitting into his life plans. Nevertheless, this high interest in postsecondary education is consistent with the results of a survey conducted by EKOS in 2005 among Aboriginal people residing in First Nation communities in Canada. That survey found that “[y]outh living on-reserve, like other young Canadians, have high educational aspirations – 7 in 10 hope to complete a postsecondary education.” (EKOS Research Associates, 2006) That the percentage in this study is higher than the proportion in the EKOS survey indicates that the participants included more of those in the Community who have considered postsecondary education. As discussed in Chapter 3, none of those I approached who had not finished high school, had not gone on to postsecondary education, or were unemployed to participate in the study agreed to participate in the study. One young mother from the Community did indicate interest in participating, sharing that she was proud to be a mother, and did not regret not going on in school. I did not include her as a participant, however, because she currently resided in a community far away from where

the Community was located, but I was aware that she held these views, and was not reluctant to participate.

The reasons that participants gave for their interest in pursuing postsecondary education closely mirrored the dominant ideas currently present in whitestream society.

For example, Pat and Dan were both enrolled in grade 12 when I interviewed them.

When asked why he valued education Pat replied,

[b]ecause it broadens your horizons. It allows you to see more things than just like, say you're at home; all you would know is what your grandparents told you or what your parents told you.

Here Pat reveals his interest in expanding his knowledge base beyond that offered to him at home, and as an extension of this, in his Community. Dan also valued education because it helped him “learn something new” and to gain insight from “all types of perspectives.” But in addition to this, he appreciated that attending school “kept him busy.” Some of the other participants also mentioned keeping busy as well. A few participants indicated to me that school was a way for them to escape their chaotic home life. Others indicated that school was their method of escaping boredom.

When working with children and youth in the community, I often heard their reply to the question “what are you doing” as “being bored.” Boredom in this case seems to reflect the growing idea among some of the youth in this Community that their reserve is boring and that there is not much to do, an idea reflective of whitestream ideas regarding activity, as well as whitestream perspectives on what daily life should look like. Because it is relatively common that children and youth do not attend school regularly, or drop out prior to graduating high school, for those who are not forced by

their parents or guardians to attend school, school may be viewed as an “option” to escape boredom.

4.2.2 The View of Parents and the Greater Community

In a 2005 survey by EKOS, it was found that 77% of parents living on reserves in Canada hoped that their children would at least complete some college, with the majority of them, at 35%, hoping that their children would complete a graduate degree. Twenty percent of those surveyed hoped that their child would at least complete high school. (EKOS Research Associates, 2006)

It became clear throughout the course of my interviews that attending postsecondary education is more of an expectation than it used to be in the Community. Charlotte was entering postsecondary education in the early 1990s, and she revealed to me that at that time, her decision to attend postsecondary education was purely her own and not influenced by her mother at all. Once she did enroll, she felt the added pressure of the Community’s expectations on her to succeed, because not many had gone before her. Years ago, when she became pregnant while in school, the opinion the Community would have of her weighed heavily on her mind. As she put it,

I remember sitting in my psychology class and I couldn’t write anything. I’d studied and I was just devastated. So with the pregnancy I told my mom. That was the hardest thing to tell her, because by that point everybody had such big expectations of me because...I had [done] this, I did that; you know, I was their success story they were going to use all the time.

This lack of parental pressure (but expectations on the part of the Community) was present for Dan, who has decided to attend college after he graduates from high school in the next year or so. When I asked him whether or not he felt his family supported his aiming for college, he told me that he knew his family is happy for him and were quite excited that he would soon be graduating from the high school in town. Despite this, he emphasized how much they missed him (as he currently lived in town to attend school) and how they asked him frequently to return home. “Yeah, they’re not saying you should come back home when you’re done school, they’re just like, come back home now. I miss you. Come back home.” It should be noted that leaving the reserve to attend school in town, while not extremely common, does occur. The Community does not keep official numbers as to how many students make that transition and at what grade levels they leave, but from what I have observed, parents who want their child to benefit from a perceived higher standard of education in town, and who are able to either purchase or rent housing or have family in town who are willing to let the child stay with them do sometimes send their child to school there to see if they are successful. Some of these experiences are documented throughout the remainder of the thesis.

Other participants shared with me that their parents seemed to encourage, if not expect, that their children would attend postsecondary education. One of Alison’s parents was not originally from the reserve, but had grown up in whitestream society and graduated from university. Alison told me that it was expected that she proceed to postsecondary education right after school, and she did so, even though she was unsure about what exactly she wanted to do. Lucy, who just graduated from high school and

lives with her family, had consulted with her parents about her decision to attend college, and she told me that she was strongly encouraged by them in her desire to continue, based partially on their own lack of experience with education:

L: They actually want me out of here.

A: (laughs) They want you out of here?

L: (laughs) Yeah, they want me to go out there, do what I got to do.

A: Why, why do you think they're so, they want you to go?

L: Because they've never made it that far in school.... Well, my dad made it up to grade 11, my mom made it up to grade nine. So, they want me to get out of here.

Whether or not a youth from the Community is encouraged to pursue education by parents depends on the nature of their relationship with parents or caregivers. There continues to be a high rate of adoption and children into care in the Community. In some cases, this means that children are transient for large portions of their lives. Pat, who had just graduated from high school by the time of the second interview, was not in touch with his biological parents and had been in and out of care all of his life. He shared with me that he had not informed his parents (or any of his foster families) about his decision to attend college.

While his parents never actively discouraged him from attending school, Carl told me that when growing up, he was responsible for getting himself to class each day through elementary and high school. Instead, his parents placed more emphasis on work, and from a young age he was encouraged to get a job. Both of Carl's parents had not completed their secondary education, but were employed and supported his family. This likely contributed to the strong encouragement he told me he was given by his parents in work over school.

Carl currently works fulltime in the community. He did not graduate from high school; however, he has taken courses which were offered in the Community towards his General Equivalency Degree (GED) and plans on taking the qualifying test in the future. While he did attend high school in the Community, his attendance was sporadic because he said he was “distracted” by his social life, and put off because he found the school work “too easy” compared to the work he was given while he attended high school in a nearby city. He finally dropped out because, as he explained it to me, he was forced to work and had no time for school.

A: Your dad came down, and he was like, you got to get a job?

C: Yeah. No he didn't say “you gotta,” he said, “you gotta start doing something, meaning you [have to] start working.”

After working in the Community for a few years, the high school teacher I spoke with has come to believe that the amount of encouragement parents or caregivers give students plays a most important role in students' self-esteem, which affects their success in education. In his/her words,

You can't just [generalize] I guess, [but] I think a lot of it probably has to do with home life. ...Some kids don't have parents that really care about their schooling, or if they don't care about their schooling, they probably haven't given their kids a whole lot of encouragement. Do you know what I mean?... The kids that haven't gotten that at home; they're the ones a lot of the times that can't express good things about themselves. They've had a rough life, and always been told they [are inferior] and so how are they going to ...have the esteem to even try?

The teacher did believe that there existed some exceptions to this case, and cited Pat specifically as an example of a successful student dedicated to pursuing more education, despite not receiving much parental encouragement. Including Pat and Carl, half of the

participants in the study reported receiving very little encouragement from their parents regarding their education. Of these, three had or planned to attend postsecondary education, and one, Carl, had not yet graduated. The three that did demonstrated to me that they had a high degree of self-motivation regarding education, suggesting that even lack of parental encouragement can be overcome as long as those considering postsecondary education are able to access other support systems that might exist. Carl and Charlotte's parents did not actively encourage their children to do well in school. Both had ended up attending high school in town and told me about support systems they had accessed there. Carl, for instance, told me about how he had taken time to speak with guidance counselors at the school he was attending in town, and had also sought out information about postsecondary education funding from his peers and his case worker at family services. Charlotte told me about conversations she had with close friends, whom she had met through a national youth program she attended in another part of Canada. Pat told me about conversations he'd had with the Postsecondary Councilor regarding college, but ultimately did not have many people he planned to call upon for support when transitioning to postsecondary education.

Other conversations I had with Community officials revealed that there is a concern among many about the level of outward parental support of education. The Band Councilor I spoke with expressed disappointment that Community members were not becoming more involved in the school life of their children. As he put it,

I would like to see more parent[al] involvement in their day to day children's education. I haven't really seen that; the only time I've seen that happen is when a special student is awarded with something. Then the parents help out, but to actually have an ongoing system where the parents

are actively involved in the students' education, I would like to see that happen.

The level of support for education from some families in the Community can be quite low, as demonstrated by low attendance rates of some children in elementary and high school (which will be discussed in Chapter 6). As perceived by the Councilor, most parents do not take an active role in the "formal" education system in the community.

When I asked the counselor why s/he thought this was, s/he reasoned that it may be the result of a value held by some in the Community. As s/he put it,

I'm not sure, maybe it's that old syndrome that I keep hearing, here's your house, you're in charge of your house, but once your child leaves, then wherever that child goes to, like say, daycare, the daycare is in charge, the daycare is the guardian, the daycare is the parent. Then that...alleviates the household.

It is unclear to me whether the "syndrome" the councilor is referring to is a traditional cultural value or a value adopted as a result of colonization. It is possible that the idea that childcare is shared among a community harkens back to traditional ways of childrearing which predate contact with settlers. The withdrawal, however, seems more likely the result of feeling alienated by the education system as a product of residential school experience. Continued suspicion towards the education system, especially among the older generations, was made clear when Lucy explained to me that at one point her parents wanted to send her to school in town to receive a better education. This idea was met with displeasure by her grandmother, who had attended residential school, and who was worried about Lucy having similar experiences to hers if Lucy were to attend school outside of the Community. As Lucy put it, "my grandma didn't want that, [and] she got

mad at my parents... 'cause she didn't want to see me go through what she went through (or something).”

Charlotte told me that her mother displayed a strong aversion to entering into school institutions when she was young and attending school in town. Charlotte commented:

My mom never came to the school; she never came to any school functions. She never came to report card night, like never ever would she in the world. And a lot of it was because she was shy, you know, and part of it was my grandparents went to residential school.

Charlotte did add that her mother eventually attended school within the Community when the day school was created. She did not think, however, that parents were ever invited into the school to participate in the education of their children.

On the one hand, these experiences relayed to me by the participants clearly indicate that the impact of residential school continues to resonate through the Community, and affect how formal education is viewed. On the other hand, some, like the Band Councilor with whom I spoke, have used the experiences as impetus for change in their lives, and fully encourage their children to participate in the school system both inside the Community and outside of it. When I asked the Councilor how time in residential schools affected his/her life, s/he indicated to me that s/he has taken the negative consequences of residential school, such as alcoholism, abuse, and little emphasis on education in his/her childhood and used them as examples of what not to do. “I don't want to live with my kids in that kind of environment I had to go through when I was growing up.... I changed everything.” And it was evident from examples s/he gave

me about encouraging his/her children and partner in school, and not continuing patterns of abuse of persons and substances, that this was indeed the case. However, it is evident that negative school experiences continue to weigh down some families of this community.

4.3 Access to Information on Postsecondary Education

During my interviews with participants, I made it a point to ask who they were speaking with to get advice and guidance regarding higher education. Participants who had attended high school in town told me that they had access to guidance counseling which helped them choose courses appropriate for their life goals. Dan, for instance, who was born and raised in the Community, but who now attends high school in town, talked a bit about the postsecondary counseling that occurred in his high school, and how the perceptions he had of college and university given to him by guidance staff, among other things, had influenced his decision to stay in applied classes. Only one participant, Mike, who lived and attended high school in the nearby town told me that he had had many conversations with peers and adults outside of school regarding college and university. The participants who attended and graduated high school mainly in the Community could not recall having conversations where they received information about postsecondary education with friends or even family. This signals an important issue to be addressed. Lucy and Pat, who were at the time of the interviews both applying to college, told me that they were the only ones currently planning to proceed to postsecondary education

among their friends, and did not have other close family members to consult with who had experience with higher education.

For Pat, Lucy, Alison, and Maria, the four participants who spent their graduating year of high school in the Community, their primary source of information regarding college was the Postsecondary Councilor. (Her role and the history of the position will be outlined further in section 4.4.) Pat, like the three others mentioned above, based his postsecondary education decisions on the preliminary guidance offered by the Postsecondary Councilor, combined with his own internet research efforts. As he put it, “[the Postsecondary Councilor] gives me a pamphlet, and I read through the pamphlet and there’s a website, then I go to the internet.” These four participants told me that counseling on postsecondary decisions at the Community high school began during the latter half of the school year. For instance, when I interviewed Pat in April of his graduating year, he told me that he had just begun the process of applying for funding and looking for programs. But Alison expressed frustration regarding the timing of the process:

Al: They don’t have that whole “choose a college, these are all your choices [process].” They kind of just left that up to you...until the very last minute, and they [say] “oh you’re going to go to college after? Where are you going to go? Where are you going to apply?”

A: It was your choice?

Al: Yeah, it was last minute too.... They should have been doing that the whole grade 12 year but they weren’t. They were doing it the last like two weeks of it.

Alison’s assessment that counseling should start earlier in the year might be based on her experience at the high school in town (she attended classes there for approximately one

year.) Her belief that the services offered by the community school were less than they should be is only the beginning of many comparisons with whitestream education made by some participants that will be discussed in the Chapter 6.

4.4 Promotion of Postsecondary Education within the Community

It was the creation of the position of Postsecondary Councilor which signaled the official beginning of the Community's active encouragement of postsecondary education in 1982. First Nations community control over its postsecondary recruitment system is a relatively new development, (however the desire for it is not new.) It was not until 1994 that INAC began to place the responsibility for issuing funding on band and tribal councils. (Stonechild, 2006, p. 140) In this Community, the process began in the early 1980s, when a member of the Band Council of the Community approached the current Postsecondary Councilor, who was then working as a teaching assistant at the school, to fill the new position. As part of this appointment, s/he was given one week of training from INAC, which s/he described to me as inadequate for the responsibilities required of the position. The training s/he received consisted mainly of learning to enter names and figures into the accounting database, and s/he had to learn, or rather, *invent* the other aspects of her position as the job demanded (which shows how little capacity-building was offered from INAC). Today, his/her official duties include dividing the money dedicated to postsecondary funding among applicants each year. Unofficially, s/he also helps students applying to postsecondary education fill out forms; provides information to students regarding institutions and programs; and has in the past organized college and

university fairs in the community, and taken students on tours of colleges in nearby towns. His/her office is a constant flurry of activity.

When I was in the Community in April of 2010, the Community was in the process of developing a new postsecondary education policy, but as mentioned earlier, I was unable to obtain it.¹³ The current policy outlines eligibility for funding, application procedures, and priority of approval criteria. It also includes a contract which students must sign to receive funding.¹⁴ The contract requires students to attend classes punctually and at a minimum of 90% attendance; complete all course work; and submit assignments on time, to maintain funding.

As mentioned, the job of the Postsecondary Councilor includes determining who in the Community can and cannot receive funding from the \$395,000 available on a year to year basis. Grants cover tuition, a \$300 per semester book fee, and \$675¹⁵ per month for living expenses. The councilor must turn down people applying to receive the money each year, and this creates tensions, especially if a rejected applicant takes the refusal personally. In the past, a handful of people who have not received money have appealed directly to the Band Council, and if that appeal was successful, the funding system was affected, and others had to be turned down. The Postsecondary Councilor reports that s/he is grateful that no such interference has occurred with the current Chief and Council.

¹³ Informal conversations with Band Officials revealed that one major section of the policy will outline guidelines for who receives priority status in their request for postsecondary funding.

¹⁴ Discussions with the Postsecondary Councilor reveal that in recent years, the practice is to only require those who do not do well in classes and who are in danger of failing to sign the contract to extend their funding into the next year.

¹⁵ If you are single with no dependents.

In terms of recruitment from the Community, the Councilor reaches out primarily to high school graduates. His/her office walls are filled with brochures for a variety of programs (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) and college and university course calendars from a variety of locations (the nearby towns and cities, as well as in different parts of Ontario, across the country, and even across the border). S/he also encourages and organizes university/college fairs to come to the community, usually on an annual basis, where s/he will go through the various booths with students. On a few occasions in past years, s/he has also taken students on tours of college campuses in nearby towns. S/he told me that s/he would like to do such things more frequently, but the time to perform administrative aspect of her job precludes this. It was obvious from what others said about the Postsecondary Councilor, and from my observations about the constant demand s/he is in from others seeking help as well as from other responsibilities that go a long with the role, that the Councilor is doing a wonderful job but constantly has to juggle many different tasks, and could benefit greatly from official support from yet to be created positions.

The teacher interviewed for this study expressed his/her opinion that in terms of guidance and career counseling at the school, “we don’t really, and we should,” which reinforces Alison’s belief documented earlier that counseling begins too late in the high school year. The teacher told me that students who seek out advice regarding postsecondary education will do so primarily from the Postsecondary Councilor, but if s/he is not available, they will also speak with the attendance officer or other teachers in the high school. According to the teacher, this takes these others away from their other

responsibilities, and so more manpower allotted to counseling would probably address this need.

Finally, workers and teachers in the high school also take indirect actions to promote postsecondary education with their students. In the few years the high school teacher interviewed for this study has been with the school, s/he has seen the high school students go on class trips to different parts of Canada, such as Vancouver and Toronto where students get a chance to familiarize themselves with a new city and go to museums, attend concerts, and engage in other activities they might not otherwise have the opportunity to. S/he feels that these trips go far to make students feel comfortable in settings outside of the Community, and that they indirectly help students to imagine different possibilities for their future. As s/he puts it,

You don't realize that there are those options for you when you can't see them. So I think that things like class trips really help, getting them out and seeing a different city and seeing what exists out in the world really makes a difference.

Taking students on class trips to other parts of the country may not be an overt promotion of distant institutions. This type of exposure, however, could conceivably influence the locations potential students consider for college, trades school or university.

4.5 Program Choice

4.5.1 Where They Are Going

The observations in this section on where to attend postsecondary education complement those on transitions in Chapter 5, where I will discuss the experience of leaving the Community to live elsewhere.

It was clear from what participants shared with me that their choice of where to attend postsecondary education depended on the amount of experience they had and their degree of confidence with living outside of the Community. Lucy had minimal experience navigating any school system outside of the Community – while in grade eight, she attended elementary school in town for only one month. Listening to her justification of applying solely to college in the nearby town, I could tell that she made her choice out of a sense of caution. In her words, “yeah, I’m just going to try out [town], and if I get used to it, yeah I’ll probably go to [nearby city] or where there are more options.” The nearby city she proposed was one she with which she was somewhat familiar, and she told me that she had family there she could stay with.

Dan expressed similar trepidation over the location of postsecondary education in relation to the Community. When I first spoke to him, he told me that he wanted to attend school in Southern Ontario. But during our second interview, he told me that he had changed his mind and had decided to apply to college in a nearby city instead. When I asked him about why he changed his mind, he suggested that in the closer city, “it will just be better for me because it’s a smaller area than that place I was planning. And it’s closer to home too.” When I asked him to tell me what part of the city in Southern Ontario was not “his scene” (as he described it), he replied that the distant city

didn’t seem [like] the place I wanted to be ’cause near the [Great Lakes], there’s not much bush area around. When I was down there... it ... didn’t really catch my eye, [I] didn’t see anything special I could walk to or walk around in. If [there] was a park, it was a [town] park, not natural or anything. [In the nearby city], there’s a bunch of bush area there.

For Dan, living in a naturally wild setting which resembled home clearly brought familiarity and comfort, and was crucial to help him cope with his emotions. He explained to me how having natural landscape close by to the college he eventually chooses will be important to him and his well-being. In his words, “[w]hen I was younger, whenever things got [hard], I went to the bush, and just chilled out in the trees.” This goes beyond a simple preference and can be connected to the practice of Aboriginal cultural traditions and spiritual closeness to the land. (Cajete, 2000)

In contrast, Mike, who had spent years living in town and attending school there, felt comfortable considering cities he had only briefly visited, and where he knew only one or two people. Here he describes to me how he came to decide on the large Southern Ontario city where he is currently attending college:

[I chose this Southern Ontario city] because it’s centrally located from all the places I would love to travel to – well, kind of centrally located. And plus it’s also huge.... But, it has a small town feeling to it.... So I’m comfortable living in [town], cause like it’s a small town, so when I moved to [Southern Ontario city], instead of like a big shell shock like Toronto would be, or Winnipeg, or Montreal, I’m like, comfortable with the setting there.

Arguably Mike’s experiences in the school system outside of the Community made him more confident in his decisions, and he was the only participant who could confidently describe to me a long term postsecondary plan. Compared to Mike, the other participants did not express confidence or willingness to move into uncomfortable and unfamiliar non-Aboriginal settings as part of attending college. As I will discuss in Chapter 5, even the choice to move away from the Community to a nearby town to attend college

represents a large step away from their support system and natural surroundings and involves numerous stressful transitions.

4.5.2 Programs of Choice

During my interviews, I noticed that all of the participants who did go or were planning to go to postsecondary education, attended very specific programs which led to particular trades or jobs, except for Alison who, as mentioned earlier, attended college directly after high school to meet the expectations of her parents. When asked if they would ever consider education which did not lead to a specific job, participants emphasized that practical considerations regarding the future took precedence in their minds. In Pat's words, "it's important to have a job at the end of it.... Education is good and all, but ...you need something to keep yourself going." Dan, too, was strongly focused on acquiring employment at the end of postsecondary education, and he told me that he valued both his high school education and the college programs he was researching because they had a co-op component which he believed would aid him in finding a job. Maria, who graduated from high school and quickly became employed fulltime in the Community, indicated that she put aside further education because, as she put it, "I didn't know what I wanted to do... [and] I didn't want to go for nothing, and take years and years of different things."

This view that the most important (and for some, perhaps only reason) to pursue further education is to gain entry into the workforce in a desired occupation is familiar in whitestream thinking where credentials are "cultural capital" that assure jobs. It is

interesting to note that in Erwin's (2009) study involving interviews of Aboriginal students in Ontario community colleges, participants (all of whom were already enrolled and taking courses in college) placed more emphasis than my interviewees on their desire to pursue education for itself, a belief which she identified as being congruent with "Indigenous epistemology – that the journey is as important as the intended outcome." (Erwin, 2009, p. 202) While my interviewees did value education and learning, the end result, employment, was a priority. Only Alison, whose parents would not accept that she do anything but proceed to postsecondary education after graduating high school, entered a general arts program in college without having a specific career destination in mind.

While it is true that a main motivating factor to attend postsecondary education among my participants was to gain entry into a certain career, one common point that was repeatedly made in response to the question "why are people from the Community not going to postsecondary education" was that there exists a belief that postsecondary education was not necessary for community members, because diplomas and degrees were not generally required to be employed within the community. The teacher explained that:

I've heard the kids say, "well why do I need to get my grade 12 'cause there's people that work at the band office who make [decent] money and ah, they don't have grade 12. So "why should I have grade 12?" Do you know what I mean? "I could get a job just like that, so why do I have to go to school?"

According to the 2005 EKOS study, this particular attitude is present in other First Nations across Canada as well. In the EKOS study, 20% of respondents agreed with the statement "First Nations people don't really need a college or university degree because

there are no jobs in our community that require that kind of qualification.” (EKOS Research Associates, 2006) Despite not currently being required, Alison and Maria both thought that postsecondary education was important, and that those with the degrees should have priority over those without in terms of jobs. In the following exchange with me, Alison expresses her frustration that some of those who have gone on to higher education have not been recognized with a better employment position or salary within the Community;

A: But like, living in [this reserve] though, is it important to have a postsecondary education?

Al: If you are going to go back and live [here], no.

A: You don't need it?

Al: Yeah, you don't need anything to work [here].

A: Do you think you should?

Al: Yeah, you should.

Despite not having any postsecondary education herself and also having a full-time well-paying job in the community, Maria thought that others should go on to further education because of the lack of employment opportunities in the community. “They should... because maybe they won't be as lucky as I was in the way where I got a good paying job. There's not too many job opportunities here, I think.”

Indeed, Maria's observation above ties into a frustration expressed by some Community members, namely that the Community presently cannot always offer employment to postsecondary graduates who desire to return and bring their new knowledge and skills. Most recently, a Community member who had just earned a PhD was not able to return and work for the Community despite a strong and well-known

desire to. A brief conversation with the band council revealed that finding a position for this particular graduate was in progress, but that it was the funding aspect which was preventing the actual hiring from occurring. Limitations due to funding, a major theme in my interviews with regards to both education and employment in the Community, will be discussed in chapters 6 and 7. For now it is important to note that a few of the informal conversations I had with individuals in the Community (all of whom happened to be employed) revealed that there exists disappointment that the Community is not yet able to tap into the education and skills of all of their members, especially given the fact that a large proportion of them have had their educations funded by the Community.

Out of the participants who had advanced, or were advancing to postsecondary education, only one, Charlotte (who had begun her postsecondary education journey 20 years ago and had attended school solely in town), chose a university as her first choice of preferred institution. The others chose college, which reflects the statistics reviewed above (that Aboriginal students are choosing colleges and trade programs at the same rate as non-Aboriginal Canadian society, but university at a much lower rate).

When discussing why he chose college over university, Dan revealed that part of what factored into his decision was his perception that college programs were not as challenging as those at universities and that the material was taught at a slower pace. As he expressed it, he wanted a challenge that he could meet, and he felt that attending college would “be better for me, for my own emotions too.” He was more confident of finishing “with all [my] trouble,” as he termed them. Thus, while he is determined to go on in school, he preferred that school and other things in his life unfold at a slower pace,

so that he did not have to sacrifice personal balance, or his own emotional well-being to keep his grades high. The only two participants (other than Charlotte) to speak about attending university were Mike and Alison. And despite doing well in the school in town and being willing to move to a faraway town, Mike was still cautious about which institutions to attend. "People were saying university is harder than college," he said, "so I kind of want to get college done with first, so I can have... the foundation of understanding this subject that I want to take." Alison struggled with college at first, though she now feels comfortable with classes and the institution, and has begun to consider careers which will require that she attend university. While she has grown comfortable with the college institution she now attends, and is willing to enroll in university, she is still concerned about the challenges it might present. She worried that university professors might diverge from background readings in their lectures, and be hard to follow. As she expressed it, it was frightening

[b]eing in that huge classroom, and you have to take lecture notes and it's a big deal. The lectures are a big deal. Here [at the college] they're not -- it's all text book based, and a lot of the tests are just textbook based. What the teachers said in my classes was all based in the text books. I know that in university sometimes what they say isn't in there, but it can also be on the test.

Despite these perceptions, compared to all the others I spoke with, years of college and time in town have instilled in Alison a confidence that she can meet the challenge of a bigger and more academically challenging institution in a town or city further away from the reserve.

4.5.3 Aboriginal Programs

So far, the situations of Aboriginal youth living on reserve and contemplating attending whitestream postsecondary education has been discussed. Was there any interest in Aboriginal programming? One participant, Charlotte, is approximately 10 years older than the other student participants, and was not immersed in informal education about Aboriginal culture while growing up. It was not until she began taking courses in one of the postsecondary programs she attended where she learned, as she says below, “how to be Native.” She has taken different programs in postsecondary education over the years, in both college and university. The third she embarked on was a social work program designed for Aboriginal individuals, offered through a distant college. She describes the program as,

all Aboriginal orientated. So that was my first real learning how to be Native.... I mean, all those traditions, you know, people [I knew] never really talked about. My mom never really talked about. It was learning that language about all the racism and colonization, and all that stuff, and what it meant.... It was a lot of that, it was a lot of you know, counseling and social work stuff, it was really getting to know who you were as an Aboriginal person.

Charlotte’s account of the program summarizes the general content of the many Aboriginal/Indigenous postsecondary programs in Ontario, both at the college and university level, which currently exist in Canada. A list of these programs can be found in Appendix A. Colleges and universities also may have services or organizations specifically oriented to the needs of Aboriginal students, including student centers, program offices, and student-run organizations. (Erwin, 2009)

In 2008, I transcribed interviews for another study by professor Suzanne Stewart which sought Aboriginal students currently in university to discuss their experiences. While doing so, I heard much of the power of these programs to educate about colonization and how for many, they had fostered a journey of self-discovery and decolonization.

Not only did Charlotte's time in both the social work program and in another Aboriginal-centered program fill in some of the gaps in her cultural education, they also actively undid some of the negative and colonial stereotypes which had been taught to her as a child while attending schools in town. As she explained it,

I remember my teacher talking -- and this was in grade 5 -- about the Pueblo Indians. She talked about how they were, and they lived like this, and then she looked at me and said, you know, they were all dirty and starving and that's why they all died. Because the book ended with something about, you know, the population decreased for whatever reason. And...I was like sitting in there -- why did she look at me and say that? ...And that really made me angry. Why was somebody who was a teacher for me, telling me something like that when that wasn't true? So, that's what I mean. With the [Aboriginal-based] program, it has taught me how to be culturally sensitive, even to myself.

Overall, Charlotte felt positively towards her experiences with programs focused on Aboriginal content. When I discussed such programs with other interviewees, however, none of them showed any interest at this point. And not surprisingly, given their awareness of being racialized, some even expressed opposition to the idea of having programs and services dedicated to Aboriginal content. For example, while Pat was aware of one or two such programs, he said "Mmm, doesn't matter [if the program is Aboriginal]. As long as I get the work needed and certification to get where I want, I don't care if its Ojibway or White or whatever." Another participant, Mike, has

specifically chosen not to focus on Aboriginal or Indigenous Studies in college (or in his future University program) at least at the moment, because he believes that that doing so would limit what he could do with his future. When I asked him whether studying Aboriginal issues is important to him, he answered,

Well, it is, but I don't want to get involved in *just* Aboriginal issues.... The way I look at it, we have a national chief and council whatever, across Canada.... But they pretty much can't do anything 'cause they're not technically government.... And...I'm concerned about Aboriginal issues, but I want to go (pause) into more things than just Aboriginal.

When I asked Mike as to whether or not he had sought services at his college directed specifically towards Aboriginal students, he revealed that he had visited a Native Centre at the college he attends, but did not find that it suited his needs. As he expressed it, he just went "to use the computer and get free paper printed, but that's pretty much all I go for." He was aware of peer tutoring and other counseling but felt that those services were not of use to him.

Not only was Alison not interested in pursuing any sort of Aboriginal Studies, she also didn't express a need for services directed specifically at Aboriginal people. As she put it,

It's not a big deal to me. It'd be nice you know. You'd have that support, that extra crutch basically if you really needed help.... They usually have, if they have those kinds of programs, something there, like a student help [program]. If you're struggling and stuff. But it wouldn't be a big deal...because they usually have student help programs anyway. I wouldn't need one specifically for Aboriginals.... Why do you even need one for specifically for Aboriginals? You shouldn't even.

Here she has adopted the view prevalent in white society that services for all should be offered, without singling out any particular group.

After comparing the postsecondary experiences of Charlotte with the opinions of Pat, Alison and the rest of the participants, I was very confused about their seeming incongruity. Why were the other participants so reluctant to consider attending these programs and accessing these services? A member of my committee, professor Jean-Paul Restoule explained to me, this incongruity “rests in personal contextual factors.” (Jean-Paul Restoule, Personal Communication) My conversations with participants suggested that some Aboriginal students are seeking out skills and knowledge not to do with Indigenous issues (as we saw above with Mike and Pat’s comments on their program preferences). Other Aboriginal students may either decide to enter Aboriginal themed programs to maintain cultural safety, or “because they’ve been removed from the knowledge in their families and communities” as with Charlotte. (Jean-Paul Restoule, Personal Communication)

My two discussions with Dan during our first and follow-up interviews suggested to me that there is some ill-feeling felt by a portion of potential Aboriginal students, which could be a result of not wanting to be “singled out” for special consideration. During our first interview, Dan held negative opinions regarding Aboriginal-themed programs. Not only was he not interested in attending one such program, he also echoed Alison’s comment regarding services, saying that he did not think these programs were necessary. For Dan, Aboriginal traditions are “too personal” to be taught in school; he thought that if students wanted to learn they could just “go back to their home roots, home place, and they can just learn there.” Dan also noted that traditionally, Aboriginal beliefs were only taught to a person when they were deemed ready for the traditions by

their elders and teachers, and that teaching them according to a course schedule would go against this practice.

During our second meeting, Dan and I continued to talk about Aboriginal traditions and their place in school. At this point, Dan was more open to the possibilities of such programs. He told me of a recent experience he had where an Aboriginal storyteller gave a talk during a workshop he attended for Aboriginal high school students at a university in Southern Ontario. He shared with me that he really enjoyed the storyteller, and that he was excited to receive teachings which he had not yet been given. Because some of those attending the workshop were Aboriginals who grew up apart from their home communities and traditions, Dan said he had realized the benefits these programs could have. “[In the audience] were Natives, but ... they grew up in a White Society, not in their own. So they have a course like that open to them.” This led to the realization -- “what if I want to explore my own culture and myself?” Dan’s comment led me to believe that perhaps awareness of what these programs could offer, not only in terms of traditional teachings, but also with regards to the history of contact between Aboriginal people and settlers and the effects of colonization might engage more students like Dan. Alison’s questioning of why Aboriginal students need separate services revealed to me an opportunity to raise consciousness about the unique struggles that Aboriginal students may encounter, and most notably the Aboriginal-specific way these issues may be addressed in a service center directed specifically at Aboriginal students.

But as I have indicated, Alison and the other students were also expressing something else in their comments -- their reluctance to be segregated from their peers in

the whitestream. When I asked Pat why he would not consider attending an Aboriginal postsecondary program he replied: “Adapt or die.... [I]t’s something I heard as a kid and it’s stuck with me since then.” When I asked him what the benefit was to adapting, he replied,

I would be anonymous. Though I’m a big guy, the more I adapt, the more people won’t see me. I just like being a wall flower, I don’t like being the center of attention, but being a tall guy, I am the bloody center of attention.

Pat believed that above all, it was being Native that made him stand out when he left the reserve and entered whitestream society. He told me that he felt people in whitestream society were scared of him because of the stereotypes which exist. He worried about white fears of “natives” as “rowdy or mean,” and their fear “that I might be possibly mean, so they’ll just be a little more careful around me.” In the next chapter I will detail experiences the participants had with racism, all of which have perhaps influenced them to seek out ways to blend in or adapt as Pat suggested.

4.6 The Place of Postsecondary Education in the Community

To conclude this chapter, I will compare the discussions regarding the desire for postsecondary education expressed by the Assembly of First Nations to the opinions of the interview participants and Community members in general. It must be noted that most of the participants have attended or plan to attend postsecondary institutions themselves, and three out of eight interviews I held were with people over the age of 30. Thus, the following opinions may very well not echo the sentiments of the entire Community.

The Community policy regarding “Post Secondary Opportunities” which came into effect in May of 1995 clearly states that the Education Authority “believes that it is important for members of the community to pursue post secondary education opportunities.” The document goes on to justify this statement, arguing that postsecondary education “will allow community members to secure better paying jobs and to provide services and expertise to the community and country.” Moreover, the document states that “it is the...Education Authority and community’s desire to provide for and enter into self government, self reliance and independence in planning and action. This requires well educated and trained people.” This policy echoes the rationale of the AFN which places a high degree of importance on the education of Aboriginal people so that major goals, like that of self-government can be realized.

But when I spoke to Alison about what she perceived adults in the Community felt about postsecondary education, she saw a split between the opinions of “older people” and “20 to 30 year olds”:

Why are you going to school? Why postsecondary?” -- “you should be here in the community working, you should be trying to do stuff here.” That’s how a lot of the older people think...but I’m pretty sure a lot of the... 20- to 30-year olds are all [saying], “oh, it’s great that you’re going to college; its great you’re going to university [to learn] these skills. Utilize them, bring them back and help your community.” But a lot of the older people [ask] “oh why are you there?”

Since my interviews focused on younger individuals, overall, most participants felt that if more community members attended postsecondary education, it would be positive for the Community. Pat felt it would “make a difference” and Dan expressed the view that “everyone should” attend some sort of a program. If they did, Dan felt,

community members would make opportunities for themselves where none exist now, and would be able to improve the quality of life in the community. As he put it,

I think kids, youth, adults, should go to school, they have an opportunity they can start their own business ... and then, make it back to here if you want, make money for the reserve to help other people on the reserve.

Aside from creating employment opportunities and improving the economy on the reserve, Charlotte felt very strongly that postsecondary education would raise consciousness about the situation of Aboriginal peoples, their history and the details of legislation such as the *Indian Act*. (She recalled that access to such information changed her view of herself and her community when she learned it.)

4.7 Chapter Summary

Community policy, as well as the testimony of participants, suggests that emphasis on postsecondary education is increasing, especially among the younger generation. This reflects the shift occurring at a national level, evident in the actions of the Assembly of First Nations. Many younger participants felt that postsecondary education was important for many in the Community to attend, so to increase the job prospects of Community members, as well as the prosperity of the Community as a whole. In terms of their own personal decisions, the reasons that participants stated for considering postsecondary education echoed those of whitestream culture, with the main reason being to secure a job. They maintained, however, that they also persisted through elementary and high school to learn new things, keep busy, and escape their home life. Parental encouragement of education seems to have some influence over whether or not a

participant went on to postsecondary education, however, the interviews suggest that even if students are not encouraged in school by family members, those with a high degree of self-motivation, who have access to support systems, or have gone to school in town may go to school. There is a concern among some education workers and band councilors regarding the lack of parental involvement in the Community's education system, which was ultimately traced to the devastating experience of residential schools, however it was noted that some have used traumatic experiences of the past as an impetus to become more involved in the school system.

In order to get information about postsecondary education, those participants in town spoke to guidance counselors, and peers who were planning on attending or had attended a postsecondary institution. Community members considering further education relied on the Postsecondary Councilor, as well as their own research for information on where to attend school and what programs to apply to, and had no conversations with peers. Also, most did not speak to family about postsecondary education, and most were the first in the immediate family to attend. There was a strong feeling among both youth and educational workers that the Community would benefit from additional guidance workers in the school to assist in this area, as the current Postsecondary Councilor is straddled with many responsibilities.

Where participants considered attending postsecondary education depended on the amount of experiences and confidence students had living out side of the Community. The programs they chose most often led to specific jobs, and one participant actually decided against giving up her job in the Community to attend postsecondary education

since she did not have a specific employment plan (a value shared by whitestream society.) Most often, participants chose college programs based on the proximity of a community college to the Community, the programs available leading to jobs desired, as well as the perceived ease of college over university, (although some did want to pursue university after they had mastered college.) Participants showed concern about how they would cope with their responsibilities when living away from the reserve.

It was also noted that some youth in the Community hold the view that it is not necessary for them to attend postsecondary education, since many who are hired to work in the Community do not have that educational background, a view which seems to be held in First Nations across the country. Indeed, the reality that the Community is not always able to afford to hire Community graduates because of their credentials was a source of frustrations for many.

Finally, one participant had attended postsecondary programs which had Aboriginal structure and content, and spoke about how those positive experiences had taught her “how to be Native.” Other participants did not choose Aboriginal-based programs, because they were seeking skills and knowledge apart from Indigenous knowledges. The experience of one participant who changed his mind regarding the place of Aboriginal-based programs in postsecondary education between the two interview periods, and participants who were unaware of why separate services should exist in postsecondary institutions suggests that perhaps there needs to be more awareness brought to Community youth about what these Aboriginal programs can offer, and also maybe consciousness needs to be raised about the unique struggle of Aboriginal students

and Aboriginal-specific ways to address these issues. The reluctance to enter these programs also suggested to me that there exists some awareness among participants that they are being racialized. In the next chapter, I will look at the various transitions involved for those leaving the Community to pursue postsecondary education.

CHAPTER 5

TRANSITIONING FROM THE COMMUNITY TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

5.0 Introduction

It is difficult for me to communicate the extent to which the transition from high school and life in the Community to college or university and life outside of the Community may affect participants. Some of the problems encountered by students will be described in Chapter 6 and will be attributed to the psychological and epistemological shock of transition to whitestream institutions of young Aboriginal people. For some, including participants in this study, these transitions can be overwhelming and pose many challenges. Tragically, it was during one such transition that one of my participants took his/her own life. How difficult must it be for Aboriginal youth growing up in a close-knit community with its own distinct culture to move away from their community, their friends, their families, and the systems of operating and behaving to which they have grown accustomed. This chapter will outline transitioning challenges described to me by participants and will include cultural, geographic and academic obstacles.

The great sadness which will be discussed here is that participants said they were constantly told by non-Aboriginal people that they were different in a negative way and that being Aboriginal and from a reserve had made them so. Instead of celebrating their successes, the world that greets Aboriginal students leaving their reserves is often an unwelcoming one. Moreover, it is one which largely is not aware of, or does not

recognize, the systemic reasons why the educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples is so much lower than Canadians in general. Finally, some members of whitestream Canadian society (a society which claims to be multicultural) are still unwilling to accept the distinct values of First Nations, and has instead cast them as inferior, savage, and primitive, based on measurements crafted by its own cultural traditions. I hope that this thesis will have some role in helping non-Aboriginal people to understand the strength and resilience of these students (who when they make the choice and are able to pursue whitestream education, must negotiate this unwelcoming climate), so that the relationship between the two can become one of support rather than suspicion and scorn.

5.1 The Trauma of Geographical Transitioning

Leaving the Community to attend postsecondary education is a must for those who wish to earn a degree, diploma or postsecondary certificate, as currently, no such programs are offered in the Community. Indeed, in the 2005 survey of First Nations conducted by EKOS, it was found that out of the 27% of individuals who lived away from the Community two years previous to the survey being conducted, 33% did so to attend school. (The next largest reason was employment, which was cited by 30% of the respondents). (EKOS Research Associates, 2006) As was mentioned before, the Community is not a closed system. Some residents have moved out for various periods, perhaps for school or to seek employment. Each of the participants with whom I spoke with had lived outside of the Community in the nearby town for some period of time -- some for as little as a month, some for many years. Depending on their experiences and

their personalities, I found that they displayed a variety of attitudes towards moving to town.

As I have indicated in Chapter 4, Mike, who had lived out of the Community with a parent to attend school throughout high school, was quite eager to attend college far from home in a bigger city. When I asked him why he decided not to stay in town and attend the college there, he replied: "I'm not too sure.... I guess it's kind of too small for me." Lucy, however, told me that she was quite intimidated by the thought of moving away. At the time of the interview, she had only lived in town for a period of one month a few years before, and her time spent at school there included experiences of racism (discussed in the next section.) When we spoke, she told me she was worried about the transition to town: "It's very scary.... I'm kind of scared to go out there."

Despite being removed from the community physically, the responsibilities which individuals feel for the Community do not disappear, and participants told me that they were concerned about dealing with these from a distance. Dan was particularly worried about how issues with his family and his other relationships may affect his education, as well as how not having family to support him would affect his emotional balance while at school. He posed the following to me:

What if one of my parents dies, or something -- what if something happens in my life, in my personal life that makes me change? Like if I have a kid while I'm in college? What if something happens?

As I said in Chapter 4 after considering the interviews conducted for this study in their entirety, it was clear to me that the decisions participants were making about where to go to school and what to pursue were based on what degree of transition they thought they

could handle. As also discussed in the fourth chapter, participants chose more college programs when first entering postsecondary education, and attended the college in the nearby town most frequently. Depending on the support they had and their prior experience living and going to school away from the Community, their interviews indicated to me that this occurred because they saw the nearby college as the safest choice. When moving away, students are faced with having to find a place to live and pay rent for the first time, and many also need to seek employment to support themselves. Alison had lived in town to attend high school for about one year before returning to the Community to complete her diploma. In her last year of high school, she strongly considered moving away to another province to attend college, and had even put an application in to the college, but she decided against the move when a friend of hers did not end up graduating and thus could not accompany her:

Al: We were both the exact same age [and] we would have had an awesome time. And then he didn't graduate, and I didn't want to go out to Alberta where the rent was high.

A: By yourself.

Al: By myself, living in a basement apartment with a bunch of rats or something; you know, it wasn't going to happen.

For Alison, her friend would have acted as a safety measure to help ease the transition of moving away. When this person was unable to accompany her, she could not foresee herself being able to successfully take on the extra burden of rent. She eventually ended up attending school in the college closest to the community and lived rent-free with family in town. However, as I indicated, now that she has attended college there for a few years, she has developed a degree of comfort with both living in town and a whitestream

school system, and planned on attending university in the future. Now she felt she could consider options all over the province.

Based on the above analysis it is safe to say that depending upon whether one is alone, lacking in funds or unsure of how things are done in whitestream schools, it can be very intimidating for students from the Community to even contemplate the move from the reserve to a town or a city, even if the town is the one closest to the reserve (which most people visit every week or two with their families to get groceries). Participants did display increased levels of comfort as a result of time spent in town as well as in other educational systems, which not surprisingly allows them to feel more comfortable taking risks with regards to postsecondary education.

5.2 Cultural Transitioning

After spending time in a First Nations community, it quickly becomes clear to any observant person that First Nations youth are quite distinct epistemologically compared to white youth with respect to some of their attitudes, beliefs, and values. When youth leave the community to live in town, they are thrust into a new environment where they are confronted with these differences. This section will look at the extent to which participants identified with their Aboriginal culture, and the lack of acceptance that greeted them because of their culture and background when transitioning to town.

When asked whether or not they considered themselves “traditional,” only two of the participants, Dan and Lucy, replied that they are “very traditional.” The others classified themselves as “somewhat” or not at all. While she identified herself as

“somewhat traditional,” Alison, as I have indicated, told me that many of her traditions, including her language, had not been taught to her up until that point. While she did seem interested in learning it, she worried that it might be “too late” for her. When I asked if she was worried about losing the traditions she did maintain, she replied,

No because I didn't [really] learn them anyways. They barely got taught.... It would be nice to learn but it's hard, you know. It's easier to learn the Ojibway language growing up with it, being spoken to.

When asked how he was “traditional,” Dan spoke of practices he undertook individually, such as putting down tobacco and smudging himself. When asked whether he thought that leaving the Community for his education would impact his ability to practice his traditions, the answer I received was the same as Mike's. Dan said,

I don't think so. I think no matter where I am, as long as I try to be or I want to learn something, I want to go to the sweat lodge. No matter where I am, it's going to be there...because I know for a fact that, we're all over the place.... And I can go to [local communities] and ask for them to give me a sweat, and ask for guidance, just because [in] our culture, we are supposed to help anyone. We're open to anyone. We're not supposed to be judgmental of anything.

One of the concerns expressed to me by Charlotte is her observation that children and youth in the Community seem to ridicule their identity and Aboriginal traditions, a behaviour s/he does not recall from her past. As she explained it,

C: I never met anybody or there was never anybody in any [of my] groups that hated who they were. Or resented it, or whatever. Nobody ever said, “you know, oh I'm going to the rez... the rez sucks.” We never talked about our communities like that. We would laugh at things, like “oh yeah, our bunny ears aren't working on our tv,” but I never knew anybody that talked about being Native the way our kids do these days.

A: Ok. How do they talk about it? What's that about?

C: Um, [what they call] that “Indian stuff,” talking about ceremonies, or whatever. There's no respect for it. Even though we didn't know about it,

or we weren't taught about it, we never talked badly about it. Or laughed at somebody because they spoke broken English. [We] never did any of that.

It would be difficult to say whether the stigmatization of Aboriginal culture has changed in recent years, but there is widespread worry that many cultures will be lost in this generation. From our interactions during the interview, I could tell that while some participants embraced their culture, others wanted to disassociate themselves from it. As mentioned before, Pat's personal strategy as expressed to me was "adapt or die." When I asked him if he had ever encountered racism in town he told me that people "act a little more careful" around him. As I have discussed above, he is tall and some non-Aboriginal people in town may connect his physical attributes to the stereotypes that exist. He and Dan also told me that they had sometimes felt unsafe or stereotyped while walking the streets in town. According to Dan, "even for me, racism [is] around the corner. Sometimes I'll look behind my back and keep walking, because there can be some racist old [man]."

The racism does not seem to be exclusive to the older generation of people living in town. Alison, for instance, told me that she encountered racism among her peers during her first year of college. Because Alison has a lighter skin tone, she found that many people at college assumed she was from town. When they found her socializing with other Native people, some asked questions. Alison was clearly angry when she told me the following:

When they found out where I was from ... when they [saw] me hanging out with a bunch of Native people, they were just like, why the fuck are you hanging around with *them*?

When I asked Alison whether or not those who found out disassociated themselves from her she replied “Not all of them, but then some of them who are racist said, ‘you shouldn’t hang out with Natives, you’re white.’ But I’m not white, I’m both.”

To leave the Community to go to the college in the nearby town, or another postsecondary institution in another location, where racism will be “around the corner,” takes a lot of bravery for students. After my first interview with her, I could not stop thinking about how Lucy told me she was scared to move to town in part because she was afraid to face “mean” people. It was not until our second interview that she revealed that the reason why she only attended school in town for one month (back when she was in the eighth grade) was that, as she told me, she was “being bad.” When I asked her to tell me what happened, her answers revealed that her behavior was a reaction to racist experiences. As she explained, one day,

in geography class we had to team up...and I was sitting with this boy and...he [said], “you know, Natives are not supposed to be here,” like that. And I said, “say it again?” and he didn’t say it, and I didn’t know there were cameras there at the time, so I kicked him.... And I got sent to the office. And then, after that, the principal’s [said] “don’t do that again!” ... I just walked away... I told the principal [what he did], then she went and talked to the kid who said that, and he came in, and he got in trouble too.

But the intervention was obviously not successful, because she left the school.

Lucy also encountered racism from adults at the school, which understandably caused her to grow upset. She reveals,

I spit in the Janitor’s face. Um, I was pretty angry. I was angry. Real angry...because they kept saying “Natives don’t belong here,” and I was like, “man, shut up,” so. I did what I had to do.... I was just walking by.

In chapter four, I discussed the encouragement Lucy was receiving from her parents regarding her impending enrollment in college and subsequent move to town. When I asked her if she was happy to have their support, her reply revealed her insecurity about her upcoming transition: “Um, I’m happy but at the same time I’m kind of scared, because I probably wouldn’t even know what to do.... [I’ll] probably feel lost for a while.” Here Lucy touches upon a fear of many Aboriginal students, that they will not know how to adapt to the new and different nature of responsibilities with regards to both living in town and attending school there. In the Community, the school system is small and easier to navigate than in town. Because of the small population, teachers and administrators are quite familiar with each child, and students are not required to interact often with unfamiliar adults.

Perhaps the most challenging part of the transition to town is the isolation experienced. When the move is made, a person from the community may find that he or s/he feels very alone because the support systems which helped them to navigate their daily lives while in the Community, especially with respect to school, are no longer there. That is, Aboriginal and white settings differ quite substantially in this respect. Further, the Aboriginal student is an outsider. When I inquired about the concerns of one participant about the transition to town, she told me that one challenge she foresaw was “not having my family there and stuff...and having no one to talk to ‘cause your going to be all new there.”

To summarize, there are numerous new responsibilities that students moving from the community to attend postsecondary education must take on, and how much support

they have and their previous experiences living in town often determine the extent of the comfort that participants feel in these transitions. The difficulty of the transition to town is exacerbated by the fact that racist episodes are experienced there. I will conclude the section on the cultural transition out of the reserve with a succinct statement made by Dan who at the time of writing had attended one year of high school in town and was embarking on his second: “Because of the history between [Native and non-Native people in town](pause), it’s hard living there.”

5.3 Making the Academic Transition

In Chapter 6 I will discuss at length the shocking inequity of funding to First Nation schools (as compared to the rest of the Province of Ontario.) This reality can be theorized to have resulted in a school system which participants in this study have observed is lacking when judged against the standard set by schools outside of the reserve. Students may emerge from the Community school system with lower than average academic skills. (Again a detailed discussion of why this occurs is included in Chapter 6). As a result, if people do go on to postsecondary education, they often struggle with the academic transition, at least to begin with, as they catch up their skills and knowledge. Alison, who has attended college in town for a few years, expressed great concern about other students who go through a similar transition as she did. This worry seemed to partially stem from her experience with a student she mentored last year, who had also recently graduated from the Community high school. Here she explains the

transition program at the college, and how the girl was unable to handle the level of difficulty:

[In the program they] transition you, like this is what is expected of you, like this is the kind of work that we do. We do it on timelines; you can't hand in your work a month later and be like "here you go, can you please pass me now?" It's a transition program, and this girl, I helped her, try and pass, but she just couldn't do it.

From the above example, it is clear that the whitestream institution sets the standards of education here, rather than the situation of those who wish to transition. There are no official numbers of how many members of the community have attempted postsecondary education in the past and what their rate of success has been. I decided to ask the high school teacher whether or not over the years s/he has been employed in the Community, s/he has seen many students go on and be successful in postsecondary education. S/he told me s/he had not, and had the following explanation:

Sadly, I think a lot of it is (sigh) in my opinion, a lot of them might struggle with the school work that they get faced with when they get out [of the Community]. I mean, we try our best to keep things up to 'standard', or 'par' here [in the Community high school]. You know what I mean, what they should be doing or what they should be learning, but there is a certain point where we have to kind of lower it just a little bit, because so many of the kids are so much below grade level that we can't possibly do everything. Look, I try so hard not to lower my standards.... I try to make them do as much work as they can. It's what other kids will be doing in the Province, but there are obviously times where you have to bring it down just a little bit 'cause they just don't have the knowledge or the background, or whatever basis for what [the Province requires].

While this problem masquerades as one of quality, it can be ultimately traced to chronic underfunding of elementary and secondary education, as I will argue in this thesis. The academic disparity between the two school systems manifests itself in various ways, as can be seen throughout the academic experiences of interviewees in transitions

to postsecondary education as well as to elementary and high schools outside of the community.

As mentioned earlier, only one of the participants in this study had not attended school for any amount of time outside the Community. The rest had all at least attempted time in an outside school and were met with differing degrees of success and enjoyment.

Here Mike explains his experience:

I remember in grade 7 [in the Community] for our geography, we would just look at maps and colour them in and whatever, find main cities in the book.... And as soon as I got to [the local town], we started in grade 7. We started learning about longitude, latitude, all the rest of the stuff, like co-ordinates and everything, and I was “whoa, this is confusing.”

Depending on their academic talents, and how much assistance is available to students who make the transitions (for instance, help with homework from parents, siblings, or other family members) this increased challenge of moving into whitestream postsecondary education can prove frustrating. The recent increased emphasis on academic rigour, especially in the younger grades in Ontario, means that those making a transition to a whitestream institution in elementary school may not know how to deal with situations which are new to them. One participant, who moved to town and lived with a family member so s/he could attend elementary school there, related the following story to me:

[My math teacher] was being mean. He piled a bunch of homework for me. And he’s like “oh, do this and that” and I was like “(sigh).” So I did that and then, went back.... I used to stay with [my uncle] and did all my work.... When I took it back, [the teacher] said it was wrong, and I checked it again, came out with the same answer and then just gave it to him. Then he marked it, and then he said something again and then I just looked at him, and then I messed up his papers, and just walked away.
A: You were frustrated?

L: Yes.

A: Why were you frustrated?

L: 'Cause he was giving me a hard time. He made me check my homework twice.

Acting out against the teacher (messing up his papers) was the way this participant expressed frustration and it is clear from the situation s/he described to me that s/he did not understand at the time why s/he was faced with such a situation and perhaps misunderstood the motivations of her/his teacher in town.

As was discussed earlier in this chapter, some youth in the Community are forced to miss school because of family issues, such as dealing with addictions, or perhaps being in and out of the care of child services, and these absences may keep them behind at school. Instead of attending school within the community, Charlotte transitioned between various elementary schools in town and group homes which provided some sort of academic instruction. As a result of being chronically absent throughout some of her elementary and high school years because of family issues, and of the poor academic standards of the group home she attended, Charlotte felt that she continued to lack the knowledge base of her peers in school. As a result, she found she was disadvantaged when entering postsecondary education. In her words,

I'd come back [to school after an absence] and not know what's going on. For me there are big gaps with [material] I know I should have picked up way back when. Or things I should have been able to build on by the time I was in grade 6. [School in town] went from junior kindergarten to grade 6 [and] then you transitioned over to [another senior school]...and that population was 500 to 600 students. ...I was terrified, I had no self-esteem, I had nothing. So when I walked in the door I walked right out the other door.

It is easy to understand how the self-image issues which may affect children who experience such tumultuous home lives, as mentioned by Charlotte, is such an important aspect of academic success. Experiences related by participants suggest that if children have to deal with stressful situations at home, and are not encouraged or supported in their schooling, their attendance may lapse and contribute to poor academic success. This makes the academic transition to postsecondary education that much more difficult for these students. But the lack of support is systemically related to parental and/or grandparental involvement in residential schools, and suspicion of the whitestream system.

Participants also told me about skill sets that they felt they were lacking when transitioning to town. Alison, who completed the majority of her high school in the Community, commented that when she entered college, she lacked certain skills (that are highly valued in whitestream education, but perhaps not as emphasized in the culture of Community) which she required to be successful in certain classes. Here she links how her lack of public speaking skills was directly related to her ability to make new friends in town and her poor grades in one class:

You don't learn [public speaking skills] in [the Community]. So then when you go to somewhere where you are expected to do that, or where you are expected to be open and out there, and meet new people..., I failed this one class three times. No, twice, because of the last project at the end, which is a presentation project, where I had to stand up and talk for 10 to 20 minutes about a certain topic.

In addition to this, students may not know to advocate for themselves when assistance is available, and/or to seek out transition programs. The teacher speculated that individuals

attending school outside the Community for the first time may have difficulty navigating postsecondary institutions this way:

They may or may not know where to go for help when they're in college. Most colleges that I know do have student success centres that will help people that struggle. But the kids might not know about that, and they might not know how to access it, or even know who to ask for help, or may think that help's not available to them when they're out there.

It is usually the responsibility of the individual to seek help if he or she needs it when in whitestream college or university. Within the Community school, students are well known to everyone and familiar with the staff, but they may not feel comfortable approaching new people at the college. As a result, students are often identified and recruited directly to programs which would benefit them. Compared to this, and the close-knit and relatively isolated nature of the Community, a student entering an outside whitestream institution for the first time may not know to or feel comfortable seeking out academic services.

Further, in a transition to another school from the community, workers at the new schools may not acknowledge or even be aware of the unique life histories that Aboriginal students may have. When Dan moved to town to live in foster care during high school, he was placed in applied classes (which lead to admission to college) rather than academic classes (which lead to university) by guidance staff. This placement occurred based on his previous marks, which he explained to me, were negatively affected because he often had to miss class in order to meet and deal with his family service agency. When he did attend class in the community, however, he told me that he found the work easy. Currently Dan has been achieving first or second place standing in

many of his classes – for whatever reason, he has accepted the “applied” label and has made the honour roll. He now thinks that he would have been able to do well in the academic stream in high school. He does not, however, plan on advancing to academic classes because he has decided that he would like to embark on a career path which solely involves college training.

5.4 Chapter Summary

A survey of First Nations across the country suggested that the primary reason that people leave communities is to seek out education opportunities at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary level. Participants expressed concern about leaving, specifically about how they would deal with responsibilities they held in the Community while living away. When they do leave, they are left to negotiate a host of transitional issues which, rather than being a reflection on themselves and their ability to adapt, are rather a consequence of the systemic inequities that are present for Aboriginal peoples in Canada. These experiences directly influence postsecondary choice. As was seen, those who had lived in town and successfully navigated the school system there were ready to move further away from the community and take into consideration institution and program preferences. Those that have not successfully lived there for an extended period of time seem to often choose to go to school in town so to minimize the transition, but can still have a difficult time navigating new experiences like rent, groceries, and a more complicated school system.

None of the participants expressed concern at their ability to maintain their traditions when away from the Community, as those that classified themselves as “very traditional” felt that they would be able to participate in ceremonies in other communities with ease, based on the welcoming nature of Aboriginal cultures. For some participants who were less traditional, there existed some desire to adapt to the whitestream, as a reaction to being racialized. Many participants recounted experiences of racism directed towards them while in town, from both older and younger people. Four participants also shared stories of being racialized while attending school in whitestream society.

Participants with less experience in whitestream society expressed greater fear of not knowing how to adapt to living and attending school in town. Unlike in the Community, when attending school in town, students are faced with a school system they are not familiar with, and must interact with adults whom they do not know. Many experience isolation and feel removed from Community support networks.

When students from the Community enter whitestream education institutions, they also find that they are not prepared for the academic transition, since whitestream institutions set the standards, not those who transition. This discrepancy exists because teachers at the school are unable to keep standards up to Provincial levels because the students are unprepared to deal with the material. It is not known why students are not achieving in school at the level of their whitestream peers. A lack of self-esteem, persistent absenteeism, and the lack of credentials of elementary school teachers were all blamed. In the next chapter, this discrepancy will ultimately be tied to a lack of government funding.

When students do go to postsecondary education, they find that they are lacking certain skill sets. Students also may not know how to advocate for themselves or to seek out academic or other help (or perhaps may not feel comfortable doing so) since in the Community school students are identified. Workers at their new schools also may not be aware or acknowledge their unique life histories.

In the next chapter, participant comments regarding issues in the Community will be recast as systemic problems which result from the continued oppressive practices of the Canadian government.

CHAPTER 6

THEORIZING PERSONAL ISSUES AS SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS

6.0 Introduction

As the last chapter makes clear, not only does Community policy support postsecondary education, but many wish to enroll in college, university or trade school (which is consistent with attitudes of First Nations people across the country). Yet, while the number of Aboriginal people attending postsecondary education is rising, the rates of postsecondary enrollment and credentialing of Aboriginal people continue to fall below that of other Canadians. This chapter will explore the stories about circumstances preventing Community members from pursuing postsecondary education.

It is impossible to isolate postsecondary education from the levels of education that precede it. The view that those with exposure to “town” schools are better prepared for whitestream postsecondary education has already been put forward. In this chapter I recount the flaws in the elementary and secondary schools in the Community that participants suggested explain low postsecondary attainment rates. I then suggest that these occurrences can be traced to the chronic underfunding of education on reserves in Canada, a problem I believe is not fully appreciated in whitestream society. This underfunding has a noticeable effect on learning environment and ultimately on student outcomes. Finally, it is revealed that underfunding also plagues the current postsecondary funding system, and thus there are limits to the number of students who are able to take

advantage of it, despite the persistent myth that all Aboriginal people in Canada are able to attend postsecondary education for free.

6.1 Issues at the Elementary School Level

As residential schools slowly began to close in Ontario, community schools located on reserve, or regular public schools in nearby towns began to take their place. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the school building within the community I visited was built in the 1970s. Both Pat and Lucy told me that they had good experiences in the Community school, and were satisfied with their time there. When I asked Pat about his time in elementary school, he told me that “it was actually pretty good, they challenged me enough so I could actually keep busy and not be bored all the time. And, overall it went pretty well.” However, not all stories were positive, and my informal conversations with Community members and interviews with participants made it clear that some residents are concerned about the quality of education that children receive in the local school.

Alison’s story about a negative experience with the quality of teachers was similar to those told by some other participants. I will suggest later in the chapter that this problem is related to underfunding and the remoteness of the reserve. In Alison’s words,

[t]hey just give you a piece of paper ...[and say] “this is what you’re doing today, do it”.... [This is] not like my experiences in town -- they weren’t like that, where the teacher is up there talking basically to the whole class about the concepts and all that. In [the Community], they’re saying, “this is a paper that you are supposed to write on, the work is on there, like, please just leave me alone at my desk.

The situation also has a very personal side, even though the issues may be related to comparatively poor funding and resources compared to whitestream schools. I noticed

that these negative stories about the Community school seemed to focus solely on the teachers who are from the Community. While the anger about these experiences came forward first, as I probed deeper into the elementary school experiences of those who compared the school and its teachers unfavorably with those in town, I also began to uncover positive stories about teachers from the Community as well. Mike, for instance, started off by relating general statements painting all of the teachers in a negative light. But, when I asked for specific examples, he did tell me about teachers he enjoyed. As he commented,

M: There was grade one, grade four and five, where the three teachers that actually taught us how to do work.

A: And the grade four and five teachers were from [the Community]?

M: Yeah, [name omitted], she still works here.... She um, she's really good, she also got us to ah, what's the word, to interact with her. I remember every time after school, when we'd go home for lunch or after school, she would get us to either give her a hug or a handshake before we left the door.

Thus I became aware that the negative attitudes towards teachers from the Community were somewhat related to comparisons students were drawing to their own experiences and the experiences of others in white society in town. Ultimately, I found that these were connected to a large discrepancy in funding between the school system in the Community and other whitestream school systems, as well as a lingering colonial legacy, which influenced some to believe that their education was lacking as a result of a deficit within their people.

In the last chapter, the exposure of young people to whitestream elementary and secondary education was depicted as “building confidence” for the decision to pursue whitestream postsecondary education. A related point is that all but one of the

participants who spoke negatively of the Community school had spent a significant amount of time attending schools in town. A number of children from the Community have spent time in the school there because their parents or guardians, wishing their children to receive what they perceive to be a “better education,” move to town, or send their children to live with family in town so that they can attend school there. None of the young participants spoke negatively of any non-Community members who had been hired to teach at the Community school; these stories were only related to me by the teacher I interviewed. As we saw with Alison above, some of the participants, however, seemed quite eager to share with me their anger and frustration at the quality of services of the Community school -- the blame was primarily placed on the teachers hired from the Community and on members of the administration. The circumstances around these critiques are worth explaining.

At the moment, elementary teachers in the Community (as in most First Nations communities in the Province) do not have to be certified by the Ontario College of Teachers, to have graduated from teacher’s college or even to have attended university.¹⁶ Participants in the study who worked in the school (for instance, the high school teacher,) were quick to point out to me that despite most not having their OCT certification, the teachers from the Community were indispensable in many ways. As one commented “many teachers are doing good things...with what they have. They’re doing what they can, and they’re doing a good job with those kids.” (Here, “with what they have” refers to the resources they are given to teach with, as well as their teacher training.) The high

¹⁶ However I was told by one of the participants that years ago, the school invested a few of the elementary teachers in the Community to go to school to earn their Aboriginal Teaching Certificate.

school teacher and another participant especially highlighted the excellent classroom management skills of the teachers. However, other Community members I spoke with informally told me that they were eager for the requirements to change, linking the standard of education with standard teaching qualifications. Those I informally met and discussed the project with during my research trips often pointed to this lack of teaching qualifications (as defined by the whitestream education system) as a starting point for improving the education system in the Community. This suggested to me there is a desire among many in the Community to have students learn the whitestream system, and achieve success within it.

6.2 Issues at the High School Level

6.2.1 Academic Standards

Reaction to the high school among participants was also mixed. Lucy and Maria told me that they felt challenged by the work given and they, as well as other participants, told me about teachers who had inspired them and supported them through their work. Lucy, who had only attended school outside of the community for one month, expressed a satisfaction at her time in both the elementary and the high school on the reserve. She told me that she found her secondary classes challenging, and that she was given great support from a particular teacher who was her favorite because “she helps me out a lot.... When I need help she’s always there.” Participants who had attended school outside of the Community, however, expressed frustration. When I asked Carl about his time in the Community high school, he became very emotional, calling the experience “crazy”:

A: You said it was crazy, what happened?

C: It was easy, it was just so slack at the school.

A: It was different compared to in [the city]?

C: Oh yeah!

The band councilor I interviewed also felt that the students at the high school were not “pushed enough” in the reserve high school. S/he felt that the workers at the school could do more in terms of promoting certain courses so that students could fare better in postsecondary education. S/he saw the problem residing in the teachers who “don’t push” education at the students as well as the students, who s/he felt had to be “ready to take that extra learning challenge.” However, when students in the Community reach high school, it is well known in they are not able to complete work at a grade nine level. According to the teacher, “somewhere there’s a gap of learning where they’re not getting what they need to be in high school basically, they’re not prepared.” According to the high school teacher, bringing the students who enter the high school up to grade level proves to be a large task. Here the teacher reflects on the academic levels of students in the Community when they enter high school:

A whole lot of them have actually been assessed, and a large number of the...grade nine and tens a few years back, were at a grade three, four level at the highest. Some of them were at grade one, two, level.... So, how do you teach a grade nine curriculum when a kid’s reading at a grade two level?

Because the teacher had been working at the school for years, and had grown quite familiar with the Community, I asked why s/he thought students arrived in high school not up to provincial academic standards. His/her answer reveals deep problems within the

Community's school system, which are ultimately connected to government funding of both human and physical resources.

Something is happening, we don't know what, we don't know where, and we don't even know if it's just elementary school, or if it has to do with [the students] home lives... [be]cause it's not all the kids. Some of the kids get through and they're just fine. Some of them are very...quick to pick up on everything we're doing, and they march on through without any help at all.

S/he went on to say that, as for the others "they literally just don't have the skills" and "they need intensive help to do it, but there's not that help available." Probing this question further, of what exactly determines whether or not the students at the Community school achieve good grades academically, is an area which could potentially be taken up by future research, especially if it is deemed to be a question of interest to other education workers and/or the Community members at large.

6.2.2 Attendance/Absenteeism

There are also chronic school attendance problems in the Community, which for some begin in elementary school. Indeed, persistent absentee problems and high dropout rates are not unique to this Aboriginal community. In 2009, the Canadian Council on Learning (2009b) reported that absenteeism indicates a lack of engagement in school on the behalf of the student, which is one variable which is identified as connected to high school dropout rates. While the report did not provide attendance percentages for Ontario, it did note that on-reserve absenteeism among Aboriginal, Metis and Inuit youth in Canada is, on average, higher than for youth living off reserve. (CCL, 2009b) The report also noted that First Nations youth living on-reserve completed high school in the first

decade of the new millennium at a rate lower than in the 1990s. (CCL, 2009b) In the Community high school, skipping school, or even coming to school and not showing up to class is an ever-present issue. Here the teacher explains the approach s/he has taken:

I've stopped running after people, and I've stopped trying so hard to repeat lessons, when kids have missed them because I think they need to learn responsibility for their actions.... [I]f I keep catering to them, they're never going to learn that, in the real world, you actually have to be responsible for what you're doing. If you want to get this credit you need to be here and do it. You can't come once a week and expect to pass.

According to the teacher, past efforts to *force* students to do all the work result in their doing “a really bad job of it,” or complaining that “it’s too much work” and quitting. By maintaining the “tough love” approach described above, s/he has seen some improvement within the students in that, “the kids that want the credits come every day, [or] sometimes every day.”

Why is attendance a problem? Workers at the school and student participants suggested a variety of theories. One administrator felt it was as simple as “your regular teenage stuff. I’m older, and this is stupid, and it sucks and I don’t need to be here.” Having a parent or guardian who is unable or unwilling to insist their child go to school was also mentioned. Beyond the personal “blame the victim” theorizing, though, there was recognition of community-based problems. For example, because of the perceptions discussed in Chapter 4 that a postsecondary degree is not needed for a job in the Community, or perhaps, a lack of exposure to the different employment opportunities available in the Community or in nearby towns and cities, youth may not be inspired to continue on in their education. (This lack of inspiration is taken up again in Chapter 7).

Three of the school-going interviewees told me they felt many of their peers did not continue to come to high school because they were caught up in drinking and taking drugs. One administrator also felt that many students did not attend school regularly because of other responsibilities and hardships they may be dealing with in their home life regarding substance abuse. In his/her words,

I was wondering the same thing [about attendance], after a year or two after being here. [I asked the Postsecondary Councilor] and she said “Well, look at a class list, from this class list, how many of these parents here have alcohol problems, or you know, are sniffing?” And you know after reading through it, 65% or 70% of them have those issues.

The administrator went on to say, however, that having family members who are dealing with addictions does not necessarily mean that those affected will not show up to school. What is the case is that those students who may have otherwise managed school may not continue to attend, given the extra challenges which may come with addictions in the household.

Some of those who do not finish the school year are students returning after a long absence -- that is, after dropping out years earlier. When I asked one school administrator why this occurs, s/he pointed out that older students were sometimes discouraged because of age differences and gaps in education. As s/he put it,

A lot of them are older adult students. They come in and they have good intentions, and they get in the classroom and they realize the kids are five, six, seven years younger than them. So those ones go off to the wayside. Some of them [may have] dropped out maybe in grade seven or eight.... And yeah, again, they've come back years later, and they sit in the classroom, and they don't have the skills to be sitting in there, so they drop out.

Maria had some insight into the situation of the Community school from her own experience. She told me that during her first two years of high school, she would attend every day because she was forced to do so by her guardian. However, when she arrived, she would not attend class. In her words, “I didn’t care to begin with. I didn’t even want to be there.” She told me that she “hated” school, and when I asked her why, she replied “honestly, I don’t even have an answer for that.... Probably because I wanted out, and I was sick of the reserve, and wanted to leave.” She told me that her anger often caused her to act out at the teachers: “I was mouthy to teachers, I put them down.”

These feelings of anger and dislike of school are common among the youth in the Community, as I noticed working as a camp counselor for two summers. I have personally seen some young people grow to become disillusioned with school and drop out. But a combination of encouragement from a family member and self-motivation inspired Maria to overcome her anger and frustration with the Community and other family members and put an effort into high school. In her words,

I realized that if I finished school, I’d leave [the community], and my grandma put this little thought in my head, and said, “if you finished school, you wouldn’t have to get up so early in the morning. You could sleep in all you want.” She said “I don’t care after you finish school.” So that thought was stuck in my head, and I went, thinking that, ... I guess basically I started doing good because I was trying to make my mom happy... [even though] she was [mistreating] me.... It wasn’t the way she treats my brothers and my sisters so...I tried to make her happy, and it didn’t make her happy, and I realized I don’t need her, and I did it. I went to school to make *myself* happy.

The teacher was also aware of these problems and told me about classroom and curriculum strategies s/he has adopted for those students to keep up who wish to come but are prevented from doing so because of life circumstances. As s/he put it,

I just try to keep going and I keep a catch up list running. I always have a catch up book waiting and extra handouts, and when people come in, they take what they need and I tell them to do it at home. And if they do they do, and if they don't they don't.

No matter what strategies teachers at the high school level take, the persistent absenteeism problem does affect the amount of material that teachers are able to cover with their students, and has an overall impact on the quality of education they receive.

The teacher continued:

It definitely affects how much you get done, and, what level you do it at too, [be]cause you can't ...get into very deep stuff when kids aren't even showing up. Or they might come for the morning, but they don't show up for the afternoon, so what are you going to do?

Perhaps in recognition of all the obstacles many students must overcome to finish high school, graduation is one of the largest and most celebrated events in the Community each year. All community members are invited to attend the ceremony in the school gym, which is decorated especially for the occasion. Graduates from all grades are honoured at the ceremony, but the focus of the ceremony is the success of the high school graduates. Graduating from high school is a very significant event in the community, and is celebrated by everyone. Maria told me about her experience with graduation, the pride she felt for her accomplishments, and how good it felt to be recognized:

I graduated, and it was pretty cool, like the best feeling ever.... Because all the attention was on you, and knowing you don't ever have to think of high school again.... And worrying about it. It's just over and done with.... And walking down the stage with everybody there, it's just awesome.

Indeed, when someone does graduate, the teachers feel it as much as the students do, since they appreciate the "long way" the students must come.

6.2.3 A Lack of Resources

Based on my interviews with participants, I detected a high degree of awareness in the Community that the high school in town has much more to offer students in terms of resources and course options than the one in the Community. In the following excerpt, Mike describes to me the advantages which drew him to attend high school in town:

There were more choices in courses to take.... We were actually able to get in depth with courses; we had science labs, where we would fiddle around with chemicals and what not.... We actually had calculators where we learned how to graph things.

A related observation is that it is difficult to recruit staff to work in the Community. Because Aboriginal communities may be remote and thus far away from whitestream society, many First Nations (especially ones located in Northern Ontario) experience difficulties recruiting teachers. Because the Community I visited is remotely located, most teacher interviews are conducted by phone, and school staff often do not have a chance to meet teachers until they arrive to start their placements. The unattractiveness of such a remote posting to some has caused a few teachers who are hired to the Community not to stay the duration of their contract. While a camp counselor in the Community, I witnessed the impact that this high turnover has on the self-esteem of the students. When we first met, many of the children asked if I had decided to come to that community in particular, and if I knew anything about the community beforehand. As my relationship progressed with both them and my older adult friends, it was revealed to me that becoming attached to outsiders who come to work often results in hurt. When teachers are hired to the Community but only stay for a few weeks or months, it sends the message

to the children that they are not worth the effort, or are too hard to handle. As a result of the hiring process, there may also be problems with the quality of the teachers. As one informant explained: “Sometimes there’s been teachers... here... that aren’t here anymore obviously, but, who are literally doing nothing all day, and we know it.” The teacher suggests that evaluations conducted by the administration of the school might be able to address issues of standards:

It’s nice to see when the administration will actually come down and check things out, and make sure things are running the way they’re supposed to, make sure we’re teaching what we’re supposed to be teaching, like we’re following the curriculum. Those kinds of things would be nice to see happening, not to evaluate anyone, but just to make everyone accountable for their actions. I think that’s really important, we don’t have that.... That’s very rare.

It is less clear how to address the issue of lack of attractiveness of a remote posting, however, which also affects quality of medical, social work and all professional services.

6.3 Underfunding of the School System

Some of the comments cited above in this chapter locate problems in the individual, for instance, by suggesting issues with the Community school are the fault of individual teachers, staff, parents, students themselves or administration. However, when they are placed in the context of the underfunding of the entire system, the problems can be seen to be systemic rather than traceable to any single individual or set of individuals. This problem is not widely understood in whiteman society, as indicated by one of my key informants, who said,

“We’re paying your taxes and you guys are getting free money”-- that’s what a lot of people are saying out there. But that’s totally wrong. We as a

Chief and Council actually see the true ramifications. Yes, taxes are a part and parcel of it, but it's the resources that the government extracts. That's where the money is. We did an analysis just for our Community alone... [and found they've extracted] 350 million out of this area.... There's pipelines going through, there's CNR, there's Bell, there's cable, there's minerals being extracted, and there's water being used as revenue.

In this comment, the problem is placed at a systemic level, rather than blaming members of the community.

It was obvious from the comments cited in the last two sections that Community members are frustrated at the state of the school system of the Community. Criticisms included the level of education teachers are required to have, the lack of resources at the school, the relatively small selection of courses offered at the high school, the lack of resources dedicated to hire quality teachers, and lack of evaluation by the administration. Indeed, the criticisms leveled against the community's school system by participants, including those of the teacher and the councilor, were quite all encompassing, which itself suggests a larger issue than individual blame. As seen in the comments above, teachers, administrators, students, and their families were *all* at some point during the interview process blamed for the failings of the education system. It was the one particular comment cited above from the band councilor, however, which brought the entire situation into perspective for me.

It is true that the school does not offer a broad selection of courses at the high school level, does not have comparable materials to the schools in town, and does not perform corresponding evaluation practices. As my own reading progressed, I began to see that a large part of the explanation stems from the reality that First Nations communities, including the one in question receive from the federal government about

half the amount of funding per student that the Provincial government gives to non-Aboriginal communities in Canada. I first learned of this figure from the band councilor during our discussion about what was lacking in the community school.

BC: We don't have all the fundamentals, ah, all the instructions, all the supplies, which the Provincial government provides to their students in [town], or elsewhere municipal.... We don't have that here.

A: Ok, why not?

BC: We just don't have the funding for it, that's the big issue right now, is our funding.

A: Because you get the funding from the federal government.

BC: Yes.

A: Whereas the rest of the provincial system is obviously provincial.

BC: Yes.... Ours is half of what the provincial students get in [the nearby town], we get half of that. But we do have a little subsidy for special ed: there's two kinds of special ed, there's soft special ed and there's hard special ed as well. We only get a little bit of that, then we get offset programs like retention, new paths. They don't [even] make a dent.

A: Ok, so the finances --

BC: Yeah they're not comparable.

I was able to confirm the figure given by the councilor in the final report issued by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1996. In RCAP, it was recorded that the ratio of expenditure on education per Aboriginal person compared to non-Aboriginal person is \$2 to \$1. (AFN, no date; RCAP, 1996) When this conversation occurred between the band councilor and me, I was absolutely horrified and heartbroken. How could the government of Canada justify underfunding the education of First Nations people? When I returned home I could not help sharing this piece of information with family and friends. Some were incredulous. My mother, an educator herself, simply could not believe it was true. Others, such as another relative, stipulated that if it was indeed true, it was justified. I was aghast when he made the same argument mentioned by my key informant above – that Aboriginal people in this country do not pay the amount of

taxes that non-Aboriginals do. Delving into the complex issue of what Aboriginal people are and are not “owed” by this government is complex and would require a whole other thesis in order to do justice. Suffice it to say that the reality is that each year, large amounts of resources are extracted from First Nations land by corporations and government organizations. It is estimated that this particular Community has seen over \$350 million in different resources extracted from their land, often in ways which damage the natural environment and hurt the animal populations, and with very little consultation or approval from the majority of the Community. Absolutely none of that money has made its way back into the hands of this community, and instead goes to private corporations and the government that awards the contracts. Against this reality, the argument that Aboriginal people do not pay taxes seems quite flimsy indeed.

The funding situation has worsened in recent years. A report issued by the Assembly of First Nations showed that, when budgets were adjusted for inflation and population growth, funding for education, economic and social development, and capital facilities and maintenance has decreased by almost 13% since 1999-2000. This decline has occurred while, according to one report, the Government of Canada Main Estimates, reveals that total government spending for the period of 1999-2000 to 2004-2005 has remained steady. (AFN, no date)

A paper on First Nations Education Funding by the First Nations Education Council published in 2009 reveals that while in the past 20 years, provincial education funding models have undergone vast improvement and reform, INAC’s national funding model has not, and thus, First Nation Education continues to suffer in comparison.

Because of inadequate funding from the federal government, First Nation communities are not able to offer comparable second- and third- level services within both their elementary and high schools. Second-level services refer to pedagogical, administrative, and professional development support services. Included in this are the components of a successful education system that the teacher identified above as lacking in the community school -- the evaluation of principals, vice principals and teachers, and the evaluation of educational programs. Third-level services include the “development of regulations, standards, certification and codes of conduct, as well as the setting of school curriculum” and are usually administered by provincial Ministries of Education. (First Nations Education Council, 2009, p.26) Seven additional areas which are not at all funded by the INAC model are libraries, technology, sports and recreation, languages, student transportation and school operating costs, employee benefits, and student data management systems. (First Nations Education Council, 2009) As participants documented, this underfunding has had a noticeable effect on the learning environments and student outcomes in First Nations schools. This shortfall means that teachers in the Community are not as well supported as those working in provincial schools (regarding such things as professional development), and it has been reported that “the lack of administrative and technical support for First Nations schools pulls school principals, and often teachers, away from their role as educators.” (First Nations Education Council, 2009, p.29) This clearly accounts for at least some of the deficits mentioned by the teacher regarding administration and evaluation and by other participants such as Mike, Alison, Maria and Dan regarding teacher, curriculum, and resource quality at the school.

6.4 Postsecondary Education Funding Grants

If students do reach the point where they have graduated from high school and are willing to brave the various transitions they must adjust to in order to proceed to whitestream postsecondary education, grants from the federal government are available to some members of the community. The history of this granting process was discussed in Chapter 2. As mentioned there, the amount of money offered has remained unchanged since the early 1990s. This stagnation in funding has had a profound effect on community members seeking assistance with their postsecondary fees.

Today, as indicated earlier, \$395,000 is dedicated to postsecondary funding in the Community each year, and it is the responsibility of the Postsecondary Councilor, guided by regulations decided on by the education authority, to decide who has priority access to that money. As reported by the Postsecondary Councilor, approximately 70% of those who apply for postsecondary funding in any given year are granted it.

Priority for the grants is first given to those graduating high school. It was surprising to me that there are only seven or eight people (approximately) who fall into this category that apply for funding each year. The majority who look to pursue postsecondary education are over that age. This is consistent with findings elsewhere that show that the majority of Aboriginal people today attending postsecondary education are, on average, older than the rest of the Canadian population doing the same. (Statistics Canada, 2010) Sometimes students with a well-established postsecondary career, for instance, those pursuing higher graduate degrees such as PhDs and Masters degrees, will not make the cut, and must apply for other scholarships and bursaries to continue to fund

their education. Also, if students do not pass all of their courses, their funding status is placed in jeopardy, and the Postsecondary Councilor routinely approaches them with a contract which requires that they pass all of their courses the following year to insure that their funding is deposited each month. If a student breaks the contract, or refuses to participate, funding is denied and/or terminated.

Because of the growing population of the Community and the increasing proportion of those seeking postsecondary education, demand for funding has exceeded the amount available for many years. According to the band councilor I interviewed, the current council would like to see more people from the Community go to postsecondary education and recognizes that a lack of funding is holding potential students back. In response, they have made postsecondary education one of their priorities when it comes to distributing any extra monies. As s/he explained:

We do have a pot of money that comes in once in a while, it's called the Casino Rama fund ... so we get about maybe \$1 million dollars [annually from Casino Rama profits] somewhere in there. And there's five priorities: there's health, there's education, community development, and community infrastructure, and I can't remember what the fifth one is But that is an area that we've been tapping into. When postsecondary [funding] has a back log, what we do is try to put some money into there. Our postsecondary officer looks at that list and gives us recommendations of who we can fund.

While this money does help, as the councilor mentioned, there are a number of high priority issues in the Community (as with many First Nations) and so the extra funding can not impact beyond a few individuals a year (with respect to postsecondary education). As a result, many who apply for postsecondary funding from the Community do not receive it. By many accounts, this sometimes causes tension within the

Community. In the past, individuals have taken appeals to the band council, which can create upheaval if the Postsecondary Councilor is told that s/he must grant money to an appellant, since it is most often at the expense of another community member's funding. According to the Postsecondary Councilor, this situation has not arisen under the current chief and council, who have given him/her complete autonomy in his/her decisions. Still, despite following policy regarding priority sequencing, s/he knows that her decisions often determine whether potential students can or cannot follow their dreams. To update the funding policy, the new postsecondary policy document is currently being reviewed by various bodies in the Community as mentioned earlier.

Aside from covering tuition, the Community also gives a grant of \$300 a semester to pay for text books, and \$637 a month (for a single person with no dependents) to cover the cost of living. From the conversations I had with participants, it was not solely whether or not they received funding which determined if they pursued postsecondary education – they also had to consider if the amount would provide them enough to live, especially if they had to sacrifice employment. Maria, for example, had decided that it was not worth leaving her full-time salary in the Community to attend postsecondary education, because forgoing fulltime employment for attending school while receiving the grant would mean a significant reduction in her income. Charlotte, more experienced than the other participants, has taken classes in different postsecondary programs since she turned 21 approximately 20 years ago. When she began, she was single and had no dependents. Today, she has a fulltime job, children and a partner (who also works). Out of the four programs she has attended, three have been funded by the Community (the

other was funded by her workplace at the time). Currently, she works full-time in the Community and lives in town. On weekends, she travels to another town approximately 300 km. away from the Community to attend classes, and must pay to stay overnight. I asked her about her experience with funding:

A: It is adequate?

C: Um, when I was a single student and back in '91 (laughs) --

A: Back in '91?

C: Well, what I got, I lived with. There were three of us that shared an apartment, so it was livable.

A: Ok.

C: The rates haven't changed since '91, so I could not even imagine [it] at all [now].

Alison also finds the money she receives every month from the band council inadequate as a sole source of funding, even though she does not have to pay rent at the house her parents own in town. As she puts it,

If I was living on my own and not in my parents' house, I wouldn't be able to live off that. Rent in [town] is \$650 a month. You get \$637 a month from the band.

Dan is worried because he has heard rumours about the cancellation of the postsecondary funding for Aboriginal students (these were briefly discussed in Chapter 2). He revealed to me that he has "thought hard" about a plan, and just in case the funding is cancelled he will "[t]ry to do my best in school so I can get bursaries." During his time in the town high school, Dan has heard about people receiving large scholarships and bursaries, and he wants to adopt their strategy and "apply to everything."

The persistent rumours and media reports that the future of the postsecondary funding program is in jeopardy makes many people from the community feel uneasy. When I spoke to the band councilor about the news stories, he told me that he found them

“undermining.” The comment is perceptive, referring to a federal government that often makes decisions about Aboriginal communities without consulting those whom they actually affect. The mere fact that this program is even in question is worrisome, given the high priority of the issue of postsecondary education in Aboriginal circles. As Stonechild (2006) suggests, it is related to the failure of the government to recognize that postsecondary education is a treaty right, as Aboriginal groups argue.

Concern regarding funding for postsecondary education not only is present in this Community, but also exists among other Aboriginal peoples living in First Nations across the country. When surveyed, 53% of respondents agreed with the statement, “the level of government funding to pay for First Nations people to go to college/university is not high enough for First Nations youth to be able to get a postsecondary education.” (EKOS Research Associates, 2006, p. 23)

6.5 Chapter Summary

While participants did share positive stories about the school in the Community, many negative stories which focused on both the quality of the school (as compared to those found in the whitestream education system) and the abilities of elementary teachers from the Community. Further probing revealed that students did had positive stories about these teachers, and other teachers praised their abilities, but that a negative stigma were attached to them because most had not received professional whitestream credentials, and this was seen as the primary reason for the low standard of education offered at the school, as compared to whitestream schools in town.

Participants also leveled criticism at the high school, for not having the same resources as schools in town, for not offering a comparable range of courses, and for seemingly not pushing students academically. Participants expressed frustration at not being prepared adequately to enter the whitestream education system after graduating from high school. These issues were traced to the lack of preparation students have for the material when entering high school which were in turn connected to deep problems within the school system which have yet to be identified, and could warrant further research. One possible explanation that surfaced was the persistent absenteeism among many children in the Community. This problem was attributed to many factors such as boredom, responsibilities at home, the perception that education is not necessary to obtain a job in the Community, substance abuse issues, and having to deal with family members who have persistent substance abuse issues. It was noted, however, that these factors do not always interfere with a student's education, and that absenteeism is only part of the larger picture.

One large factor which contributes to these perceived deficits, and which none of the young participants seemed to recognize is that schools off-reserves in Canada receive approximately double the funding from the Provincial government than First Nation schools on reserve receive from the Federal government. As a result second- and third-level services within community schools suffer in comparison to those offered in the whitestream education system, and areas such as libraries and technology are not funded at all.

If students do receive their high school diploma and wish to go to postsecondary education, it was revealed that there is not enough money available in the Community (as in many others) to fund every applicant. As the Community grows and more people make their way through the school system, increased demand is placed on the money available each year, which has not increased across Canada since the early 1990s. The monthly allowance that is given along with funding is not enough to cover even rent, and so many are unable to afford to leave their community to attend postsecondary education. The recent media attention to the state of postsecondary funding for Aboriginal people in Canada has left many Indigenous people across the country frightened for the future of the program, and angry that the government continues to deny that access to postsecondary education is a treaty right. To prepare for this possibility, some who plan to attend postsecondary in the future are beginning to strategize to find funds elsewhere.

CHAPTER 7

PROMISING FUTURE STEPS BEING TAKEN

Being one nation means looking after each other, and not seeing your community members leave your community. ...I'd like to see [each] community member live [in], and see the prosperities of the community, for them to help out in their society, that's what I'd like to see. That's why I want children to come back to see what we've been doing as a government. Since the past six years we've been a government, there's a lot of things progressing, a lot of development here, so that's why I want to see the kids come back, for them to actually see what we've been doing, and for them to continue using those steps that we've been taking – Band Councilor

7.0 Introduction

This journey through the stories collected for this study, and through the history and current state of the Community, while not exhaustive, is almost complete. Researching on Aboriginal postsecondary education and writing up until this point has been challenging. Information about residential schools, the past injustices felt by the Community, the current uneven state of funding, and the many challenges faced by participants shocked and surprised me and have left me feeling saddened and angry. First Nations are up against continued colonialism, a set of government policies which, when viewed from a First Nations perspective, are at best unfair and at worst designed to prevent First Nations from asserting their autonomy and rising up above their current set

of conditions. But Aboriginal people continue to work not just at surviving but at thriving amidst all this, as I have come to see.

This is the chapter in a thesis where recommendations for the future might be offered. To assume that I have any right to make unilateral statements about what directions the Community should seek out would be infinitely presumptuous of me. I do not believe that I, as one who grew up outside the Community both in terms of location and in terms of worldview, have any special insight into issues described to me by the Community which currently remain unsolved. I am convinced that if there are systemic problems without apparent solutions, it is not for lack of thinking or trying on the part of residents and workers – allies -- familiar with the Community.¹⁷ (Building capacity through postsecondary education to address these issues is exactly why Aboriginal leaders have been calling for more focus on raising Aboriginal enrollment in postsecondary education.) In this spirit, in this chapter I discuss promising current and future ideas and initiatives that are now taking shape within this particular Community, as well as reveal suggestions given to me by both the youth and the older participants in this study.

One observation that I did want to make regarding participant suggestions is that it struck me that many of the ideas that came forward were very similar. Participants may be unaware that others had the same suggestions, such as ideas shared with me on how to inspire students from a young age to look forward to a career and to continue school through the postsecondary level in order to fulfill their dreams. I make no comment on

¹⁷ What this thesis does represent, however, is my effort to speak to the injustices faced by Indigenous people in Canada, which (as have been revealed in this document and elsewhere) are systemic and originate outside of the Community (specifically with government policy.)

whether or not these suggestions are feasible as I do not feel able to assess the capacity of an already overstressed school system. I am heartened, however, that key community leaders and educational staff have common visions for the school system, even if frustration arises when it is difficult to secure funding to realize these visions.

7.1 Promising Developments in the School System

7.1.1 A New School!

Perhaps the most exciting development in the Community taking place right now is the construction of a new school building. Workers arrived and began to build during the 2009-2010 school year, and when it is completed (Fall 2011), it will house both the elementary and the high school.

The push for a new school in the community began in 2000, when the school building was officially condemned. For many years, promises of new educational facilities were made, only to be broken when budgets were released or when the national government changed hands. Not having proper school facilities is a common story across First Nations in Canada. Although it was identified in 2007 by INAC that money for 69 new schools and 27 major renovation projects was needed in First Nations communities across Canada, only 21 new schools and 16 renovation projects were approved for funding. This represented an approximately \$235 million shortfall over the following five years. (First Nations Education Council, 2009) It must be noted, that despite the promise of a new, up to date school, council members are already acknowledging that a lack of

government funding will mean that the school is not outfitted with all of the amenities present in the schools located in the nearby towns. As one key informant commented,

For sure there'll be technology there, where this old system here doesn't have the technology. But again, we're going to have that same problem with hardly any financial resources. We're currently trying to deal with it now with this government. The Department of Indian Affairs, and other provincial statues are, are being [pause] targeted I guess. We're making this announcement here where, we're moving out of an old school, we're moving into a new school, so therefore a new school should have this.

The councilor stressed that s/he believed that a new school should bring with it “top financial funding.” There has been some reluctance on the part of funders (for instance, the government) to fully fund the school due to the current financial system where Community monies and school monies are pooled together. The councilor indicated that the council is “willing to separate, or finance resources for the school, for them to mandate themselves” in order to secure the greatest amount of resources for the school possible.

7.1.2 New Practices

Under the current system, the school's funds are grouped together with those of the rest of the Community, a system the teacher informant critiqued because from his/her understanding, “a lot of our school funding gets put to other means that maybe [it] doesn't need to be.” While from the perspective of the council, funding must be available for numerous other efforts, from the perspective of the school, they are not able to have the resources they feel they need to run the school to the best of their ability. Given that the Community, like its education system, has a hard time funding many initiatives (from

infrastructure projects to cultural programming), it makes sense that the school would also be short on resources.

Now that the new building is being constructed, community officials seem to be taking this opportunity to evaluate old practices, putting into place new policies which have been in limbo for the past few years. When I spoke to the band councilor, s/he outlined changes s/he wanted to see come with the new school building. S/he said:

The first one is to have a stable education board. A recognized board, and their own source of funding, that could mandate their own initiatives on a day to day basis, monthly, yearly basis. And...a steady principal, a leader, that will be there for years to come.

Whether or not the three proposed changes of a stable education board, a steady principal or a separate budget will be concretely achieved with the opening of the new school remains to be seen. When I returned to the Community to conduct the second set of interviews, I was excited to see that a new office space near the school had been created for the newly appointed Education Director, who was from the Community. The Education Director sits on the board, and oversees issues of education. In the next section I discuss some of the exciting new board initiatives that the Education Director informed me about on the visit.

7.1.3 New Initiatives

During the visit to the Community when I conducted the second set of interviews, I paid a visit to the new office of the Education Director and was able to speak to the Director about the (relatively new) position and the recent developments regarding the school. The Education Director position is funded by INAC and his/her official purpose

is to find alternative forms of funding, government and otherwise, for the school. During our conversation, the Director informed me of new initiatives which the board agreed to take at their school year-end meeting in June of 2010. There are plans, for instance, to hire a parental engagement officer whose job it will be to find ways to get children in the Community to regularly attend classes and parents more involved in the school. This addresses the observations made in Chapter 4 about the importance of parental support in encouraging youth to pursue postsecondary education. At the time of our conversation, it was thought that part of the strategy of the officer would be to make house calls and speak to parents about their feelings towards the school. The idea of beginning a parent council was also tabled at this meeting, as was the idea of holding a student forum so that the board can solicit student replies to the question “why don’t you want to come to school?”

In addition to addressing the issue of parental support these new initiatives directly address some of the other current issues raised by participants discussed here. Specifically, by encouraging open communication through forums and one-to-one conversation, the Community is poised to address not only the school attendance, but also deeply felt wounds by the older generations regarding the formal school system. It is encouraging to think that members of the Community are already engaged with the issues which arose in the interviews. While this does mean that these are commonly acknowledged problems which are real and have a large impact, it also means that people are growing more ready and willing to address them, and who better to address them but members of the Community themselves?

The Director also told me that INAC has initiated a five year review of all First Nation schools, which will examine the operation of the entire school system in each Community. The reviewers were selected by INAC and their main office is located in Toronto. As a result of this, the Director wondered openly to me as to how effective and appropriate the review would be, given that the reviewers are not familiar with the Community (and given the history of Canada's neocolonial/assimilationist policies towards First Nations).

Finally, a directive which has been issued by INAC and supported by the education board in the community is that by August of 2010, all teachers at the school who had not yet obtained their university degree and/or their teacher's college certificate were required to submit an education plan which would outline how they planned to finish obtain their teaching certificate by 2012. If any are not able to accomplish this, they will be allowed to stay at the school as TAs. While it was acknowledged earlier by the councilor, and various other participants that this would not be easy for those who had to balance full-time teaching, a personal life, and obtaining their degree, my earlier analysis suggests that this seems to be an initiative that the Community is behind. After learning about all of this information, I began to wonder to what extent these actions taken by INAC could be interpreted as one more step towards making sure Aboriginal people and their youth are finally assimilated into the whitestream. As I indicated in earlier chapters, Aboriginal scholars and groups have expressed a desire for more to attend postsecondary education so to assist in their quest for sovereignty and self-determination. To do so, however, communities are being forced to take up the practices

of the whitestream education system. INAC directives are passed down to the community with little consultation, and there does not seem to be much effort to consider the unique values of Aboriginal systems of education. Instead, communities are left to struggle to measure up and to do so, are continuing to compromise their traditional values. One of these measures discussed above, namely encouraging individuals (teachers) to create a plan to be completed in the next two years and holding them accountable to it, is a blatant neoliberal strategy proposed by INAC. It puts the onus on the individual teacher to acquire a whitestream education, which would make them more qualified to teach in an increasingly whitestream system. But at least it opens the door to addressing participant concerns about matching the resources of the Community schools with those of nearly whitestream schools.

Some Community members do take issue with putting the onus of furthering their qualifications solely on the teachers. When I asked the Band Councilor what s/he thought about the new requirement that all teachers in the elementary school will have to have their qualifications by 2012, s/he replied, "I totally agree with it but, (sigh) again, I don't want to push my community members down to a level where they won't be able to get up." This answer highlights the struggle between the desire to improve the school system, and doing so at the expense of Community members and the values of the Community, felt by many, including the teacher I spoke with, and other school staff.

7.1.4 High School Programming

One successful change which has already taken place in the Community's education system is the newly implemented "block system" for arranging the high school calendar. Instead of dividing the school year into two semesters, courses run six weeks in length. If for some reason a student needs a break at any point in the school year, they are more likely to have earned a few credits in such a system, rather than dropping out and losing the whole year. As a result of this system, which began at the high school within the last five years, the school has seen the rate of graduation increase. Rather than one to two graduates a year, five or more students now get their diploma each June. The Education Director told me that the Community was the first First Nation which implemented this program. Perhaps the success of this bold and pioneering step that designs programs to fit the realities of Aboriginal life will encourage those who work in the Community education system to continue to adapt programming in innovative ways which they feel would best suit the needs of the students.

7.2 Participant Suggestions

7.2.1 Suggestions to Improve Postsecondary Enrollment and Career Aspirations

Some of the participants I spoke with had suggestions for how to improve student 'success' (by whitestream standards) and encourage more youth in the Community to work to attend whitestream postsecondary education. Currently, the bulk of the responsibility for promoting and advising on postsecondary education rests on the shoulders of the Postsecondary Councilor. Some participants felt that the students would

be better served if there existed more positions at the school which were responsible for advising students, such as a guidance counselor or career counselor. The teacher I interviewed sees the need, for instance, for a career counselor who works in the school with students not just in the high school, but in the junior grades as well. S/he saw the new councilor “in classrooms at young ages talking about careers” organizing “[career] presentations” to get students

interested early about careers, even if it was just like to get a fireman to come in and do a presentation ... to the little kids, ... just to get them excited about different careers, and make them see that there is [sic] other jobs out there that they can do.

The band councilor I spoke with had numerous suggestions on how to motivate the children in the community to continue on with their whitestream as well as Aboriginally-based education. He also called for career presentations, but specifically focused his/her suggestions on the high school students:

As soon as they get their grade eight certificate, they should be all sitting down in the gymnasium and have posters and [be able to say] ok, this is where I want to be. I want to be an officer, this is where I want to be, I want to be a doctor or an accountant, or a lawyer, like all those should be presented, oh I want to be a nurse or whatever. Like all of those should be presented, and it's up to the student to go and get what they want.

The councilor makes a good point; it could benefit youth in the Community to be exposed to different employment opportunities, and individuals may choose to pursue what interests them. However, the information in the fifth chapter of this thesis reveals that it may be too much to expect that members of a Community which has repeatedly faced damaging assimilative policies and continues to deal with numerous issues should be able to singularly break out of the cycle and succeed according to whitestream

standards. Given the extreme funding deficit of most First Nation communities, it is also unreasonable to place the onus on them. Instead, I believe it is the responsibility of all levels of government to commit to providing resources to First Nations communities, at least on par with those provided to the rest of Canadians.

The councilor also wanted to see more outside organizations who employ people from the Community to come in and educate students and Community members about the opportunities they have, in order to motivate them to focus pursue further education. This could indeed be beneficial, and could perhaps be balanced with views from Community members themselves, who undoubtedly have their own visions for what they want the future of the Community to look like.

We have a few people coming in, like [Ministry of Natural Resources] has done their work, and [they do] career fairs, which is good. We'll probably have one again this summer, but we need to do more of that. There are other organizations out there that actually do career fairs as well, they join forces with [town], with their district school boards, and we need to send more students down that way, to go see the careers, of what they have to offer there.

It was clear to me that the Band Councilor ultimately wants to see his/her Community break the current cycle of poverty and depression which holds many members of the Community. The solutions proposed, however, align with neoliberal ideals of employment and life success. It is possible that, just as it has arguably done in the whitestream, the concept of careers will damage the spiritual life of Aboriginal youth, in that life further becomes "work." If those individuals who pursue postsecondary education return to the reserve to support the Community's self-determination, this push towards education could maintain Aboriginal values. But, if the students leave the

Community, and live instead according to the values they have learned from whitestream society, it will only serve to further the federal government's assimilative agenda.

One important issue raised by participants during my visit was improving communication between youth and what might be called the "residential school" generation. If their Elders are suspicious of whitestream postsecondary education, maybe the way to address this is to have forums where these concerns can be aired, and where, conversely, youth can become part of the self-determination movement among Aboriginal communities and leaders. The band councilor expressed great interest during our interview in having members of the Band Council hold talks with the school children to explain to them how the subjects they are learning about in school apply to the jobs available in the Community. These talks would be open to whatever the students and other members of the Community wanted to discuss regarding the applicability of education. The councilor suggested that these may be beneficial for the students because they would be able to "see their leaders, their aunts, uncles, cousins, coming to talk to them about what they're doing [in their Community jobs], or out there." In this way, the Community would have some influence on what skills come back to the Community.

To help students prepare for postsecondary education, the councilor thought that it would be necessary for there to be more specific instruction on which exact credits a student needs to earn in high school so that they are able to enroll in the whitestream postsecondary program they desire. This would help them gain direct entry into programs which have specific high school prerequisites, and perhaps motivate students to take courses which they may otherwise avoid. In addition, the councilor specifically

mentioned that this could, for instance, facilitate more students from the Community going on to postsecondary education programs in health. If these students then chose to return to the Community after they graduate, this would build much needed capacity in healthcare, along with other fields where there currently exists a need for skilled workers in the Community.

Whether or not a position providing this type of guidance is created at the school, or really if any of these suggestions are taken up, however, depends on funding. As the band councilor said, “I know some of the stuff that needs to be here, but then again it’s all related to dollars.”

In the past, teachers and other workers at the school have organized long trips for high school students to other parts of Canada. In the past five years, for instance, students have had a chance to visit Toronto and Vancouver. From the perspective of the teacher, “getting them out and seeing a different city, and seeing what exists out in the world, really makes a difference” because it allows the students to gain familiarity with a new setting and perhaps other Aboriginal communities. These trips are difficult to organize, however, because an extensive amount of fundraising must be done by the teachers and students to fund the trip. The teacher acknowledged that by matching the funds raised, the band council has helped to make these excursions a reality.

Perhaps most importantly, issues of transition to whitestream postsecondary education could be addressed if certain postsecondary programs were offered within the Community itself. While this suggestion may at first seem foreign to those accustomed to the image of postsecondary education being administered from within the walls of a

whitestream institution, it is increasingly becoming the norm in First Nations communities. (Linda Muzzin, personal communication, 2010) In addition, satellite programs, administered on behalf of whitestream postsecondary education institutions, have been successfully implemented in a select few First Nations communities in Canada. For instance, Ball (2004) describes the University of Victoria's First Nation Partnership Programs, which developed university accredited Early Childhood Education programs with Cree and Dene communities in Canada to promote community development. (see Ball, 2004) Muzzin, Zarkowitz, Boskynskijg & Vinca (2009) and Stonechild (2006) also discuss the creation of Aboriginal postsecondary institutions which, although still not located within the Community, at least value Aboriginal worldviews and Indigenous knowledges.

Indeed, when I asked the band councilor whether he felt that it was important for people from the Community to leave to pursue whitestream postsecondary education, he expressed his desire to see people become accredited in the Community:

I think it's a necessity, but at the same time, we would like to bring in an instructor as well.... And try that avenue as well. I know, ah, again it's time and energy, and if that instructor comes in, you need full participation to make it worthwhile. That's the challenge in that area. But if the kids are willing and able, and want to pursue all the trades and whatever there, it's up to them to come to this individual.

A: Ok, ok I hear you. There's something, I don't know if you've heard of it, this is just from my studies, but in BC ...they have a few universities [which] have these programs where they send programs, instructors, textbooks whatever, to the communities.

G: Yeah that's what I like to see, yeah.

A: That's exactly what you're talking about, right?

G: Yeah, we do that for training, like say we put a proposal in for training, or let's say renovations, we bring an instructor, and bring in people that are going to be interested. That's the same kind of scenario, but bringing a qualified individual to actually accredit you for you doing all your work,

and signing it off, and make that legal and binding. Rather than just giving you a certificate, then you go to [local town name], or elsewhere, [where they] don't really recognize this certificate (laugh).

Bringing a more diverse range of programs, especially those at the university level to the nearest town could also impact the number of people from the Community who would consider seeking university accreditation. Today, the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP) affiliated with Queen's University in Southeastern Ontario runs a part-time program in a town located hundreds of kilometers from the Community. While one participant is attending the program, the distance from the community does not make it an ideal option for many who may not be able or willing to make arrangements to travel that far each weekend. At the very least, having somewhat of a diverse offering of university accredited programs in the nearest town could encourage more to attend, and hugely benefit the Community. Whitestream postsecondary institutions need to review their commitments to Aboriginal communities and to those instructors who are excited about and able to teach on reserve. (Muzzin, et al., 2009)

7.2.2 Other suggestions

A central hope regarding the school system that the band councilor mentioned and that Aboriginal leaders and scholars see as central to First Nations education is increased content and delivery from an Aboriginal perspective (especially in junior kindergarten to grade three but following through to postsecondary education as well). As the councilor said,

I would like to see more Aboriginal teachings, ... on a daily basis, not just a weekly basis, I would like to see integrated more Aboriginal delivery --

from each subject, let's say, a daily participation from the Aboriginal concept to be driven into those particular grades.

In 1996, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended that, when appropriate, Indigenous Knowledges and tradition should be incorporated when devising education policy. (Brant Castellano, 2000) However, doing so is not as straightforward as one might think given that the generation in residential schools were punished for practicing traditional knowledges and that youth from this reserve have seen that those who do observe these practices may be ridiculed by whitestream society. Given this colonizing view towards traditional knowledges, it is too simplistic to assume that all Aboriginal people would accept full incorporation of traditional practices. As a result of colonization, for example, many were exposed to and have chosen to retain Christian beliefs which may lead them to reject traditional ceremonies and teachings, and thus, incorporating them into a program can be met with discord. (Graveline, 2002) One participant revealed to me that there exists a big split in the community between those who believe in traditional practices and see the value of teaching them in school, and those who do not, and perhaps practice Christian traditions. According to the participant, some parents will complain if they know their child has learned a traditional practice at school that day. Again, consciousness-raising around Aboriginal colonial history, residential schools and current policy may be helpful in working through these differences at a community level.

Without the dollars to put towards even the most basic offerings such as a library or curriculum development, it is unlikely that the education board will be able to afford the time, effort, and resources it will take to make these and other much needed

improvements to the current system, despite the presence of a new building and even if they were universally agreed upon in the Community. The most telling piece of the puzzle here is that the federal government (with its history of attempts to assimilate the Native) does not offer any funding for a First Nations language teacher on reserves. However, the councilor told me that the Provincial government is “starting to recognize Native Language. So what they’re doing is providing 100% funding for a Native Language teacher and Native Language curriculum.” However, “we try to ask them for it, being Native in the Community. And we don’t get it!”

Other suggestions which arose during my conversations with participants focused on improving the overall experience of the youth in the community. Many of the younger participants told me about their desire for a youth centre. Both Alison and Maria were involved in separate youth initiatives aimed at getting a youth centre set up in the community. Unfortunately, the timing has yet to be right: one effort was unsuccessful because of a large funding shortfall, and the other because the space the youth had approved for the centre was soon after needed for housing. Currently plans for a youth centre in the community exist, and a sum of money has been put aside, but the band is still searching for other sources of money to make up the rest of what is needed.

Perhaps one of the most innovative suggestions which I heard during my conversations with Community members came from the Postsecondary Councilor. When I asked the Councilor what improvements s/he thought need to be made to help the youth in the community, s/he told me that she would ideally like to see a 24-hour youth drop-in

centre created. This centre could have activities to occupy the youth, but for her the crucial piece would be qualified councilors who would be able to speak to young Aboriginal people about issues that they may be going through. This would be useful for individuals going through family or personal issues, but it would also be useful when a community-wide trauma arises. When a participant in this study committed suicide, no outside councilors or help was made available to the school staff and students. I felt that this contrasted sharply to when a situation like this occurs in whitestream provincial schools; news reports always include the fact that outside counselors have been called in. Instead, teachers and staff, all of whom were deeply affected as well, were the sole bearers of that responsibility. Because of the frequency of these occurrences, and the reality that a death is felt throughout the whole community, it would be beneficial for everyone, including the staff, to have councilors to listen and help in the healing process.

7.3 Towards a Stronger Future

As this document comes to a close, it is important to revisit the central reason that Aboriginal leaders nation-wide are calling for improved government support for the education of First Nations people. Education, they argue, is an essential process in helping to heal and strengthen their communities. In the case of this community, as with many remote First Nation communities across the country, attending whitestream postsecondary education necessarily causes individuals to move away from their communities, which ultimately diminishes the communities they leave behind. Indeed, whether it be for whitestream school, employment or another reason, some Aboriginal

people do leave their Aboriginal communities. When participants in the EKOS study were asked about future plans to move off-reserve, more than four in 10 planned to move, with the numbers higher in western Canada. Almost one-half expect their move to be permanent, suggesting an exodus from reserves in this generation, towards assimilation. (EKOS Research Associates, 2007, p.1)¹⁸

That being said, while some do plan to transition off reserve, this statistic reveals that more than half plan on staying. In conclusion then, I would like to focus on the comments of participants regarding their Community and their hopes for its future.

As mentioned by Charlotte in the previous chapter, some adolescents from the Community do not see their future there. For example, Maria told me that at one time when she was in high school, “I wanted out, and I was sick of the reserve, and wanted to leave.... I just didn’t care, I walked with my head down.” When I asked why and how that changed, her answer is worth repeating. She replied that she stopped feeling so stigmatized as an Aboriginal and “just ended up liking where I came from. I just grew up thinking differently about the reserve.” She added, “And now I just don’t want to leave.... I have a life, and it’s an awesome life.” How did this transformation into self-acceptance as an Aboriginal person occur? It seems that after she secured a job on reserve, and her life began to take a direction she was satisfied with, Maria felt that she had a positive future in the Community.

What of the younger participants who foresaw that in the future they would have a difficult time returning to the community if they wanted to find employment in their

¹⁸ The report found this number was higher for Western provinces and for those under 35 years of age, which suggests a continuing assimilationist trend into whitestream society from colonial times.

chosen field? Dan, for instance, wants to become a mechanic, but no shop exists in the Community, and he does not foresee himself being in the financial position to start his own. To reiterate his point he says, “everyone [suggests] “why don’t you build your own shop here, then you can live here?” and [I reply] “good idea, give me the money.” It is worth noting that the reserve still has some appeal for those who leave the Community because their employment path leads them away. They return to the Community frequently, and demonstrate a strong connection with both the land where the Community is situated and the people there. In the EKOS study, almost 9 in 10 of those surveyed expressed a strong belief that they “have a personal responsibility to make their community a better place for future generations.” (EKOS Research Associates, 2006, p2) This commitment was clearly evident in the comments of all the participants.

Thus, while Mike felt that his work in the future might take him away from the Community, he felt strongly that he would be active in the Community in some form in the future. Part of this seems to stem from the strong family ties to the Community. As he put it,

I would come and help out as best I can.... I would like to give my support.... I would like to come back and like to help other people get into power and do whatever I can.... This is where my nephews and nieces are growing up now.

Dan also sees the Community as ripe with potential and possibility. He shares that he knows that it is hard for people to change because of the difficult life circumstances, but thinks that education may be one pathway for people to break cycles they may be stuck in.

D: It's a nice place, this place has, to me it just has so much potential to change, since people don't. It's either that people don't want to change, or it's hard.

A: It's hard, maybe.

D: Yeah, some people, are just in this environment all their lives, and they haven't seen the opportunity because they don't know how to look at one. So, if you get education -- going to university, college, learning what they have to, they open up. I use me as an example (laughs) cause I'm so smart (laughs), seeing what's out there, seeing what you can get. It opens up! I want to dream about opening a shop here. [We need to invite the one] who is dreaming about opening a shop here, who is dreaming about opening a beauty shop here, barber shop, or anything like that, and all types, any sector.

7.4 Chapter Summary

There are many positive developments in the Community to look forward to, but it is important to note that without adequate funding from any level of government, it will be difficult to make sustaining and meaningful improvements. After years of broken promises from various Federal governments, a new school building will be welcoming students in 2011. This is a positive moment in the history of the Community's education system, but will be dampened by the fact that at the time of publication, the government had still not pledged to provide funding for key areas such as a Native Language program, technology, and libraries.

Future efforts on the part of the Education Director and the board of directors to hire a parental engagement officer, begin a parent council, and hold forums for children about absentee problems point to promising opportunities to increase communication about issues recognized as problems by many in the Community, and address longstanding concerns with school institutions held by those traumatized by residential schools. The efforts also show that Community members are growing more ready and

willing to discuss these past injustices together, which is an important step in the healing process.

Solutions coming from INAC, such as the nationwide review of reserve school systems, and the directive to enforce teacher credentialing by 2012 continue to impose neoliberal values and promote assimilation, but in the case of credentialing, it does address participant and Community concerns. Also, solutions which place the onus on individuals (such as the teachers and students) to “succeed” according to whitestream standards may expect too much as most individuals and even Communities on a whole continually find it difficult to break out of cycles without outside help. Real change will come when the government dramatically increasing funding to address discrepancies. In the meantime, decisions which adapt programming to fit the realities of life in the Community, such as the bold implementation of the block system in the high school will continue to be met with success, and will, I hope, inspire the Community to continue to make such innovative choices.

Instead of following down the path of whitestream society, down which life becomes work and spirituality is far removed from daily life, more opportunities should be made for the Community to envision a future for itself, and for it to exercise some influence over the skills which come into the Community. Exposing youth to different options and holding concerns where concerns regarding postsecondary education can be aired and discussed would go far towards this end.

One way that these issues are increasingly being addressed in First Nation communities is through joint initiatives between institutions and communities to bring

credentialing university and college programs, whose skill sets are desired by the community, on reserve. Even offering university programs in the nearby town would increase the offerings available to current students. While increasing Aboriginal content and delivery methods within the Community school is a much desired initiative (and one which already occurs to some extent) some resistance from within the Community due to post-colonial attitudes towards traditions, and resistance from youth who observes these practices being ridiculed in whitestream society make this area an ongoing challenge.

Non-educational initiatives to improve overall experience for the youth in the Community, perhaps through a long-desired youth centre, which could include councilors to deal with ongoing issues, could potentially be a great addition to the Community. Initiatives such as this could go far to help those who plan to stay in the Community break out of cycles and help the Community realize its potential.

7.5 Limitations of the Project

Now that the research is written up and has taken its final form, I would like to take some space to reflect on the process which, from start to finish, spanned two and a half years (from September 2008 to December 2010.) While I am satisfied that the findings of the project represent the experiences of a portion of the Community, I know that there are perspectives that my research did not capture. Given more time in the Community, the sample size of ten formal participants, could have been expanded considerably. Also, my limited budget meant that I was not able to stay in the Community for longer periods, nor schedule additional research visits.

I also strongly feel that the work and my own insights could have benefitted from the participation of a Community Elder. I did consult with two respected Elders from other communities while in Toronto, and their advice was very important in helping me to reflect on my first months in the Community, and clarify whether or not it was appropriate for me, an outsider, to conduct research with the Community. Perhaps if I had approached or been introduced to a Community Elder, he or she may have shared their perspective on the history of the Community, and the desire for postsecondary education.

7.6 Future Possibilities for Research

One area for possible future research (identified by the teacher in Chapter 6) is the journey of children through the Community's school system. As was noted in the interview, school officials are aware that many students fall behind provincial standards, but they are currently unsure of what exactly contributes to this, and why certain other students moving through the same system are able to thrive academically.

Another extension of this project would be to interview Community members who have gone on to postsecondary education, to learn about their experiences, and to document how they decide to use their skills, and what factors determine whether or not they return to the Community.

It would also be interesting to observe and participate in discussions which will be forthcoming between parents and education officials from the Community about increasingly parental engagement in the school system. As the process unfolds, there may be much that could be learned from other communities who have worked to revitalize this

engagement, and also practices to pass on to other communities who wish to bring about this change in their own First Nation.

These suggestions being offered, I must reiterate that no amount of research will ever correct the astoundingly large funding and policy gap between First Nations and the rest of Canada. The more I learn about this, the more I become convinced that awareness needs to be raised about these disparities, in order for the government to feel real pressure from its constituents to make meaningful and much needed change.

7.7 What Went Wrong – What Went Right

While the research process did run relatively smoothly, it was often very difficult to strike a workable balance between university, Community, and personal timelines. I would have liked to have spent more time in the Community, especially during the first year as I formulated the project, but classes in Toronto and family obligations often kept me in Toronto. Spending more time in the Community would have allowed me to solicit more advice from Community members on the research design, and perhaps increased my insight into research findings.

I did not follow through with the entire mind-map methodology as I had intended to in my research proposal. Rather than showing participants the mind-maps I had created, I found that I had follow-up questions stemming from them. During the second interviews I did read participants their mind-map statements, and asked them to confirm or alter them as they saw necessary. I did not, however, share the mind-maps of others directly, and instead chose to ask questions which referred to themes emerging from the

data in the first set of interviews. I chose to do this at the time, because I recognized that many of the mind-maps contained data which could possibly identify participants to one another. Since the Community is small, people may be familiar with the life histories, and as most of the interviews were conducted in the school, I did not want identities to be deduced based on whom I was seen with. That being said, I think that the alterations that I made to the methodology were based on instinct and experience, and in the end did not compromise findings of the projects – if anything they served to further protect participants.

As a non-Aboriginal person who was not born and raised within this First Nation community, I found it challenging to continuously think about and interpret the various protocols of research with Aboriginal communities that I had wished to abide by. My two committee members, Dr. Muzzin and Dr. Restoule were so helpful and supportive with this task, and I am greatly indebted to both for their guidance and understanding. I think that the way the project came about was extremely beneficial to the project. Because my relationship with Community members predated any thought of a research partnership, and because the research question emerged from conversations and interactions with new friends, developing, securing, researching, and writing the project felt like a more genuine and smooth process. I did not have to prove to anyone that I cared about my friends and the Community at large. Those relationships all developed naturally, and people had observed my true self during my first summer working in the Community.

I was also very fortunate to have the support of the Postsecondary Councilor. I initially approached him/her to participate in the project because I hoped that the research

would aid her in her work. She proved to be a key informant, and her assistance with securing meetings with band officials and recommending participants, as well as the information and experiences she shared with me were indispensable to me. By having the Postsecondary Councilor's participation and support, I feel quite confident that the project will benefit the Community in the future.

7.8 Moving Forward

Even though the project is complete in the eyes of the university, my work is not finished. Some members of the Community requested copies of the thesis, and those will be delivered directly to them. This document is not the last word. I plan to spend time in person and on the phone listening to any reader with opinions on what I found and how I represented the data. I hope to make a presentation to the Community's Band Council, as well as the Education Board. I would also love to facilitate discussions on the findings with other groups in the Community. I also plan on disseminating a newsletter throughout the Community which will contain the findings in accessible language. Ideally, someone from the Community will be able to assist me in translating it to Anishnawbe.

My relationship with the Community also will not come to a close. During my visit in July of 2010, I was asked to be the godmother to my friend's firstborn. I look forward to many visits with my friend's family in the future, and to the land and Community that has so captivated me these past few years.

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Appendix A

LIST OF INDIGENOUS POSTSECONDARY PROGRAMS IN ONTARIO

(From Naokwegijig-Corbière, 2007, p. 57)

Program Name and Credential Awarded or Program Length	Institution(s) Offering Program
<u>Aboriginal/Native Studies Degree Programs:</u>	
Aboriginal Studies - B.A. Ottawa;	Brock University; University of University of Toronto
First Nations Studies - B.A.	University of Western Ontario
Indigenous Learning - B.A. Generations	Lakehead University; Seven Education Institute (with Lakehead) Seven Generations Education
Indigenous Knowledge/Philosophy - M.A. Institute	McMaster University
Indigenous Studies Interdisciplinary	
Aboriginal Learning - Certificate	Algoma University
Native Studies - B.A.	Laurentian University; Nipissing University; Trent University
- M.A.	Trent University
- Ph.D.	Trent University
<u>Business and Economic Development-Related:</u>	
Aboriginal Small Business Management - Diploma	Anishinabek Education Institute
Entrepreneurship - Certificate	Northern College
Introductory Management - Certificate	Northern College
Native Management and Economic Development - Diploma	Trent University
<u>Environment Studies:</u>	
Indigenous Environmental Studies - Diploma	Trent University
<u>Governance and Administrative:</u>	
Applied Human Services – Indigenous Leadership and Community Development - Degree	Confederation College

First Nations Business Administration	- Certificate	Oshki-Pimache-O-Win (with Cambrian College); Kenjgewin Teg E.I. (with Cambrian College)
Anishinabek Governance and Management	- Diploma	Anishinabek E.I.
Native Education-Community and Social Development	- Diploma	Georgian College
Office Administration/ Administrative Assistant	- Certificate	FNTI and St. Lawrence College
Public Administration and Governance	- Certificate; Diploma; Degree	FNTI (with Ryerson University)

Health-Related:

Indigenous Health Practitioner/Indigenous Community Health Approaches	- Certificate	FNTI
Practical Nursing	- 4 terms	Six Nations Polytechnic

Journalism-Related Programs:

Aboriginal Media	- Certificate	FNTI
	- Diploma	FNTI (with Humber College)
Journalism	- Certificate	Northern College
Journalism-Aboriginal Profile	- Diploma	Humber College

Language-Related Programs:

Aboriginal Language (Mohawk) – Certificate		Brock University
Anishinaabemowin (Immersion) - Certificate		Sault College
Anishinaabemowin and Indigenous Studies	- B.A. in Anishinaabemowin	Algoma University
Cree Interpreters and Translators	- Certificate	Northern College
Native Language Instructors Program	- Certificate	Lakehead University

Law-Related Programs:

Aboriginal Law and Advocacy	- Diploma	Confederation College
Aboriginal Legal Education	- Certificate	Laurentian University ¹⁹

Preparatory or Access Programs:

¹⁹ This is the university that grants the certificate. The Department of Native Studies administers the program but the degree-granting powers of the federated college, the University of Sudbury, in which this department is housed were put into abeyance when Laurentian University was established.

Aboriginal General Arts and Science - Certificate	Canadore College; Seven Generations
Aboriginal Pre-Health Science - Certificate	Georgian College
Aboriginal Transition - Certificate	Confederation College
College Entrance-Native - Certificate	Sault College
First Nations Science Transition Program	University of Western Ontario
General Arts and Science -Aboriginal Studies - Certificate; Diploma	Algonquin College
General Vocational Preparation - Certificate	Northern College
Native Access Program	Lakehead University
Native Nurses Entry Program	Lakehead University
Native University Access Program - Certificate	Six Nations Polytechnic (with Brock, Guelph, McMaster, Waterloo, and Wilfrid Laurier)
Pre-Health Science - Certificate	Six Nations Polytechnic (with Niagara)
Shki-Miikan Foundation Year- Certificate	Georgian College

Social Services-Related Programs:

First Nations Constable - Certificate	Northern College
Indigenous Wellness and Addiction Prevention - Certificate	Canadore College
- Diploma	Canadore College; Confederation
- 2 year part-time	Seven Generations (with Canadore)
Life Skills Coach - Certificate	Sault College
Native Child and Family Services- Community Worker - Diploma	FNTI
Native Child and Family Worker - Diploma	Confederation College
Native Community Care: Counseling and Development - Diploma	Anishinabek E.I.
Native Community Worker: Healing and Wellness - Diploma	Anishinabek E.I.
Native Counsellor - Certificate	Northern College
Native Human Services - B.S.W.	Laurentian University; Seven Generations (pending; with Laurentian)
Personal Support Worker - Certificate	Anishinabek E.I. (with Canadore); Seven Generations (with Sault College)
Social Services Worker-Native - Diploma	Anishinabek E.I. (with Canadore); Sault College

Social Services Worker-Welfare Administrator	- Diploma	FNTI
Social Work	- B.S.W.	FNTI (with Ryerson)

Teaching-Related:

Aboriginal Adult Education – B. Ed.; Certificate		Brock University
Aboriginal Teacher Education Program		
- Certificate		Queen’s (with Kenjgewin Teg)
- Diploma		Seven Generations (with Queen’s)
- B. Ed.		Brock University
Early Childhood Education – Diploma		Anishinabek E.I.; Oshki-Pimache-O-
Win;		Seven Generations (with Canadore)
Education Assistant Apprenticeship Training		Seven Generations
Native Language		
Instructors Program - Certificate; Diploma		Lakehead University
Native Teacher Education Program		
- B.A./B.Ed.-Indigenous Learning		Lakehead University
Principals of First Nations Schools - 6 wks		Six Nations Polytechnic and
		Seven Generations
Teacher Assistant	- Certificate	Northern College

Technical Programs:

Automotive (entry-level preparation)		Ogwehoweh Skills & Trades
		Training Centre
Carpentry	- Certificate	Northern College; Ogwehoweh
		Skills & Trades T.C.
A+ Certification Preparation		Oshki-Pimache-O-Win
First Nations Aviation - Diploma		First Nations Technical Institute
Renewable Energy Certificate Program.		Seven Generations

Appendix B

TABLE OUTLINING RESEARCH PROCEDURE AND TIMELINE OF PROJECT

Phase	Method	Specific Procedures	Time
Preliminary Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Proposal to supervisor and second reader - Contact with key community members - Meeting with the chief and band council - UT Human Research Ethics Board application - Field notes and journal recordings - Personal research journal recordings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - present and successfully defend proposal to committee - meet with vice-principal and postsecondary councilor to propose project - meet with postsecondary councilor to approve process and consent form - meet with chief and council in community for consent - apply for and receive ethics approval from the UofT 	One year
Phase One	In-depth Interviews #1 (audio taped)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - obtain oral and written consent with individuals - interview participants - transcribe interviews - field and journal notes taken 	1-2 hours Each 2 weeks
Phase Two	Preliminary Analysis / Interview #2 (audio taped)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial narrative analysis by researcher - Revisit consent orally - Review research questions - Review initial themes & story maps to ensure participant is represented to her/his liking. - field and journal notes taken 	1 – 2 hours Each 2 weeks
Phase Three	Final Analysis & Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write final analysis into thesis chapter, and a summary into a community newsletter - Present to committee 	1 month
Phase Four	Dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss final results to participants, community 	Continual dissemination

		officials, band council - Discuss, celebrate, & implement uses for the results in participant community - Write scholarly articles and presentations	over 2 - 3 months

Table 1. Research Procedures Summary

Appendix C

PROJECT INFORMATION GIVEN TO BAND COUNCIL

LETTER TO THE BAND COUNCIL

Angela Nardozi
308 Palmerston Ave – Apt 205, Toronto ON M6J 3X9
416-566-7563

[date to be inserted here]

[the Community] First Nation
Chief and Tribal Council
General Delivery
[the Community], ON, P0X 1P0

My name is Angela Nardozi. I would like to acknowledge myself as a visitor to your traditional territory and thank you for allowing me to be here and speak to you from my position as visitor.

I am from Toronto, Ontario and am presently a master's candidate in the Higher Education Program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. My supervisor is Dr. Linda Muzzin. She is a faculty member in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies at U of T. You may contact her at any time regarding this project via telephone (416) 923-6641 or email: l.muzzin@utoronto.ca.

In the summer of 2008 I worked in [the Community] as a Literacy Camp Counselor employed by Frontier College. During that time I developed many relationships with my peers and adults from your community. When I returned to school in September of 2008, I decided that I wanted to conduct my master's research to give back to the community, which had been so welcoming to me during the summer. After speaking with [a vice-principal] and [the Postsecondary Councilor] about the research, we have decided that with your approval, the project will focus on the perceptions of postsecondary education which exist in your community, and why or why not the people of [the Community] decide to pursue university and college education. In order to do this, I would like to talk to community members, educators, and public officials from your community.

The project will commence in the spring of 2010. I will work with [the Postsecondary Councilor] to recruit 12 to 20 willing participants who will meet the following three criteria: live in the community of [the Community], be between the ages of 18 and 65, be a self-identified Aboriginal person. They will be asked to participate in two interviews, lasting one to two hours, where I will ask them questions on their experiences with education, whether or not they have considered postsecondary education, their

perceptions of postsecondary education, the experiences of others in the community regarding postsecondary education that they are aware of, and their future plans in terms of education. I hope to return in July of 2010 to conduct the second set of interviews. Participants will receive a \$20 gift certificate to a business identified by [the Postsecondary Councilor] in Kenora, Ontario to thank them for their participation. At the completion of the project, I will also hold a feast for participants.

There are no potential or known inconveniences associated with participation in this research. There are potential benefits associated with participation directly for the participant, to your community, to society, and to the state of knowledge. These benefits will be described to participants in several ways. There are no known risks to the interviewees, and privacy and confidentiality will be ensured for each participant. In addition I will not identify the community in the thesis or any additional projects.

The participants will be told, verbally and in the consent letter, that “The potential benefits of your participation in this research include the clarification of personal educational goals, benefits to [the Community] include the identification of community-wide barriers to post-secondary education, benefits to society include insight into the decisions of Indigenous youth and adults living in First Nation communities in Canada regarding their education. Additionally, the research may inform academic literature and data about Indigenous peoples and university education in Canada.”

I would like to ask your permission to visit your community and interview community members and educators from the community.

I will be conducting this project solely with [the Community]. I hope that once the results are obtained they will provide specific recommendations to strengthen participation in post-secondary education in your community.

Below I have formulated some questions you might ask about this research project, and have provided detailed and non-technical answers:

What are the purposes and objectives of this research?

The purpose of this research project is to gain an in-depth understanding of the story of how Aboriginal peoples living in [the Community], Ontario perceive postsecondary education, and to gather their story with regards to postsecondary education. Objectives of the project are to gather information related to the decision-making process of the people of the community regarding their education, in order to inform community policy and future programs and initiatives to support those who wish to pursue post-secondary education, and to contribute new information to the research literature on the accessibility of postsecondary education for Indigenous peoples.

Why is this research important? What contributions will it make?

Research of this type is important because it will record the attitudes of Aboriginal youth towards attending university, without assuming that pursuing postsecondary education is an appropriate "life path" to be achieved. It will assist the community of [the Community] in identifying the particular challenges faced by those in their community who do wish to pursue university and college education. Further, it will help shed light on the challenges faced by other youth living in First Nations communities in Canada who wish to pursue university and college education.

What other uses will be made of the data from this research?

Data and results will be presented to the community of [the Community], in the form of newsletters or reports that use non-academic language. Data will also be shared with the academic community through the publication of research reports and papers in scholarly journals, and in reports to Native and non-Native governments and health organizations.

How will I describe the dissemination of results to participants during the consent process?

Orally at the beginning of the research relationship, and in writing in the consent letter, participants will be informed that a copy of the research report and/or a newsletter to the community will be given to them at the end of the research project if they wish, that the results of the study will contribute to a master's thesis, and that findings will be published in a peer-reviewed journal, and presented at professional and/or scholarly conferences.

Also in this envelope I have included a copy of the interview questions that I plan to ask the participants, as well as the recruitment letter, the information letter, and the consent letter. If you have any questions or comments about these, you may contact me as per the information below. Their use is subject to your approval.

I hope that these words have offered some understanding of the work I am seeking to undertake in your territory. If there are any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone in Toronto at 416-566-7563.

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to consider my request for permission, and I offer my assurance and my word that you will remain informed of any developments changes, and results that occur within the context of this project, should you deem it acceptable for me to pursue.

Sincerely,

Angela Nardozi
Master's Candidate, University of Toronto

Angela Nardozi
309 Palmerston Ave Apt 205
Toronto, ON M6J 3X9
(416) 566-7563
Email: angela.nardozi@gmail.com

Thesis Supervisor:
Dr. Linda Muzzin
Associate Professor
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of University of Toronto
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Toronto, ON M5S 1V6
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POSTSECONDARY COUNCILOR RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

The following script will be followed by [the Postsecondary Councilor] during the first recruitment meeting with possible participants.

I am meeting with you because I would like to invite you to be part of a study being conducted in the community. It is being conducted by Angela Nardozi, who worked in the community for the past two summers with the literacy camp. She is currently at the University of Toronto where she is studying to finish her M.A. degree in higher education under the supervision of Dr. Linda Muzzin.

The project will look at the perceptions of college and university in this community. The main objectives are to determine what factors influence residents of [the Community] as to why or why not they wish to go to college and university. Angela has been given permission of the band council to conduct this project.

You have been identified as a possible participant because you fit the following criteria: you are a person who self-identifies as Aboriginal, you are 18 to 65 years old, and you live in [the Community].

To participate you will be asked to sit down with Angela for two, one to two hour long interviews. One will take place this month, one will take place in July. She will ask you questions about your experience with education, your views on college and university, if you have any experience with either college or university, if you know anyone in the community who has etc.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked if it will be ok for Angela to record your interview on tape, and transcribe your words. Your name will be kept confidential, and your name will never appear in the study. You will not be paid to participate in this project.

If you do not want to participate in the project, you will face no negative consequences.

Participating in the project will give you time to reflect on your own perceptions of education and your life goals. Your experiences will be then used, along with those of others to form the final report, which will be given to the band council. It is possible that the results of this study could inform future community policy. Angela may also use the finished report to publish articles in academic journals and give presentations at conferences. Your name and the name of this community will not be revealed in the thesis or any other follow up publications.

Do you have any questions about the project?

(Additional information which can be found in the Information Letter about the project will have been reviewed with [the Postsecondary Councilor]. She will also have a copy of the Information Letter to reference at this time.)

If Postsecondary Councilor does not know the answer to a question: I do not know the answer. If you decide to meet with Angela, however, she may be able to give you an answer to that question.

Would you be interested in meeting with Angela to hear more information about the project, and ask her any questions you might have? Take some time now to think about it.

If a possible participant says yes: Here is a signup sheet. Please write your name beside the time you would like to meet with her and indicate where you would like to meet. If you would prefer, her phone number and other contact information is at the top of the page. You can also contact her at your convenience. You may also give me your number if you wish, so that she can contact you.

If a possible participant says no: Thank you for your time! If you have any further questions, just let me know?

RECRUITMENT LETTER

[To be printed on OISE/UT letterhead]

RECRUITMENT LETTER (handed out by Postsecondary Councilor)

Dear Possible Participant;

Are you an Aboriginal person living in the community of [the Community]?

**WHY NOT PARTICIPATE IN A PROJECT AND LEARN SOMETHING
ABOUT YOUR VIEWS OF EDUCATION AND YOUR COMMUNITY'S
ACCESS TO UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE EDUCATION?**

I am a former literacy camp counselor and am now Graduate Student in Higher Education at the University of Toronto, supervised in my M.A. research by Drs. Linda Muzzin and Jean-Paul Restoule. I am interested in the stories of the people of [the Community] and their journeys with education.

To participate in my project you must:

- 1) Be a self-identified Aboriginal adult aged 18 to 65
- 2) Live in [the Community].

To participate – I ask that you sit down with me for two interviews which may last one to two hours long. One will be conducted in the spring, and one in the month of July. I will ask you questions about your experiences with education in general, but the main focus will be on your opinions, perceptions and experiences regarding university and college education.

If you might be interested and you meet the requirements, please contact me by phone or email. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Angela Nardozi

Phone: *** **

Email: angela.nardozi@gmail.com

INFORMATION LETTER

To be printed on OISE/UT letterhead]

Perceptions of Postsecondary Education in a Northern Ontario Community

This study is being conducted by Angela Nardozi under the supervision of Dr. Linda Muzzin at the University of Toronto.

Participant Information Letter

Dear

I would like to invite you to participate in a study, being conducted by myself, Angela Nardozi. I worked in [the Community] as a literacy camp counselor in the summers of 2008 and 2009. I am also a graduate student, working on my Master of Arts degree in the Higher Education Program at the University of Toronto. This study is one of the requirement for completing my degree. The project will begin with interviewing members of your community, and I hope that the results will eventually help the band council and school workers gain a better picture of how the people of [the Community] view college and university. You have been identified as a possible participant because you are an Aboriginal adult, aged 18 to 65, who lives in the community of [the Community].

You will be asked to participate in two interviews, each of which will take one to two hours of your time. During that time, I will ask you questions about your educational experiences and your views on education as a student and/or a community member. You are under no obligation to participate in this study, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer without any negative consequences. I will provide you with a \$20 gift certificate to a local business in Kenora to compensate you for your time.

With your permission, the interviews will be taped and transcribed. I will also take notes during the interview about our interaction. After the first interview is completed, I will create a summary, or what I call a mind map of your interview to present to you. During the second interview, you will have an opportunity to comment on the map, as well as add, delete or change anything I have written. In an effort to build upon the ideas of others, you will also be shown the maps from other interviews, and will be given the opportunity to comment on those as well if you wish. These maps will not be identified by name. Also, you may choose not to have your map shared with others.

When you view the mind maps of others, you are required to not share the information you read on others' mind maps with anyone else, as this information is confidential.

Transcripts (copies of our conversations) will only be available to my thesis advisor, Dr. Linda Muzzin of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and the University of Toronto and myself (our contact information is at the end of this letter). No one else will have access to these tapes and transcriptions. You will at no time be judged or evaluated and at no time will be at risk of harm. No value judgments will be made on your results.

All tapes and transcriptions from the tapes will be kept locked in a drawer in my home and the computer will be password protected. The information you provide me will be kept strictly confidential. Your real name will not be used alongside biographical information, and will only be used next to your opinions if you give me permission to do so. You will be asked to choose a fake name. All raw data will be destroyed in two years. At the completion of the study, a report will be made available to you, and the results will be celebrated at a feast. If at the end of the project you would like a copy of the research findings, you may request that I mail a summary to you. In the case that you would like to be informed of the results of the study, your contact information will be kept separate from the data.

After the project is complete I plan to both publicize the results within Wabseemoong, to publish or make public presentations based on the research. In all publications and presentations your identity, as well as the identity of [the Community] will remain confidential, and pseudonyms will be used. One of the potential benefits you may experience from the project is from the reflection time and insights gained during the interview process on the subject of postsecondary education. Also, because the study will focus directly on your community, the results will relate directly to you and your experience. There is a lack of academic information about the perceptions of Aboriginal people living in First Nations communities of postsecondary education. It is my hope that this study will begin to fill that need.

I will telephone or email you to follow up with this letter. Please also feel free to contact me in the community or by email at angela.nardozi@gmail.com if you have any questions about this study. Thank you so much for taking the time to read this letter and for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Angela Nardozi
309 Palmerston Ave Apt 205
Toronto, ON M6J 3X9

(416) 566-7563

Email: angela.nardozi@gmail.com

Thesis Supervisor:

Dr. Linda Muzzin

Associate Professor

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of University of Toronto

252 Bloor St. West,

Toronto, ON M5S 1V6

(416) 923-6641 Ext. 4490

Email: l.muzzin@utoronto.ca

The study has been approved by the Research Ethics Boards of the University of Toronto. If you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study please or if you have any complaints or concerns about how you have been treated as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Ethics, ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

Please keep a copy of this letter for your records

INFORMED CONSENT

[To be printed on OISE/UT letterhead]

Consent Form

Perceptions of Postsecondary Education in a Northern Ontario Community

This study is being conducted by Angela Nardozi under the supervision of Dr. Linda Muzzin at the University of Toronto.

I have read the attached letter describing the research study being conducted by Angela Nardozi, and I have spoken with her about the research. I fully understand the project as outlined and the reason for my participation. I agree that my participation is voluntary, and know that I may withdraw at any time without consequence or penalty.

I do agree to participate in two, one to two hour long interviews.

Date: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____

I agree to have my interview taped and my interview transcribed:

YES **NO** **Initial**

I have been given a copy of this consent form:

YES **NO**

I agree to be contacted after the first interview to make an appointment for the second interview.

YES **NO**

I agree to have my mind map viewed by other participants during their second interview:

YES **NO**

I would like a copy of the research findings mailed to me

YES

NO

Researcher:

Angela Nardozi

309 Palmerston Ave Apt 205

Toronto, ON M6J 3X9

(416) 566-7563

Email: angela.nardozi@gmail.com

Thesis Supervisor:

Dr. Linda Muzzin

Associate Professor

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of University of Toronto

252 Bloor St. West,

Toronto, ON M5S 1V6

(416) 923-6641 Ext. 4490

Email: l.muzzin@utoronto.ca

The study has been approved by the Research Ethics Boards of the University of Toronto. If you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study please or if you have any complaints or concerns about how you have been treated as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Ethics, ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

Please keep a copy of this letter for your records

Appendix D

FIRST INTERVIEW GUIDE AND MIND MAP TEMPLATE

Interview #1:

Each participant will be asked to do an audio-taped interview. Prior to beginning, I will re-visit consent with the participant, as well as ask them whether or not they wish to remain anonymous.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. If you wish to stop the interview at any time, just let me know, it is not a problem. If you do not want to answer one of my questions, you can ask to pass.

School-Aged Community Members

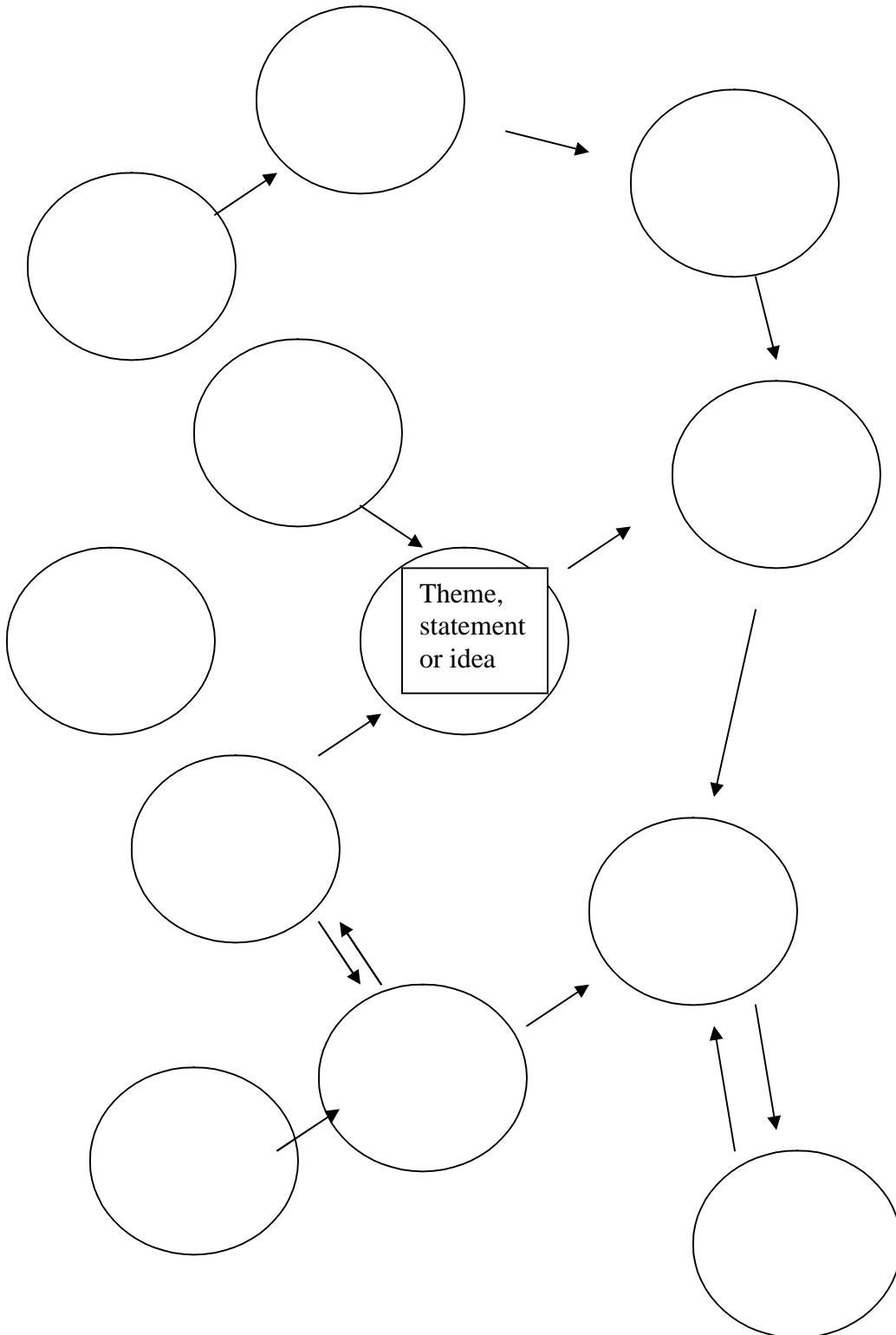
1. Are you in school? What level of school are you currently in?
2. What is your experience with school up until this point?
3. Do you want to pursue more education in the future? To what level?
4. Is education important to you?
5. Tell me what you know about postsecondary education.
6. Have you ever thought of attending college or university? Why or why not?
7. If you went, what would you study?
8. What do you think of college or university?
9. Here are some pamphlets from the colleges and universities in Kenora, ThunderBay and Winnipeg. What do you think of them?
10. How do you think your family feels about you going to college or university?
11. What do you think your community wants you to do?
12. Has anyone in your family ever gone to college or university?
13. What attitudes towards postsecondary education have you heard about in the community?
14. Do you know about some of the issues of funding?
15. Who do you think should pursue postsecondary education from the community?
16. Do you think it is hard for some to leave the community to go to school?
17. Is it difficult to get to transportation to school outside of the community?
18. Do you think you would be able to maintain contact with your family, Elders, and others from the community if you went away to school?
19. What kind of postsecondary education should they pursue?
20. Is there anyone else you know from [the Community] who has gone to college and university?
21. What do you think their experience was like?
22. Do you believe that the programming in colleges and/or universities is relevant and applicable to you? To Aboriginal people? (Erwin, 2009).
23. What do you think are the challenges faced by people who want to go to college or university from [the Community]?
24. What does success in life mean to you? Where does postsecondary education fit?

At the end: can you draw me a picture of your relationship to college or university? (This can be completed over the next week, and you can leave it for me at the school office.)

Community Official

1. What is your experience with education up until this point?
2. Do you want to pursue more education in the future? To what level?
3. Did you attend college or university? Why or why not?
4. Tell me what you know about postsecondary education.
5. What do you think of college or university?
6. Has anyone in your family ever gone to college or university?
7. What do you think their experience was like?
8. Is it hard to secure funding for postsecondary education in [the Community]?
9. Do you think going to college or university has been good, bad, or neutral for the people of [the Community] so far? Why?
10. Do you think attending post-secondary education benefits or harms the community in any way?
11. Do you believe that the programming in colleges and/or universities is relevant and applicable to you? To the community? To Aboriginal people? (Erwin, 2009).
12. After they attend post-secondary education, do people return to the community?
13. What do you think are the challenges faced by people who want to go to college or university from [the Community]?
14. What is the relevance of postsecondary education to Aboriginal communities?
15. What does success in life mean to you? Where does postsecondary education fit?

Mind Map for (insert pseudonym)



Appendix E

SECOND INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview #2:

Each participant will be asked to do a second audio-taped interview using this format.

Thank you for returning and meeting with me again.

1. From your interview I made a mind map. What do you think of it? (Please see attached example.)
2. What is missing from it? What would you like to add? Is there anything you would like to change or delete?
3. These other maps were made from other interviews. Take time to look over them. Would you like to comment on them?
3. If you think of anything else in the future about your map or another map, feel free to contact me.