An Exploration of the Perceived Impact of Selected Factors

Related to Successful Métis Education:

The Voices of Métis Graduates of a Rural Manitoba High School

by

Kristine J. Friesen

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Administration, Foundations & Psychology

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KRISTINE J. FRIESEN ©2012

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**Department of Educational Administration, Foundations & Psychology,
Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.**

ABSTRACT

Educational success eludes many Aboriginal students today. They are
not graduating at the same rate as non-Aboriginal students in Canada and in
Manitoba. Métis students, although faring a bit better, are still struggling
academically, socially and economically. The literature up until now has mainly
focused on Aboriginal education and there is limited research on Métis
education. Across Canadian society there is a high level of consensus that
education is central to individual economic, socio-cultural, and psychological
well being, and to the country's well being. Many factors contribute to their lack
of success including racial discrimination and stereotyping of the first peoples of
our nation.

This qualitative study focuses on student voice and data from six
interviews of three male and three female former Métis graduates from a rural
Manitoba high school and their perceived impact of school factors related to

successful Métis education. This study offers insight for educators and policy makers by highlighting factors that the former students state themselves including elements such as the importance of cultural programming, accessible and caring teachers, parental involvement, and hands-on authentic learning experiences.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to dedicate this study to my father, an avid learner, who at the age of 71, discovered, for the first time, that he was Métis. I had been in contact with my cousin who was researching our genealogy when she shared with me my Métis ancestry. I'll never forget the look in my father's eyes when I asked him if he knew he was Métis. He sat for a long time not saying anything, almost paralyzed, and then murmured, "Wow, that explains a lot…" and drifted back again into his thoughts.

How was it possible for almost a lifetime to go by without him knowing this important fact about his heritage? How could I reach almost half a decade before finding out this important piece of who I am? I'm grateful to the Creator that I was able to enter into engaging discussions on this subject with my father for the next ten years before his death at age 81. Discussions that started the healing of both our generations. Discussions that are giving me a fuller sense of self. I've since discovered that I am not alone as I meet many other Aboriginal people who share similar experiences and stories. Stories of how our ancestors were trying to protect us, their children, from racial discrimination. It is my hope that personal pride of whom we are and how we came to be accepted, learned from and celebrated.

I am always amazed at how helpful and gracious people around us can be. Some of these people along this journey I have never met before and yet they did everything they could to help me. To my husband, Ken, I say Thank You for your love and patience in my unending quest for knowledge and where it takes me. To my children, Scarlett and Hudson, I say Thank You for embracing who you are. I love you and I am proud of you. To my mother, who has long since passed, I say Thank You for teaching me that anything is possible with hard work and for my Dad, whose high expectations continue to drive me to excel. A special thank you to Jon Young, Laara Fitznor, Fred Shore and Brian Leithwaite for encouraging, challenging, and supporting me along the way. I thank the

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES

PREFACE

I was different. I thought it was because I lived on the edge of the "good community" or because my father struggled with alcoholism. I did well in the private Catholic school I grew up in until Grade 6 but I was fearful. Always fearful.

Later, I wondered if I didn't fit in because my dad was a drinker, a well-known but hidden fact to most of the community. Later yet, I wondered if it was because I was the product of a mixed marriage. A Métis French Roman Catholic who married an Icelandic Lutheran. Some of the pieces began to come together when, to my surprise, at 41 years of age, my cousin, working on a family genealogy, told me that I was Métis and related to Louis Riel. A part of my history was forgotten lost or was it being hidden? There are tears for generations I know nothing about. My father used to say that his mother, my grandmother, would talk to neighbours over the fence and come back into the house in tears. She never felt like she fitted in, a woman growing up in residential school. I never understood why this was significant. Now, after much learning about our Métis history and my own family history, I understand this sense of loss…

At first, I was perplexed as to how this would change the way I saw myself. In fact, as I continued with my own schooling, I didn't think any of it mattered. I didn't realize that the tears I carried were for my people, a forgotten identity, something stripped away. Was it something to be ashamed of or felt the need to hide?

In reality, it does matter who I am, where I come from, the experiences of my ancestors and who I am becoming along the journey. I needed to find a way to let those voices out. Uncover the layers.

When I saw the same fear, the same doubt, the unknowing, in the eyes of the Aboriginal students in my midst, is the day I knew my purpose. I would continue the journey to discover not only where I had come from but also guide those around me to do the same when they asked and were ready. This is true educational success in my eyes.

The question, "How does a Métis person navigate their way through the educational system?" is the basis for this thesis. As many others before me, I wanted to quit school when I was 16. My father would not let me. He encouraged me to walk in both worlds without knowing it, understanding that education would bring freedom... or would it? Both my parents wanted me to succeed and my father especially knew that I needed an education in order to experience success.

I did graduate, yet something was missing. There was always an uneasiness I could not explain. I noticed it most when I was in the company of Métis people. It was many years before I had the courage to return to the post-secondary system to carry on the journey I began many years earlier.

This thesis is about understanding why Métis people have had success in one world, that of one rural Manitoban high school, while many still struggle elsewhere in the Western educational system. It is hoped that this study will give insight to educators as to the factors that are contributing to these students'

success and pride to those on the journey of self-discovery so that greater

educational success can be experienced by, for, and with Métis students.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Across Canadian society there is a high level of consensus that education is central to individual economic, socio-cultural, and psychological well-being, and to the country's well-being. National Chief Shawn Atleo, in his first speech to the nations of Canada in Calgary on July 23, 2009, stated that successful education for Aboriginal youth must connect them with their families, their culture, their language and the land (Atleo, 2009). Regardless of how one chooses to define "educational success" (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007; Messersmith, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2006), there is a substantial body of evidence to demonstrate that in many different contexts across Canada that Aboriginal People – defined here as Métis, First Nations and Inuit – do not experience academic success at levels similar to those of the non-Aboriginal population at large (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2001; Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996; Statistics Canada, 2006;Tait, 1999). While there is data that suggests that Métis students appear to be faring better than other Aboriginal Peoples, there is still a significant disparity in many indicators of educational success between Métis students and the rest of (non-Aboriginal) Canada (Wilk, White and Guimond, 2009).

Emerging out of the many initiatives that have been undertaken over the last four decades to address this achievement gap is a growing body of literature that attempts to describe successful Aboriginal schools for Aboriginal students and

analyzing the features that contribute to this success (Melnechnko & Horsman, 1998; Mendelson, 2006; Richards, Hove & Afolabi, 2008). Most of this literature has as its focus First Nations students attending either First Nations/Federal schools (Brunnen, 2003; Canadian Council on Learning, 2007; Fulford, 2007; Tunison, 2007) or provincial schools (Levin, 2007; Morin, 2004; Richards & Scott, 2009; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2002), but there is very little research on effective schools for Métis students.

This thesis seeks, in a small way, to contribute to addressing this gap by examining the perceptions of six Métis graduates from a single, rural Manitoba high school, which in this study has been given the fictitious name of Cedar Falls High School, on the school factors that they consider as important in contributing to their educational success – measured, in this first instance, as high school graduation.

Who are the Métis? A Cultural, Historical and Legal Profile

According to Goulet & Goulet (2008), "the historical Métis were a unique, native-born people of Western Canada, the Great Lakes region on both sides of the border, and some northwestern areas of the United States" (Goulet & Goulet, 2008, p. 15). Accordingly, Peterson (1985) adds that the Métis "burst upon the historical stage in 1815…declaring themselves the rightful owners of the heartland of North America " (Peterson, 1985). Foster (1985) states that the Métis are "unique among native peoples" (Foster, 1985, in Peterson and Brown, 1985, p. 73) in that their origins were in the fur trade and they did not "antedate

the fur trade" (Foster, 1985, in Peterson and Brown, 1985, p. 73). According to Foster (1985), the term Métis are those individuals of "mixed Indian, western European and other ancestry, who arose in the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes trading system, including its extensions to the Pacific and Arctic coasts, and chose to see themselves in various collectivities distinct from their Indian neighbours and in some instances, distinct from members of the "white" community (Foster, 1985, in Peterson and Brown, 1985, p. 73).

The Métis developed their own culture with the mixing of Euro-Canadian and Indian ancestry, where they had a blending of "customs, traditions, way of life, and collective identity separate from those of their Indian forefathers (many of them Cree, Ojibway, Chipewayan, and Saulteaux) and their European forefathers, primarily French and Scottish" (Goulet & Goulet, 2008, p. 15). A number of factors contributed to their distinctive culture such as their "common Euro-aboriginal ancestry, their remoteness from a populous civilization, their way of life including their roles in the fur trade and the buffalo hunt, lack of elaborate structural controls, their shared kinship and communal experiences, and the sluggish pace of settlement in the fur trade hinterland" (Goulet & Goulet, 2008, p.16).

Living and working together, their new identity emerged in a number of ways. There was a merging of languages, development of their own clothing that suited their purposes of canoeing, hunting, and fishing, creation of their own infinity flag, their own means of transportation (for example, birch bark canoe and the Red River cart), their own style of dance (jigging), their own style of

music (fiddling), and poetry and song (oral tradition of storytelling) (Goulet &
Goulet, 2008, p. 16). As "children of the fur trade", as they were often called in
Western Canada, these shared experiences also brought forth folk heroes,
folklore, and political leaders (Goulet & Goulet, 2008, p. 16). Métis roots go back
to the beginning of the exploration of North America when furs proved more
lucrative than fishing and alliances with Indians was seen as a way to further
their financial interests even before the founding of the Hudson Bay Company
and North West Company (Goulet & Goulet, 2008, p. 17).

From a legal point of view, there are differing views on how someone is
identified as Métis. Foster (1985) argues in "Some Questions and Perspectives
on the Problem of Métis Roots" that in a common sense approach, you are Métis
if you say you are and if others who identify themselves as Métis say you are
(Foster, 1985, p. 73-87). This goes hand in hand with a Supreme Court of Canada
case in 2003 when Stephen Powley and his son, Rodney, asserted their
Aboriginal hunting rights in the area around their Métis community located in
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, and were acquitted of hunting illegally by the Supreme
Court of Canada (Judgments of the Supreme Court of Canada, R. v. Powley, 2003
SCC 43, [2003] 2 S.C.R. 207, p. 1). Until this time, there was no legal definition of
Métis. The judgment stated that,

> individuals are only entitled to exercise Métis Aboriginal rights by virtue
> of their ancestral connection to and current membership in a Métis
> community. Self- identification, ancestral connection, and community
> acceptance are factors, which define Métis identity for the purpose of

claiming Métis rights under s. 35" (Judgments of the Supreme Court of Canada, R. v. Powley, 2003 SCC 43, [2003] 2 S.C.R. 207, p. 1).

As the courts have declared, the identity of the Métis is "not merely a question of genetics" (RCAP, 1996, Volume 4, Chapter 5), as blood is not typed by race. Although a Métis person has some degree of both Aboriginal and European ancestry, the notion of identity goes beyond bloodlines and "sometimes involve marriages or adoptions, family links that are as deeply cherished as blood connections and it is primarily their distinct culture that sets the Métis apart from other Aboriginal peoples" (RCAP, 1996, Volume 4, Chapter 5).

The complexities arise from the fur trade because it involved the English speaking North West Company, the French speaking Hudson Bay Company, and the Aboriginal[1] peoples who operated the fur trade posts. The "half-breeds", those who looked visibly Aboriginal but were not Status or Treaty Indians, were forced after Confederation to identify either with the English and became "Englishmen", the French and became "Frenchmen", Status or Treaty Indians if they lived with Aboriginal people or when they chose to remain living all year round at the fur trading posts, they were referred to as Métis. Living in isolation from other communities, the Métis culture came from the melding of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples living together (Shore, 1995, p. 2). Although the

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[1] According to the Canadian Constitution Act of 1985, Section 35(2), Aboriginal Peoples of Canada includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. Available February 15, 2012 at http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/12-592-x/12-592-x2007001-eng.htm#a2.

Government of Canada recognizes Métis as one of Canada's Aboriginal peoples, to date it has failed to recognize their claim to land rights. Lussier (1978) argues that historically, the Métis could identify themselves with Indians or Whites depending on where they wanted to live and what language they spoke or chose to spoke since many Métis spoke more than one language (Lussier, 1978, p. 1).

While it is important to understand "who" the Métis are, the term Métis is used in this study in two distinct ways. Generally, the term is taken to mean a distinct people as those who self-identify, provide proof of their genealogy, and who are accepted by the Métis community as Métis outlined by the Manitoba Métis Federation Aboriginal Canada Portal (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2009, p. 1). Operationally, for the purposes of identifying "Métis students" as participants in this study, the term will include those students who self-declare as Métis on specific school data information and/or those students who state they are Métis and participate in Aboriginal programming at the school as a Métis person but did not formally declare on school data information. Even though the Canadian government and the Métis have not agreed on a definition of who the Métis are, in this study, self-declaration is seen as a democratic right to be accepted as such.

The Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

Given the powerful relationships that have been shown to exist between educational attainment and both individual well being (White & Beavon, 2009; HRSDC, 2001) and Canada's overall economic well-being (HRSDC, 2001; Institute on Governance, 1997; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996),

the under-achievement of Canada's Aboriginal population constitutes a serious challenge for Canadian educators. While in recent years a considerable body of research has been developed examining successful schools for First Nations students, the education of Métis students has received much less attention.

As such, the purpose of this study is to examine the school factors that six Métis graduates of Cedar Falls High School identify as important in contributing to their educational success. In exploring this question, the following sub-questions will be addressed:

1.   How do these students define "success"?

2.   What school factors do these students identify as being important in supporting their school success and high school graduation?

3.   What factors do these students identify as having been barriers that they needed to overcome in order to be successful in school and to graduate?

Methodology

Who are the Métis? The research is only beginning to answer this question. The Métis in one rural Manitoba high school of approximately 1000 students are doing well compared to Aboriginal students in Canada and Manitoba. The high school was assigned the pseudonym, Cedar Falls High School, to protect its identity. The school is located in a small community within 100 kilometres of a city in Manitoba.

Besides offering the regular Manitoba curricula and similar programming to many other Manitoba high schools, it also offers an opt-in

Aboriginal Awareness Program offers occasional cultural field trips as well as holding regular meetings every two weeks at lunch. The program began five years ago and the school claims to have a high rate of Aboriginal students graduating, most of them Métis. Statistics for the school have been kept since its inception and show good results.

This is a qualitative study focused on student voice, which honours the oral tradition of the Métis. The research is focused at determining which practices and school factors are contributing to the success of its Métis students with the goal of bringing awareness to educators of how to create learning environments that continue to increase success for Métis students by speaking to Métis students themselves.

There were six participants for the study, three female and three male. All of the participants had graduated from the high school in the last two years. One hour open-ended interviews were held with each participant after approval was received from ENREB and protocols were followed as outlined in the document.

The cultural awareness group of the high school is made up of Métis and First Nations students. The leadership of the group comes from the students themselves in the form of a Chief and Council. An information sheet describing the study in sufficient detail to raise awareness and potential participation was shared with the Chief and Council and subsequently, with the students who attended the meetings of the Aboriginal Awareness program both in paper form and by email.

The snowball sampling technique, a method used by researchers to identify potential participants when subjects are difficult to locate, was used to secure participants. A former Métis graduate from Cedar Falls High School contacted the researcher because of their interest in the study and after signing the ENREB approval document, was interviewed for one hour. From this one participant, other potential candidates were noted and contacted until three female and three male participants were identified for the study.

Only Métis students were interviewed that had self-declared on school data information and/or if they stated that they considered themselves Métis and participated in the school's Aboriginal programming as a Métis person but did not formally declare on school data information.

The study was designed to shed light on the research question, "What do Métis graduates of Cedar Falls High School identify as important in contributing to their educational success?" The interview focused on exploring the participants' ethnic identities, their notions of educational success, and in-school supports and barriers to high school success/graduation.

Definitions

This study has as its focus school factors associated with the educational success of Métis students in a single rural high school context. Each of the terms "Métis", "rural", and "educational success" are used in a variety of different ways within the literature, and so the way in which they are used in this study warrants clarification here.

Métis Students

Métis students for the purpose of this study are defined as those students who meet one or more of the following criteria:

1) those students who self-declare as Métis on specific school data
information; and/or

2) those students who state they are Métis and participate in Aboriginal programming as a Métis person but did not formally declare on school data information.

Rural

The term "rural" is important to this study because rural areas often differ greatly from urban areas and from each other, "especially in terms of economic resources, community priorities and purpose, demographics, and political efficacy" (Wallin, 2005, p. 79). The definition of rural will give context to the study especially when comparing other studies. Gjelton (1982) writing about the USA, describes five separate types of rural communities: stable rural communities; depressed rural communities; high growth rural communities; reborn rural communities; and, isolated rural communities (Gjelton, 1982, cited in Wallin, 2003, p. 8). A brief description of each is provided below from Gjelton's work.

Stable Rural Communities: These communities are generally white and affluent, prosperous, peaceful, and traditional. There is not a lot of change in these communities because people are generally happy with the status quo and stability (Gjelton, 1982, cited in Wallin, 2003, p. 8)

Depressed Rural Communities: These communities have a moderate to high minority population and are often referred to as a "dead-end" town where outmigration of youth is ongoing and problematic. The local economy is undeveloped and poverty and unemployment are widespread (Gjelton, 1982, cited in Wallin, 2003, p. 8).

High Growth Rural Communities: These rural communities are referred to as "boomtowns" since their economic growth has not been uniform (Gjelton, 1982, cited in Wallin, 2003, p. 8).

Reborn Rural Communities: These are communities typically located close to urban areas where urban dwellers move to these scenic and tranquil spots bringing their "city ways" with them. They are likely to buy in to the rural lifestyle to a point that they defend it vehemently (Gjelton, 1982, cited in Wallin, 2003, p. 8).

Isolated Rural Communities: The most defining characteristic of these communities is that they are very isolated which overrides any of the other characteristics the community may have such as in the communities described above (Gjelton, 1982, cited in Wallin, 2003, p. 9).

While the community within which Cedar Falls High School is located has similarities to Gjelton's classification of a "reborn rural community", for this research, I will use a **dormitory** definition of rural, meaning an area "experiencing a rapid increase in population within commuting distance from a major centre where a high proportion of workers travel outside the area to work each day, a youthful population structure and particularly high levels of car ownership" (Cloke

& Park, 1985, p. 14). The rural school in this study is located in a relatively stable rural community that is occupied by a predominantly white, and affluent population. In many rural communities, there is a high degree of overlap between school and community because of the lack of large enough public spaces to hold community events. Children and their activities become the hub of community life. There is a shared consensus amongst many parents and community members that the rural schools are safer with a higher level of caring teachers and community involvement.

It is also important to note that this particular school is in close proximity to a city, which makes it easier for graduates to access post-secondary programs at a lower cost since they are within a reasonable commutable distance.

Educational Success

In order to select "successful Métis students" to be interviewed in the study, high school graduation was adopted as the preliminary, starting definition of educational success. How the participants themselves viewed educational success is explored in Chapter Four.

Limitations

This is an exploratory case study of only six students' experiences attending a single high school in terms of their views of educational success and the school factors that contributed to, or inhibited, their school success. The findings are not intended to be generalized to other settings or to other Aboriginal populations.

This study did not seek the views of Métis students who did not graduate or non-Métis students.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped this study will contribute in a number of ways both to the knowledge base of Métis education and to offering insights and, perhaps, a different perspective to educators working with Métis students. Case studies such as this are unique in that they can put a human face onto statistics of school success and failure. There is a growing amount of research in the field of Aboriginal education but limited research in the area of Métis education, particularly, research with a student voice. Although educators are always differentiating instruction to meet the needs of their students, it is often a hit and miss situation to finding strategies that work for students. Concrete information resulting from this area of research is required if educators and students alike are to experience more school success. My career as an educator has taken me to four different schools, one of which included approximately eighty percent of the student population as having Métis and First Nations ancestry. Although my colleagues agree that there are apparent cultural differences between European and Aboriginal worldviews, there had been little focussed effort to address this in the school.

CHAPTER TWO: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The identity of the Métis people has been difficult to define as this study has had to rely on a significant amount of First Nations literature since, outside of Métis leader Louis Riel's papers, few other Métis-authored materials have survived. Most of the historical memory of the Métis is "largely orally based [and therefore], it is extremely difficult to trace the development of early Métis nationalism or group identity" (Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001, p. 19). Unfortunately, the historical information that is available has not recorded daily mundane events but the "exceptional, noteworthy, and the different" (Foster cited in Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 74). According to Grant Anderson, Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF), there are 100-120,000 Métis in Manitoba but only 60,000 are members of the Federation (Personal communication, February 10, 2012).

The MMF does not track the total number of Métis in an area but only the number of members in an area and they are in the process of revamping their system of tracking Métis members (Personal communication, February 10, 2012). They currently have re-entered 5,000 members into their data base and currently have only data on this number of Métis so no further breakdown of data is currently available although they were able to verify that they have 111 members from the Cedar Falls area (Personal communication, February 10, 2012).

According to a 2006 Census Profile produced by the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, there are 565 self-declared Métis living in the Cedar Falls area where this study takes place (Statistics Canada, 2006). This is 4.4% of the total population of the Cedar Falls area compared to 6.3% for the whole Province of Manitoba. I was surprised by this number, which I deem to be quite high (The Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, 2008, p. 3). When one compares it to how many First Nations Peoples are living in the area, there are only .1% living in Springfield versus 9% for the Province (The Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, 2008, p. 3).

Alexander Ross was a leading recorder of events that made up a significant part of Red River history. Ross gave first hand accounts of the "Métis buffalo hunt early in the 1840s with the image of the alpine chamois hunter" (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 74). It appears that Ross, while accounting for the poverty and hunger that the Métis encountered, "his cost-analysis and misunderstanding of Métis life and buffalo hunt does not give sympathy to significant aspects of Métis life" (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 74).

The literature reveals a variety of definitions for the word or term 'Métis'. For example, Redbird (1980) states that the word 'Métis comes from the French, meaning "simply mixed" and the "first use of the word in public print comes from the pen of Louis Riel himself" in a published article in the *Globe and Mail* shortly after his death (Redbird, 1980, p. 1) while Lischke & McNab (2007) claim that the word Métis comes from the Latin word "miscere" which means "to mix" and that this word is embodied in Cree, which, in a historical context,

means "the other son" (Lischke & McNab, 2007, p. 1). These mixed bloods, or half breeds, as they were often referred to, were thought to exist from at least the mid-sixteen hundreds, a race of people born with both European and Aboriginal origins (Redbird, 1980, p. 1).

This study will add to the growing amount of Métis literature in a new way in that it is based on student voice in terms of not only what school factors have contributed to their graduation as Métis students but also their thoughts and experiences about what it means to be Métis.

Who are the Métis: A Historical Profile

Some of the demand to know "who the Métis are" relates to the "current debate in Métis studies, whether cultural or legal, but particularly those relating to land rights" (Pannekoek, 2001, p. 1). Statistics demonstrate that more and more Métis are self-identifying in recent years. There appears to be a more positive climate around being Métis, in part, perhaps because Métis Federations and universities are being successful in obtaining funds that has allowed them to offer scholarships to Métis students.

There is agreement in the literature that much of Canada's Métis identity stems from what happened at the Red River settlements "and their subsequent dispersal and move into the western interior" (Pannekoek, 2001, p. 113). A critical defining factor for who the Métis were came out of one event known as the "Seven Oaks Massacre" where 22 deaths occurred, only 1 of them a Métis (Pannekoek, 2001, p. 113). As Pannekoek (2001) points out, the fact that it was

called a "massacre" shows that Métis were viewed somewhere between civilized and primitive societies and confirms "the image of the Métis as a barbaric and savage people (Pannekoek, 2001, p. 113).

Métis were involved in buffalo hunting as a commodity for eastern capitalist markets (Pannekoek, 2001, p. 115). As the fur trade progressed and as many Métis moved west, further away from Quebec attracted by opportunities, it was not as feasible to travel back and forth each year and the fur trading posts that were established became permanent homes for both fur traders and Aboriginal peoples. This was the beginning of a new culture, the birth of the Métis people. Although these communities had a sound economic base, they were typically small and isolated and therefore, did not "have the social, political and economic clout to develop nationhood" (Shore, 1995, p. 1).

Up until Confederation, the Métis developed a secure economic base from buffalo products and were an integral part of the North West Company's local trading system. The Pemmican Wars, 1780 to 1821, resulted from the Métis being involved in trading with both the Hudson Bay Company, whom they supplied with pemmican and labour, and the North West Company, for whom they operated the transport and local trading system. While having difficulty moving it forward, the Métis did realize their "nationhood" and developed a secure economic base in the provisioning of the fur trade (Shore, 1995, p. 2). Unfortunately, these 'half-breeds' as they were commonly referred to in correspondence and government legislation, were forced to choose to either join the English-speaking Hudson Bay Company, the French-speaking North

West Company, the Aboriginal communities, or remain with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples at the fur trading posts during Confederation (Shore, 1995, p. 2). If they chose to live with the English, then they were considered "Englishmen", or "English half-breeds". Similarly, if the Métis chose to live with the French, they were considered "Frenchmen" and Treaty or Registered Indian if they lived with the Indian people. The term "half-breed" was given to anyone who did not appear visibly white and was a term commonly used by 1890 (Shore, 1995, p. 2). If any of the Englishmen or Frenchmen chose to live with Aboriginal people at a fur trading post, they were considered "Métis", a term accepted by Canadians who were "not a Treaty or Registered Indian and who appeared to have Aboriginal features" (Shore, 1995, p. 3).

Historically, according to Redbird (1980), the term "half-breed" does not imply that a Métis person is in any way precisely "half White" and "half Indian" proportions (Redbird, 1980, p. 1). The Government of Canada still does not recognize its jurisdiction over Métis and non-status Indians , despite the recognition of the Métis as an individual people in the Constitution Act of 1982, (Lischke & McNab, 2007). The Canadian Government continues to spend a vast amount of time trying to define the identity of the Métis in terms of membership rather than on self-government. According to Shore (1995), the government uses this idea of inclusivity to weaken Métis cohesion, making a simple solution to Métis identity complex in the hopes of diminishing any future land claims (Shore, 1995, p. 4). Several cases are appearing in court today such as the land claim case between Sprague and Flanagan where the federal government has

been accused of conspiring to deny the Métis their rights to land claims under the Manitoba Act (Pannekoek, 2001, p. 118).

The identity of the Métis is "not merely a question of genetics" (RCAP, 1996, Volume 4, Chapter 5). Although a Métis person has some degree of both Aboriginal and European ancestry, the notion of identity goes beyond bloodlines and "sometimes involve marriages or adoptions, family links that are as deeply cherished as blood connections and it is primarily their distinct culture that sets the Métis apart from other Aboriginal peoples" (RCAP, 1996, Volume 4, Chapter 5).

Fridères (1998), in his book *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada*, defines the Métis as: a) distinct from Indian and Inuit; b) descendants of the historic Métis evolved in what is now Western Canada as a people with a common political will, and c) descendants of those Aboriginal peoples who have been absorbed by the historic Métis (Fridères, 1998, p. 38). The Manitoba Métis Federation in their membership application today continues to state that self-identifying is the first criteria in defining oneself as Métis, followed by showing an ancestral connection to the Historic Métis Community and being accepted by the Métis community (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2009, Membership Application). The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) (2003) define Métis as people of mixed First Nation and European ancestry "who identify themselves as Métis, as distinct from First Nations people, Inuit or non-Aboriginal people" (INAC, 2003, Terminology Section, p. 1).

According to Peterson and Brown (1985), the term Métis is applied to those individuals, frequently of mixed Indian, western European and other ancestry, who

arose in the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes trading system including its extensions to the Pacific and Arctic coasts and the Hudson Bay trading system (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 73). They chose to see themselves in "various collectivities distinct from their Indian neighbours and, in some instances, distinct from members of the "white" community" (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p .73).

Intermarriage between employees of the trading companies and native women came about from alliances with fur gathering tribes and meeting them "at their residential source" depending on the extent of licensing by fur trading companies of English and French (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 40). Between 1702 and 1815, "towns were exclusively fur trading towns, and dominated by off 40), who intermarried amongst themselves which produced more Métis. Illegal fur traders lived with Indian women in their cabins (even though many had legal wives back home), which were separate and removed from the legal fur traders.

During the eighteenth century, self-contained Métis communities in the form of forts and trading posts were established all the way from the Great Lakes to Lake Winnipeg and beyond (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 45). In Michilimackinac, the merchant elite were a growing number of Métis fur traders who had "adapted to the local environment, wearing the same clothes, eating the same food and living in the same houses as the commoners" (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 45).

The highest level of intermarriage for the early corporate towns occurred at Sault Ste. Marie by 1800 (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 59). By 1815,

there was tangible and abundant evidence of a 150 year long all 62). By the late

1820s, there was an estimated 10-15,000 residents of Métis communities south

and west of Lake Superior and Huron (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 63), however,

as these families were not an agricultural society until after the fur trade

collapsed, they did not "develop a keen sense of individual property rights"

(Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 63).

The "new people" of Red River, the Métis, had emerged, "not merely

biracial, multilingual and bicultural, but the proud owners of a new language"

(Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 64), and after 1815, "of a quasi-military political

organization, a flag, a bardic tradition, a rich folklore, and a national history

came to be once the old fur trade communities of the Great Lakes collapsed"

(Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 64). Dickason (1985) states that in 1815, the Métis

burst onto the scene declaring that they were the rightful owners of the

heartland of North America rather than the Hudson Bay Company (Peterson &

Brown, 1985, p. 38). Some thought that the Métis were a North West Company

invention and a political group. The fact that the Métis were spread across the

nation as a "persistent appeal throughout the nineteenth century, suggests that

it [the Métis] stood for a type of social cohesion which was much older"

(Peterson and Brown, 1985, p. 38). It was not until the 1820s that there were

more accounts of fur traders as "halfbreeds", "mixed breeds", "Métis" and

"métif" occurring in the travel literature (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 39).

Lussier (1978) argues that historically, the Métis could identify themselves

with Indians or Whites depending on where they wanted to live and what language

they chose to speak since many Métis spoke more than one language (Lussier, 1978, p. 1). Lussier (1978) also refers to Jean Legasse's (1958) study called *People of Indian Ancestry in Manitoba* where twenty people were asked to define what the terms "Métis" or "Half-Breed" meant to them. His research concluded that a Métis person is "any person of mixed White and Indian blood, having not less than one-quarter Indian blood" (cited in Lussier, 1978, p. 1). He then disputes the validity of this definition based on "blood" since history has shown that no matter how much "blood" of each race, White and Indian that one had, an individual can identify as an Indian, a Scot, a Frenchman, or as a Métis (Lussier, 1978, p. 1). Furthermore, it would be ludicrous to think that such a noted Métis leader as Louis Riel, with only one eighth Indian blood, would not be considered Métis under this definition (Lussier, 1978, p. 1).

There were several subdivisions amongst the Métis including community distinctions based on who the trading partners were or to which community they were adjacent to (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 78). For example, French trading posts were associated with the Ojibway in the Great Lakes region while the Cree and Assiniboine were associated with the French to the northwest while there were also distinctions between the buffalo hunters of the prairies and the hunters-trappers of the Boreal forest (Petersen & Brown, 1985, p. 78). In the East, it appears that even though many of the Canadian men were living with native women in the villages around Montreal, they did not see themselves as a distinct society, as Métis, until 1759, when the increasing dominance of the English, after the British were victorious on the Plains of Abraham, resulted in

the half bloods in the upper Great Lakes trading families identifying with their English roots to protect their interests (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 81).

Historians argue as to whether the Métis emerged at this time or whether it was after the Battle of Seven Oaks in the Red River region in 1816 when the "New Nation" of Métis arose, nevertheless, the Métis are thought to have emerged, as Barth (1985) states, "when the shared experiences in a particular population create the social group, the shared understandings arising from these experiences are expressed as behaviour that distinguishes the Métis from others (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 82). The particular needs of the fur trade influenced but did not dictate the shared experiences of the adult men while the sharing of experiences amongst the women may have resulted in institutionalizing Métis ways, however, the literature is written with such male bias, it is difficult to gauge how much influence women had on the Métis way of life (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 85). At this particular time, women were items of barter amongst men but some Métis women did rise to a position of respect with evidence of Métis families appearing because the men coming to the trading posts counted enormously on the women to prepare for their new way of life with clothing suitable to the climate (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 85).

Who are the Métis? A Statistical Profile

Census Background

According to the 2006 Census, the Métis were defined as those "persons reporting a single response of "Métis" to the Aboriginal identity question" on the

census form (Statistics Canada, 2006) which differs from the Métis National Council (MNC) who considers the Métis as a distinct society accepted by the Métis nation (Statistics Canada, 2006). The MNC defines Métis as "a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis nation ancestry" (Statistics Canada, 2006), which means a "person having ancestry from the historic Métis national homeland, an area in west central North America" (Statistics Canada, (2006)).

The census results have been adjusted for incompletely enumerated Indian communities for the years 2001 and 2006 to allow for a more accurate comparison of statistics. Aboriginal groups expressed concerns prior to the 1986 Census' question regarding an individual's ancestry stating "that an individual's ancestry does not necessarily reflect his or her feelings of belonging to a specific group", thus, an Aboriginal identity question was added in the 1986 Census short questionnaire (Statistics Canada, 2006, How Statistics Canada identifies Aboriginal peoples). I would argue that this is an important question, not only to First Nations peoples but also to Métis people, given their history of choosing to identify with different cultures during the fur trade era and as a result of Confederation and the resistances that followed and led to their dispersal.

According to Statistics Canada (2006) Part 2: Questions used in the 2006 Census to identify Aboriginal peoples, the census questions on ethnic origin and Aboriginal identity have changed over the years (Statistics Canada, 2006). The 2001 and 2006 censuses include questions to every household on ethnic origin (including Aboriginal ancestries), Aboriginal identity (First Nation, Métis, Inuit, or Uncertain of ancestry), and whether or not a person is a

Registered or Treaty Indian and member of an Indian Band or First Nation

(Statistics Canada, 2006).

Rate of Growth

According to Statistics Canada (2006) Métis high rates of growth over

the past decade, Canada's Aboriginal population is currently growing at a much

faster rate than the non-Aboriginal population, and the fastest gain is occurring

with the Métis, whose reported population increased by ninety-one per cent in

the last ten years (Statistics Canada, 2006). According to White (2009), these

increases stem from two factors: (i) a higher than average birth rate; and, (ii)

the fact that more individuals are increasingly identifying themselves as an

Aboriginal person (White, 2009, p. 50, Statistics Canada, 2006). Both of these

factors are important to the thesis, the first leading to a larger Métis student

population and the latter requiring that the thesis address the question of Métis

identity and identification.

**Table 1: Aboriginal and Métis Populations
for Canada, Manitoba, and Cedar Falls**

Country or Province	Total Population (Aboriginal & Non-Aboriginal)	Aboriginal Population	Métis Population
Canada	31,241,030	1,678,235 (5.4%)	363,045 (22%)
Manitoba	1,133,515	186,660 (17%)	65,335 (35%)
Cedar Falls	14,069	740 (5%)	565 (76%)

(*Note:* Statistics compiled by author from Statistics Canada (2006) at
www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement and
www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/statistics/demographics/communities).

According to Statistics Canada (2006) Table 1, there are almost three times

the national number of Aboriginal people living in Manitoba compared to those

living in the whole of Canada. The number of Métis living in Manitoba comes close to doubling that of all the Métis living in Canada.

Studying Table 2 below, there are four times as many school age Aboriginal children in Manitoba as the national average and four times as many school age Métis children in Manitoba compared to the national average. Twenty percent of Canada's total Aboriginal (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) and non-Aboriginal population is school age (5-19 years) and similarly, 22% of Manitoba's population is school age. Further examination reveals that 2% of Canada's Aboriginal school age population is Métis.

For Manitoba, 22% of its population is school age (5 to 19 years). Approximately one quarter of Manitoba's total school age population is made up of Aboriginal children. When comparing with the percentage of total Métis Canadians who are school age, Manitoba has four times the national average of Métis school age children.

All of this is significant because the statistics show that Métis students are not graduating at the same rate as non-Aboriginal students in Manitoba. This is significant in terms of the number of children affected by the growing achievement gap and lower than average graduation statistics for Métis children. There are also implications for schools and educators in terms of how they are adapting to the Métis students in their classrooms.

**Table 2: Aboriginal and Métis School Age Population
for Canada and Manitoba**

Country or Province	Aboriginal & Non-Aboriginal School Aged (5-19) Population	Aboriginal	Métis
Canada	6,022,335 (100%)	356,105 (6%)	107,905 (2%)
Manitoba	238,360 (100%)	57,290 (24%)	20,245 (8%)

(*Note:* Statistics compiled by author from Statistics Canada (2006) at
www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement).

With a growing population of Métis people in Manitoba (and Canada), it is
important that educators and policy makers understand what school factors
contribute to their academic success as the Métis makes up a growing portion of
Manitoba's workforce. This study, which identifies school factors that contribute to
success for rural Métis students, contributes to this knowledge base through the
students' voices themselves.

Rural and Urban Statistics

In 2001, 68% of Canada's Métis population lived in urban centres and
29% per cent lived in rural areas. The terms "urban" and "rural" as defined
earlier give a context to what constitutes these terms. Because there are several
references to data in this section from Statistics Canada, a census metropolitan
area needs further definition. A census metropolitan area (CMA) is defined by
Statistics Canada as "one or more adjacent municipalities centered on a large
urban area (urban areas include large cities, or census metropolitan areas, and
smaller urban centers and are known as the urban core.). A CMA must have a
total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more must live in the

urban core. A CA must have an urban core population of at least 10,000. To be included in the CMA or CA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the central urban area, as measured by commuting flows derived from census place of work data" (Statistics Canada, 2006).

According to Statistics Canada, 2006, seven out of ten Métis live in urban areas, however, urban Métis were twice as likely (41% compared to 20%) as urban non-Aboriginal people to live in smaller urban centres comprised of less than 100,000 people (Statistics Canada, 2006). The remaining 59% of urban Métis live in census metropolitan areas (CMA). This is significant because the rural town where this study takes place is considered a bedroom community in a populated municipality of approximately 13,000 situated within 100 kilometers of the City of Winnipeg.

For Manitoba, 67% of the province's Métis live in census metropolitan areas (CMA) and 23% live outside of CMAs. The City of Winnipeg has the largest Métis population (approximately 41,000) of any census metropolitan area in Canada. With a large and growing population of Métis in Manitoba, and a lower graduation rate when compared to non-Aboriginal people, it is becoming increasingly important to identify factors that contribute to their greater academic success. This is important to both correct disparities that exist for the Métis and because they have the same right as every non-Aboriginal Canadian to be the educated workforce of the future.

Aboriginal/Métis School Success

Because of the limited research being done specifically in the area of Métis education, it is necessary to try to glean a perspective from a broader examination of the literature that speaks to successful schools for Aboriginal students, recognizing that while there may be critical differences, it is likely that in some situations First Nations research may offer insights to Métis education.

Aboriginal students, identified in the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 as the descendants of the original inhabitants of North American Indians, Métis, and Inuit with their own unique language, culture, and spiritual beliefs (The Constitutional Act, 1982, Part II, Section 35[2]) are not graduating at the same rate as non-Aboriginal students (Brunnen, 2003; Hallett, 2006; Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2005; Owens, 2006; Richards, Hove, & Afolabi, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2001; Tait, 1999)

In 2006, thirty-four per cent of all Canadian Aboriginal persons had not completed high school and 21 per cent had high school as their highest level of educational attainment. The 2006 Census reported that, "Aboriginal people were still much less likely to have a university degree than non-Aboriginal people (8% compared with 23%). This gap is somewhat larger than it was in 2001, 6% compared with 20%" (Statistics Canada, 2006, http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-560/p16-eng.cfm).

According to Statistics Canada, 2006, "individuals who reported Métis identity were less successful [65.4%] in earning a certificate, diploma (including a high school or equivalent diploma), or degree 52). According to Statistics Canada,

2006, "half (50%) of the population aged 25 to 64 who identified as Métis were postsecondary graduates, [compared with 61% of the non-Aboriginal population]...[while] the rest of the Métis population was split almost evenly between those who obtained their high school diploma (24%) and those who did not (26%)" (Statistics Canada, 2006, p. 1).

There is good news in terms of the proportion of Métis people with a university degree which increased from 7% in 2001 to 9% in 2006; however, there is still a 10% discrepancy with non-Aboriginal individuals who are securing university degrees at 19% (Wilk, White & Guimond, 2009, p. 66). Fifty-one percent of non-Aboriginal individuals versus 40 percent of Métis individuals earned post-secondary certificates, diplomas, or degrees (Wilk, White & Guimond, 2009, p. 53). It is noteworthy that the proportion of Métis adults who have a postsecondary qualification was slightly lower than the national Métis average in the Prairie Provinces and New Brunswick while the proportion was higher than the Métis national average, aged 25 to 64 in the remaining provinces (Statistics Canada, 2006). The two most common trades for Métis people were Construction Trades (15%) and Mechanic and Repair Technologies/Technicians (15%). One-quarter (26%) of Métis college graduates studied in Business, Management, Marketing and Related Support Services, while 24% of Métis university graduates had a degree in Education.

More Métis women than men attain higher levels of education (68% for women, 63% for men) while there are no gender differences between non-Aboriginal men and women (Wilk, White & Guimond, 2009, p. 54). Métis women

are much more likely to attend university than their male counterparts (12%

versus 8%) (Wilk, White & Guimond, 2009, p. 54) and have a university degree

(10% versus 8%), a college diploma (25% versus 17%), and a postsecondary

education (51% versus 48%) while men tended to have more trades certificates

(21% versus 12%) (Gionet, 2006, p. 1).

Effective Aboriginal Schools

The statistics and research about successful educational attainment for

Aboriginal students noted above has shown that Aboriginal students are not

succeeding in school to the same degree as non-Aboriginal students. This section

will explore the literature around successful Aboriginal schools in terms of what

strategies they use or have identified which help their students experience success

at school. Again, in this first instance, success is being defined as high school

graduation. It is hoped that this study will distinguish factors that contribute to this

success based on interviews with six recent Métis graduates of Cedar Falls High

School.

Long before Europeans arrived in North America, they had evolved their

own form of education that enabled them to successfully live on the land for many

centuries. According to Verna Kirkness (1992) in *First Nations and Schools:*

Triumphs and Struggles, this "was an education in which the community and the

natural environment were the classroom, and the land was seen as the mother of

the people. Members of the community were the teachers and each adult was

responsible for ensuring that each child learned how to live a good life" (Kirkness,

1992, p. 5). Success according to Kirkness (1992) was making education relevant to the philosophy and needs of Indian people and giving children a strong sense of identity with confidence in their personal worth and ability (Kirkness, 1992, p. 2). Furthermore, she states that education is a preparation for living a full life, where an individual has a free choice of where to live and work which enables them to participate fully in their own social, economic, political, and educational advancement (Kirkness, 1992, p. 2).

Fulford (2007) in *Sharing Our Success*, which studies ten exemplary First Nations schools, presents recommendations for policymakers of Aboriginal communities, which can be broken down into six categories:

1. *Improving Governance and Leadership* in the form of two governance models, namely, band operated and provincial or territorial models (Fulford, 2007, p. 298). Leaders of Aboriginal schools need to be situational and visionary leaders, which is in keeping with Aboriginal traditions. They also need to value stakeholder consultations to develop strategic plans while continually building external relationships with funding agencies. Leaders do not need to be Aboriginal persons, but whether they are Aboriginal or not, they need to be committed to the school to increase continuity and stability (Fulford, 2007, p. 301).

2. *Creating Successful Learners must start with pre-school programs* and costs money especially when the need for additional resources for language and literacy acquisition, specialist teachers, counseling and support services, and

culturally relevant program and curriculum resources are required (Fulford, 2007, p. 342).

3. *Strengthening Language and Culture* must be taken seriously with concrete measures to preserve Aboriginal languages along with a national database of Aboriginal materials being introduced to support instruction (Fulford, 2007, p. 343). Aboriginal language and culture need to be a priority for research initiatives in the school due to the belief that the vitality of a culture is in its language. Educators need to work diligently to develop curriculum materials and programming that reflect Aboriginal cultures (Fulford, 2007, p. 315).

4. *Strengthening Teacher Quality and Supply* will only take place if colleges and universities recognize the importance of Aboriginal languages and offer programs. Teacher education programs need to be offered in Aboriginal communities to encourage more Aboriginal youth to choose teaching as a profession as well as salary incentives to further attract high quality teachers with expertise in Aboriginal education (Fulford, 2007, p. 343). Incentives need to be given to hire optimistic, caring, dedicated and local teachers who have high expectations and believe students that can and will achieve. These desirable teachers need to be willing to have a lifelong connection with students (Fulford, 2007, p. 308). Instruction methods used need to appeal to tactile learners and early interventions used for teaching students to read need to be available (Fulford, 2007, 311).

5. *Removing Transition Barriers* such as providing resources and technology within home communities for secondary education and encouraging

research to identify effective approaches to increase pass rates on senior English examinations (Fulford, 2007, p. 344).

6. *Improving Accountability and Capacity* with programs to track the progress of Aboriginal students in order to improve annual school plans and funding is provided to ensure ongoing assessment and monitoring of achievement (Fulford, 2007, p. 344).

In addition, Fulford (2007) states that parent and community partnerships should be valued and leaders of Aboriginal schools need to be sensitive to the effects of residential schools, making a concerted effort to make their schools a welcoming place for parents (Fulford, 2007, p. 304). The school climate needs to be one that recognizes the importance of maintaining Aboriginal cultural traditions through programming and respectful relationships need to be encouraged between the school and community heritage organizations (Fulford, 2007, p. 307).

Similarly, the *Simcoe County District School Board First Nation, Métis and Inuit Student Achievement Plan 2008-2009* which is located in Midhurst, Ontario, outlines eight common success factors for Aboriginal schools including:

1. Strong Leadership including a strong governance structure (long tenure in terms of school leadership was deemed important)

2. Multiple programs and support for learners

3. Exceptional language and cultural programs

4. Secure and welcoming school climate for children and parents

5. Respect for First Nation, Métis and Inuit culture and traditions

6. High percentage of First Nation, Métis and Inuit staff and quality staff

development

7. Assessment linked to instructional and planning decisions (within yearly school improvement plan)

8. Vigorous community partnerships and beneficial external alliances (Simcoe County District School Board, n.d.).

In addition, four systemic and structural factors affecting First Nation, Métis and Inuit student success in First Nations' Schools were highlighted which include funding, special education, language and literacy initiatives and performance measurement and reporting (Simcoe County District School Board, n.d.).

Hawley (2007) in *The Keys to Effective Schools* lists six Keys (an acronym for Keys to Excellence in Your School) which include: authentic learner centered instruction, shared understanding and commitment to high goals, open communication and collaborative problem solving, continuous assessment for teaching and learning, personal and professional learning, and resources to support teaching and learning (Hawley, 2007, p. x).

In conclusion, defining who the Métis are is a complex and multi-faceted undertaking. According to Dorion and Préfontaine (2001) in Métis Legacy, "until recently, little academic attention was paid to the origins of the Métis" (Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001, p. 17) and "new knowledge about Métis origins is still emerging and the study of miscegenation is in its infancy" (Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001, p. 17). Even though Métis identity was localized in smaller communities associated with the fur trade, their nationhood encapsulated a broad expanse of territory (Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001, p. 19). This has contributed to the difficulty in

defining the identity of the Métis. Their history is diverse, there has been little written about their past, and self-identification is still elusive today for many Métis. The negative connotations imposed by Europeans kept them seen somewhere between primitive and civilized. This is an image Métis are still fighting today.

Although there are some materials produced through the Manitoba Métis Federation about Métis culture, the lack of research on Métis education, Métis schools, or Métis students has made it necessary to rely somewhat on First Nations research, which is limiting. Although there are some commonalities that many Aboriginal groups share, it is difficult to secure concrete information that fits with Métis history and the limited Métis literature that is available in particular to how the Métis express their lives culturally, politically and socially but not specifically related to educational factors that contribute to their learning (Barkwell, Dorion & Préfontaine. 2001).

The literature on successful schools for students, such as Fulford's work described above, focuses on schools with Aboriginal students on reserves. On the one hand, strategies that work for schools, Aboriginal or not, may work for schools with Métis students. However, with the focus on Métis students' voices in this study, students did not talk about a number of the factors identified in this literature.

Dorion & Préfontaine (2001) in Métis Legacy refer to Fred Shore's (1991) work in terms of an "encyclopedic approach to Métis history" (Barkwell, Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001, p. 14). The progression of history begins with the birth of the Métis before 1750 in Central and Atlantic Canada, the growth and move of the

Métis into Western Canada (1750-1800) and the continued growth of the Métis

that resulted in a national identity for the Métis (1800-1870) (Barkwell, Dorion &

Préfontaine, 2001, p. 14). After 1869 and the Red River and Seven Oaks resistances,

the Métis dispersed which has contributed to the complexity of identity for the

Métis. For the Métis, this resulted in a loss of collective identity until the 1930s

when the Métis surfaced again to reclaim their identity in Canadian history

(Barkwell, Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001, p. 14).

Founded in 1967 as the Métis self-government, the Manitoba Métis

Federation's mission continues to this day to "represent and advance the interests

of the Métis people" (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2010). It is important to note that

the few published resources that exist on much of Métis history are sensationalized

and "concentrated on the actions of a political class and were devoid of Aboriginal

Primary sources of ways of thinking" (Barkwell, Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001, p. 26).

In reality, the Métis wanted to be consulted about the "transfer of their homeland

to Canada from Hudson's Bay Company control" (Barkwell, Dorion & Préfontaine,

2001, p. 26) and they "feared for their future, not so much because the buffalo were

disappearing but because they believed that the expected flood of settlers from

Ontario would not respect their way of life" (Barkwell, Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001,

p. 26). The works of George F. Stanley (1936) Birth of Western Canada: A history

of the Riel rebellions and Marcel Giraud (1945) Le métis canadien both contain

racist overtones (Barkwell, Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001, p. 27). According to

Barkwell, Dorion & Préfontaine (2001), "Giraud's Eurocentrism was evident when

he dismissed the activities of those Métis involved in the traditional economy as a

mere distraction rather than a legitimate livelihood" (Barkwell, Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001, p. 27).

Although since the 1980s, many educational resources about Indian and Métis peoples have been reviewed, "educational publishing about the Métis is still in its infancy and there is still a great need for Métis resources that complement existing curriculum" (Barkwell, Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001, p. 32). Therefore, with a limited focus on Métis people in the public school system, this study is unique in that it is the students themselves who will give their perspective on school factors that they feel have helped them succeed academically in the public school system.

According to Grant Anderson of the Manitoba Métis Federation, although scholarships have caught the attention of Métis youth, Métis locals have begun hosting Métis Days type of events and more youth are taking part each year (Personal communication, February 10, 2012). This, in his opinion, shows the interest and growing cultural education taking place outside the school system (Personal communication, February 10, 2012).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

There are many confusing references to who the Aboriginal people of
Canada are and it is important that the Métis perspective be among the many
voices that continue to be heard and in this case, the voices of Métis students
themselves that went through the public provincial school system. As I struggle to
understand the Métis perspective myself, research is only beginning to address this
question. According to Dorion & Yang (2000), there are "few studies that address
the historical evolution of Métis education, and even fewer that analyze the specific
circumstances of Métis students in public schools...In fact, generalizations are often
transferred from First Nations education to Métis education without any critical
analyses of parallels and divergences" (Dorion & Yang, 2000, p. 176). There is an
increase in Aboriginal literature such as by Battiste (2005), Blackstock (2007),
Dorion & Préfontaine (2003), Guimond (2003), and Stonechild (2006). There is
also an increase in the amount of literature related to success for Aboriginal people
(for example, Alberta Education First Nations, Métis and Inuit Services Branch,
2007; Fulford, 2007; Haig-Brown, Archibald, Regnier & Vermette, 1994; Kirkness,
1992 and Seven Oaks School Division, 2010).

For one high school in Manitoba, their Métis and First Nations students are
doing well in terms of graduation rates compared to Aboriginal students in the rest
of Canada and Manitoba. What are the underlying assumptions we have about why
these students are successful? If you talk to the teachers, you might discover that

they add Aboriginal content to their curricular areas or have received professional

development in the area of Aboriginal education, which is making a difference. The

school has started an Aboriginal culture student group that meets regularly and

also contains mostly Métis students (Personal communication, January 30, 2012[2])

that meets regularly.

      According to personal communication with the guidance counselor who

oversees the group, this has created a greater sense of belonging and the

assumption is that this has contributed to their overall academic success (Personal

communication, March 24, 2009). Several of these students are living in a two-

parent family with a middle class income (including foster families), which

provides stability and support for school and extra-curricular activities. Some

foster families encourage connections with the students' home communities where

they continue to learn about their culture and practice their traditions. I was able

to find only one study by the Seven Oaks School Division that has asked the

students themselves about what they think constitutes a good education (Seven

Oaks School Division, 2010). For example, according to Carol, a Métis student, in

Celebrating strengths: Aboriginal students and their stories of success in schools

(2009), a good education includes helping students feel proud of who they are and

being able to "ask questions of the teachers about learning the Aboriginal culture"

(Aboriginal Research Committee, Seven Oaks School Division, 2010, p. 10).

      I believe that if we want the answer to what factors have contributed to

their successful educational outcomes, it is important to ask teachers to reflect on

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[2] Throughout the thesis, the actual name of the person is not included to protect
the confidentiality of the research.

their teaching and also ask the students themselves what they attribute to their overall school success, in the first instance, being graduation. Teachers must "first become aware of the influence of their own culture… before teachers can address the cultural and literacy needs of their students" (Willis, 2000, p. 1). Abt-Perkins and Rosen (2000) in Willis (2000) talk about ""inquiry into cultural consciousness" so that teachers will discover "the assumptions and stereotypes which create obstacles to culturally responsive teaching" (Abt-Perkins & Rosen, 2000, p. 254 in Willis, 2000, p. 1). Unless a teacher has this self-knowledge, a barrier could be created if a "teacher's culture, language, social interests, goals, cognitions, and values…[are] different from the students" (Willis, 2000, p. 20) making it difficult for them to understand "what is best for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds" (Orange & Horwitz, 1999, cited in Willis, 2000, p. 1). Breaking through this barrier will take teachers "learning to acknowledge and respect their students' language, literacy, literature, and cultural ways of knowing " (Willis, 2000, p.1). The same difficulty applies to us as readers and researchers in being able to put aside our assumptions in order to hear these student voices.

I believe using narrative gave voice to the students' perspectives and provided credibility for their thoughts. Aboriginal knowledge, including the Métis culture, has traditionally been passed down orally and performing the research in this way recognized this method as viable, important, and honourable. Hearing their voices was a privilege and one that I treated with respect and dignity. It is hoped that these student voices will generate an opportunity to create a different and better learning environment available to all schools, students and educators.

Through the process of writing this thesis, I have gained a greater understanding of my Métis heritage and I trust that contents herein will help others along their journey of self-discovery as well.

Choosing a qualitative approach was well suited to my purpose because it allowed the students' words and experiences help me to understand the meaning the students place on factors contributing to their success. It also helped me to discern whether or not individual educational practices have had a positive impact on student success or if it is necessary to take a more holistic approach.

The Research Setting – Cedar Falls High School

Cedar Falls High School is a Grade 9 to Grade 12 school with close to a 1,000 students. The school is located in a small town, with a population of approximately 3,000 people, within 100 kilometers of large urban centre. Cedar Falls is located in a rural municipality with rural residential, agricultural and natural landscapes. The area is primarily an agricultural area with many commuters driving to employment in a large urban centre located nearby. According to the Legasse, 1958, there are not many Métis who have historically lived in the area, however, the number has substantially grown since that time to today where there are 565 Métis living in the Cedar Falls area. It is known that a rather substantial wave of Ukrainian immigrants in 1892, Halychyna, the Western region of Ukraine, settled in the Cedar Falls area" to establish farms in the region (Litchie, 2003). According to the guidance teacher, there are three Métis teachers and two Educational Assistants who work at the school (Personal communication, September 24, 2009).

Besides the regular Manitoba curricula, the school has several programs

such as *Artspeak* (an integrated arts credit program), ICT and Cultural Credit

Courses, Photography Club, Drama, Band, Peer Tutoring Program, Business and

Information Technology Program, and an Aboriginal Awareness Club, which is

open to all high school students. This club is designed to promote an

understanding and acceptance of Aboriginal cultures and to make a space available

where Métis, Inuit, First Nations and other interested students can experience a

sense of belonging and "inspire students to fulfilling futures in Canada's diverse

society" (Personal communication, October 13, 2005).

Membership is voluntary and opt-in in nature. Membership can be secured

at any time of the year by a declaration of intent and attendance to a minimum of

three consecutive meetings excluding field trips. Meetings are held during lunch

usually once every two weeks supervised by at least one staff member and the

group is governed by an elected Chief and Council. The Chief must be of Aboriginal

descent since "leadership in this group is seen as preparatory experience for

Aboriginal Self-Governance, as an area of post-secondary study and/or leadership

within the Aboriginal community" (Personal communication, October 13, 2005).

Council members do not need to be of Aboriginal descent, however, one Councilor

shall be chosen from each high school grade. Council must meet a minimum of once

per month.

The cultural awareness group developed a constitution dated October 13,

2005, which outlines the mission statement, membership requirements, its

relationship to the school, outline of meeting schedule, leadership requirements of

the club, staff memberships and supervision and parental input. The guidance teacher provided a mission statement for the cultural awareness club that states that the purpose of the group is,

> to promote an understanding and acceptance of Aboriginal Cultures in all of their aspects, to make available a space where the Métis, Inuit, First Nations and interested students can feel connection at Cedar Falls High School and to inspire our young people toward fulfilling futures in Canada's diverse society (Personal communication, June 20, 2009).

Parents and legal guardians are included and invited to activities and are requested to attend parent meetings periodically. This First Nations model of governance was adopted according to the cultural awareness club teacher leader at the Cedar Falls High School because the club learns about the Indian Act and the forced form of governance that has been laid upon the First Nations of Canada (Personal communication, February 8, 2012).

The positions titled Chief and Council were chosen for the club because this form of governance fits well with the learning around the Indian Act (Personal communication, February 8, 2012).

According to the guidance teacher, who is the coordinator of the group, students associate the Métis form of governance, which includes a Mayor and Councilors, as a jurisdiction over a town site rather than over a group of people so it was not chosen (Personal communication, February 8, 2012). Since many of the club's members are Métis, this form of governance is not recognizing their culture and their role in the club or in Manitoba's history and again, the Métis are being

displaced.

Table 3. Percentage of Students who have self-declared as Métis in Cultural Awareness Club at Cedar Falls High School

Year	Total Number of Members in Cultural Awareness Group	Total Number of Métis Members in Cultural Awareness Group	Percentage of Métis
2006-2007	75	38	51%
2007-2008	112	35	32%
2008-2009	63	28	44%
2009-2010	75	34	45%
2010-2011	126	37	29%
2011-2012	97	22	23%

Table 4. Graduation Rates for Métis Students of Cedar Falls High School (Personal communication, June 20, 2009).

Year	Percentage of Métis Students who graduated after 4 years in the cultural awareness club
2004	86%
2005	75%
2006	80%
2007-2009	Not available
2010	79%

The guidance teacher stated in a personal communication that the number of Métis members in the cultural awareness club are likely higher, "as often the kids that come to the group indicate that they are Métis, but on their self-identification forms at registration time, they haven't checked off the appropriate box" (Personal communication, February 27, 2012). The school began collecting

data on graduation rates after they introduced cultural programming as an option for students. The graduation rates in Table 4 show that Métis students are graduating at par or better than the provincial average of 75% (Statistics Canada, 2006, p. 1). There seems to be some consensus amongst the school staff that the reason Métis students are graduating at or above the national average is because of their involvement in the cultural awareness club. It is hoped that this research study will be able to shed some light on to the factors that are contributing to their success including and beyond the cultural club.

The Research Participants

The interviewees, three male and three female students, over the age of eighteen, who had graduated in the past two years at the Cedar Falls High School, were selected.

Given the exploratory nature of the research, the principal data collection strategy used was a qualitative open-ended interview conducted by the researcher with each student for one hour. This method gives voice to the students themselves. Aboriginal knowledge, including the Métis culture, has traditionally been passed down orally and performing the research in this way recognizes this method as viable, important, and honorable. It is deemed a privilege to hear the voices that came forward and each will be treated with respect and dignity. Before each interview, the interviewee was asked to read and sign the ENREB Informed Consent Form. All interviews were taped and transcribed.

The participants were assigned pseudonyms and the school was given a generic and fictitious name, which has no descriptors, such as a proper name common to the area that would reveal its location or identity, to protect its identity. It was identified as a Manitoba rural high school in a middle class community close to an urban centre with a significant Métis student population that is seen to do quite well in school.

Recruitment Strategy

The rural Manitoba school in which the Métis students attended hands out voluntary Declaration of Identity forms each September to all the students in the school where students voluntarily self-declared their Aboriginal heritage. They have their parents sign it, and return it to the school office. These forms are kept in the office for statistical and grant funding application purposes. The guidance teacher is also the Aboriginal Education leader of the school and has access to these forms because he is required, as part of his job, to annually tabulate school statistics related to graduation and academic standings for Aboriginal students. He has reported in various public documents that the Aboriginal students according to school statistics, are doing well in school. He also conducts an Aboriginal program at lunch hours every two weeks, where students learn about the Aboriginal culture, share, and celebrate with other Aboriginal students of the school on an opt-in basis and also have the opportunity of earning a cultural credit after four years in the program.

A snowball sampling technique, a non-probability sampling technique,

which identifies potential participants used by researchers when subjects are difficult to locate, was implemented to acquire the participants for the study. According to Handcock & Gile (2011), snowball sampling is an effective technique for "hard to reach populations" (Handcock & Gile, 2011, p. 369) where "a few identified members of a rare population are asked to identify other members of the population, those so identified are asked to identify others, and so on, ..." (Thompson, 2002, p. 183, in Handcock & Gile, 2011, p. 369).

Since this method was being used to gain participants in the study, the first step was to share an information sheet with the cultural group (Appendix A) that described the study with their membership at one of their regular meetings. The information sheet was read to the membership, describing that this was a study that was looking for recent graduates of the school, so if any member knew of any former graduate(s) that might be interested, they were asked to pass it on and then this individual, if interested, could contact the researcher.

This approach would prevent a perceived power relationship in the recruitment process and would protect confidentiality and anonymity of participants in the study. The information sheet described the study in sufficient detail to raise awareness and to inform potential participants about the study. He or she could contact the researcher to learn more about the study and subsequently decide whether or not he or she wanted to become a participant.

The criteria used for identifying Métis students for the study was three-

fold. Due to the nature of the study, only Métis students, who completed their secondary education within the past two years, were interviewed. Once students contacted the researcher, they were asked if they considered themselves to be Métis and if they either self-declared as Métis on specific school data information, and/or, 2) they considered themselves as Métis and participated in Aboriginal programming as a Métis person but did not formally declare on school data information.

Data Collection

Each former graduate who contacted the researcher was contacted by telephone to answer any further questions before a time was arranged for the sixty-minute interview. The questions asked were designed to shed light on the research question, "What do Métis graduates of Cedar Falls High School identify as important in contributing to their educational success?" The details of how many questions were to be asked, the process that would be used for collecting the data, and follow up was reviewed with each student prior to commencing the interview.

The research involved one 60-minute interview with each graduate with a follow up interview scheduled if required with consent by the interviewee. The interview focused primarily on three areas: 1) exploring the participants' ethnic identities; 2) their notions of educational success; and 3) in-school supports and barriers to high school success/graduation.

Data Analysis

Three male and three female former Métis graduates from Cedar Falls High School were interviewed using the snowball technique described above. Interested participants contacted the researcher to indicate their interest and find out more about the study. After it was determined that the potential participant met the criteria of being a Métis graduate who graduated in the past two years, each participant was asked if they knew of any other former Métis student who might be interested in the study. Once the Informed Consent Form was signed and the preamble was read to the participant, the research questions were asked. These were taped and transcribed. The findings were transcribed in a document as a qualitative study focused on the data from three male and three female students who graduated in the past two years from Cedar Falls High School. The final thesis includes an individual account of each graduate's school experiences as well as a chapter that provides a synthesis of the themes and issues raised by the six participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS: MÉTIS STUDENT VOICES ON IDENTITY.
SUCCESS AND SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

Introduction

The findings presented in this chapter provide data and insights on six

Métis high school graduates' views of good schools and, more specifically, their

ideas about effective schooling for Métis students. The data addresses three

main research questions, namely, 1) how these Métis students define success, 2)

what in-school factors supported their successful graduation from high school,

and 3) what in-school barriers they had to overcome in order to be successful.

Each of these questions explores the issues of what "Métis education" is, and in

what ways it might look different from "non-Métis education". The findings

highlight the complexity of Métis identity supported by the ways in which the

participants' talk about how successful they have been in constructing their own

identity in relation to the Aboriginal cultural group held at the school.

I share the following information to give context to the issues related

around identity for Métis people. My Métis, French and Icelandic ancestry

seemed like an odd mix of cultures growing up, however, the dominant culture I

recall being emphasized in my family was French. Although my father's family

was French and Catholic, my father had no knowledge about his Métis heritage

until he was 71 years of age. He was a product of the fur trade in St. Boniface. My

mother had moved to Winnipeg from the small Icelandic village of Riverton,

Manitoba where her family farmed and commercially fished on Lake Winnipeg

nearby. She moved to Winnipeg as a young adult with three of her sisters in hopes of gaining employment in the city after attending business college. My mother's Icelandic family of nine remained in close proximity to one another, both in Iceland before they came to Canada, and in Manitoba where they settled, which made visiting easier between grandparents and relatives and where there were few disruptions to the family unit and rhythm. This changed when she moved away from home to the City of Winnipeg.

In Riverton, historical stories, resources and collective community labour enabled them to establish strong family relationships and a steady income from farming and fishing. They were able to meet their basic needs and have a modest, but comfortable life. Because my mother married my father and moved a considerable distance from her homeland and into Métis territory, her culture and language were there but somewhat suppressed and although she did her best to embrace her new surroundings, she never successfully learned the French language or the Métis and French cultures.

My grandmother's extended Métis family on my dad's side, on the other hand, was affected by transiency due to poverty, the fallout from residential schools, and alcoholism. The family unit slowly disintegrated and as a result, there was little contact between family members, which meant that I, as a child, had very little overlap with my Métis grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins where the rich exchange of stories about family history and culture would naturally occur. In addition, once my grandfather had secured work in the City of Winnipeg, my grandparents focused on being French and did their

best to keep their Métis identity in the background, in order to avoid discrimination and being subjected to negative stereotypes for both themselves and their children.

The reason I provide this personal information is because five of the six participants for this study shared similar stories, which, I believe, has ultimately affected their ability to construct a strong identity that includes their Métis heritage.

Background on the Research Participants

All participants have been given a pseudonym and were asked to share information about themselves such as their age, what they have been doing since they graduated and their current occupation or schooling, where they grew up and currently reside, how they saw themselves as Métis people, and what their plans are for the future.

Jamie

Jamie is 21 years old and has lived his whole life on an acreage in a rural municipality near a small town with his mom, dad and two siblings. He attended three leveled schools in the area, an elementary school, a middle years school, and a high school. He is currently attending university in a nearby city. He started in Business and has since switched to Political Science. He hopes to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in Politics and minor in Business Administration. He then plans on finishing off a second Business

degree at the same university. He does not have any concrete plans after he finishes university.

Jamie stated that he is happy that he is Métis because it provided him with more educational opportunities (Jamie, p. 4, L143-144) but besides that he doesn't really identify with the cultural aspects of being Métis (Jamie, p. 4, L151). The Manitoba Métis Federation state that the "Métis are a people of North American Indian and European ancestry who coalesced into a distinct nation in the northwest in the late 18th century" (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2011, p. 1). Métis culture, as defined by the Manitoba Métis Federation (2001), includes a distinct language spoken by the Métis called "Métif" or "Métchief", after themselves" (Barkwell, Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001, p. 23). Métis culture also has music that carries out the oral tradition of story telling and includes the fiddle and dancing traditions. Decorative clothing and footwear that included beadwork embroidery became a Métis art form and the ceinture-fléchée or "arrow" sash commonly word by the Métis is a historic symbol still word today. Other patriotic symbols of Métis identity, "like the Red River Cart or the Métis Infinity Flag" mark the Métis culture (Barkwell, Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001, p. 25).

Chris

Chris is 20 years old and has lived in the same house all his life in a rural setting close to a major centre. He currently lives at home with his mom, dad and siblings. He graduated from a high school in the area and then went to work in construction. Although he liked the industry, Chris found the work very taxing

on his body, therefore, after two years, he has decided to go to a vocational college to learn to become a construction manager. He is awaiting acceptance into this four-year program. Chris shared that being Métis was part of his heritage (Chris, p. 5, L186) and although he was told by others that Métis people could access scholarships towards future education, Chris did not pay attention to this or anything else related to his heritage until he became involved in the school's cultural group which he states definitely helped him succeed in school (Chris, p. 7, L283).

Sam

Sam is a 20-year-old female who lives on an acreage with her mom, dad, and some of her siblings in a rural area within a reasonable driving distance to a city. She attended three schools in the area from elementary to high school, and now attends a university in the city where she is studying music, a passion she has had all of her life. She graduated from high school one year ago. Her mother is Aboriginal and grew up on a First Nations Reserve in northern Manitoba. Her father has a German ancestry and grew up in Ontario. Her grandparents on her Dad's side were German immigrants. Her Dad is a physician in the inner city and although he could choose to work elsewhere, he chooses to work with in an impoverished area which he loves and where he feels he can make a difference. Sam has self-declared as Métis. To Sam this means being in touch with her past and being knowledgeable about her heritage so that she can successfully talk to others about it in a way that gets rid of stereotypes (Sam, p. 2, L80-86).

Robin

Robin is 20 years old and graduated two years ago. She grew up with her mom in a single parent family. She grew up in a city in Manitoba but moved to a rural area close to the city during her adolescence because her Mom felt that her daughter's student life was not going well in the city. She hopped from school to school in the rural municipality she resided in but finally settled in at a rural high school where belonging to the school's cultural group and having the support from the guidance counselor helped her focus on her schooling. Her Mom struggled with addictions and poverty, which is something Robin is determined not to fall into. She has not pursued post-secondary education to this point and now works in sales, which she is hoping will be financially rewarding for her. She lives on her own, which is proving to be quite a challenge for her. Robin does not see that being Métis or any culture or race should enter into whether or not a person can be successful. She says she can't figure out her genealogy in terms of where she comes from because of family problems that prohibited her from knowing that side of her family. According to Robin, others saw her as white because her skin was white, however, she mentioned that if you "have a little bit of Aboriginal in ya, you get little opportunities [that others do not have]" (Robin, p. 3, L118-119).

Terry

Terry is a 20 year old who grew up in a small rural bedroom community with her family. Her mom's family ancestry is Cree while her Dad's family came to Canada from English. Her Dad came to Canada when he was four years old.

Terry's family is situated in a small French community. Terry has two siblings. Since graduation, she has been working at a hardware chain store. She is trying to save up enough money to attend pre-veterinary school. To Terry, being Métis was "kind of who you are" (Terry, p. 3, L100), and having a different culture and background from other people (Terry, p. 3,111).

Jody

Jody is a 21-year-old male who grew up in a rural setting and graduated from a rural Manitoba high school. His mom is Cree and his dad is European, which Jody claims makes him Métis, which he didn't really start learning about until he was in high school when he decided to join the school's cultural awareness club. He grew up in what he considered to be an average middle class family with his Mom, Dad, brother, and sister. He is currently working in a northern First Nation community as an educational assistant. He decided to take the job because his aunt, who lives there, told him about it and he was having difficulty finding a job closer to home. He is taking courses through the University College of the North and he is hoping that eventually he will be able to find work and lodging closer to his family. He enjoys working in the north but finds "it's nice but just kind of nothing to do there" (Jody, p. 1, L29). He also stated that parents there are disengaged from their children's education compared to the community in which he grew up which had supportive parents. Jody mentioned that his identity as a Métis person is changing as he learns more about the history of the Métis, however, he sheepishly stated that the first thing

he thought of when he thought about being Métis were the financial benefits a Métis student might be able to obtain for future schooling (Jody, p. 3, L125-127).

Indicators of Success and How Education is Related to This Definition

This study's first research question explores three areas of success for Métis students. First, the participants define what success means to them. The second area explored is school factors that contributed to the participants' academic success while the third explores barriers to their success at school.

Participants' Definitions of Success

The participants articulated a *material* aspect of success and successful people, which they indicate is influenced by the media that involves financial security, employment that was rewarding, and also a Hollywood image of physical appearance and 'style'. For some, financial security is expressed modestly in having enough to get by (Robin, p. 2, L70) (Jamie, p. 2, L47)or not having to worry about anything (Terry, p. 2, L52) while for others it was expressed more ambitiously as having lots of money (Robin, p. 1, L37). The participants talked about relational elements of success that involves positive relationships with family and friends, happiness and a sense of individual achievement or living a worthwhile life. Some of the interviews had an overall theme of evolving and cumulative aspects of success that one could see in one's achievements over time – in both material and relational terms. The

participants saw all three of these aspects of success as contributing to an overall happiness and idea of success instead of each of these things in isolation.

School Success and "Life Success"

The data shows that all the participants agree that completing high school was very important to success in their lives. Jamie, for example, thought that to get anywhere in life in terms of gaining any sort of financial security, a person needs to get a degree from university, which, of course, means that they would have to finish high school first. For Jamie, doing well academically came easily to him in high school and so there was never any doubt that he would not finish or do well although he found university much more difficult and he felt unprepared for it.

Sam indicated education and success went hand in hand, as "it's a lot harder, much, much harder to do something without an education these days" (Sam p. 3, L123-124). She mentioned "you can't even get a job without a high school diploma, so I think getting a high school diploma at least is extremely, extremely important" (Sam, p. 3, L126). Robin indicated having a high school diploma was really important because a lot of jobs ..."you gotta go to school and all that so basically I think most jobs if you're going to be successful you have to have some schooling" (Robin, p. 3, L104-106). Robin felt she was successful because she had graduated. She was very proud that she had graduated "with a couple of extra credits more than some kids...I feel great about it" (Robin, p. 2, L70-72).

Terry thought she would consider herself successful if she was able to graduate from university and had a job that she liked, saying that "to get where you want, you need to have the education" (Terry, p. 3, L129) for that field. Jody focused more on learning as opposed to diplomas and degrees, saying that "it doesn't matter if it's university or college or just learning on your own, you've got to learn something so education is pretty well the key to success" (Jody, p. 3, L114-116).

Material Success

In terms of success, five out of the six research participants mention that financial security was an important part of a successful life from being able to "support themselves…without having to worry about anything" (Jamie, p. 2, L47-50) to enjoying "doing your job and making money" (Sam, p. 1, L29) to having access to "a lot of money" (Robin, p. 1, L35) in order to do or buy things that make life enjoyable.

While making enough money to live comfortably seemed important to the participants, Jamie indicated, "a lack of money would be an indicator of not success" (Jamie, p. 1, L58-59). To Jamie, being healthy is an important indicator of success in that "health is a big part of it too, like if people are healthy then they're more likely to be happy and secure and carry themselves better" (Jamie, p. 2, L63-64). Sam said something similar in that those people that live in poverty have difficulty attaining success because "they can't really afford to buy healthy food, and your brain needs that to be able to develop properly and to

have the energy to get to school and have energy to study" (Sam, p. 7, L285-287).

Three participants identified the media's role and Hollywood's influence on society in how it portrays successful people such as movie stars (Jamie, p. 1, L69-72, Chris, p. 1, L40), authors (Chris, p. 1, L47) and the importance of how a person looks or what type of car they drive, saying "basically look at their car, you know, you'll be able to tell if they're rich or not if they're riding a junker, a big half ton, or you know" (Robin, p. 2, L47, 60-61). Terry thought that celebrities have reached success because "they don't have to worry about anything" (Terry, p. 2, L64).

Robin described her current boss as very successful. He created a ground transport company from the ground up and has been continually growing and expanding the business. She commented,

> ...my boss at [name of company] [is successful]...I mean he started
>
> from nothing and he worked his business up to success and then, uh,
>
> he changed the name to [current company name] and he's got a lot of
>
> money. He seems like he's doing pretty well for himself
>
> (Robin, p.1, L35-27)...he flaunts his money like it's nothing, and uh, I
>
> don't know. It's kind of hard to say [why I think he's successful]...it's just
>
> how he portrays himself, that's all I can say...to see how people act
>
> (Robin, p.2, L60-61).

In terms of Métis success, the first mentioned and the most prevalent way the participants identified themselves as Métis was through being able to

access scholarships and bursaries to further their education after high school.

All participants were aware of scholarship opportunities available for Métis

students and this motivated them to identify themselves as Métis even though

some participants stated that they "felt guilty" for doing so just because of

available funds to them while others felt it was a privilege to gain funding for

school because of their heritage. However, in so doing, all of the participants

discovered that it was interesting to learn about the Métis and as time

progressed, this knowledge contributed to their overall identity. A number of

the participants applied for scholarships but only one participant received one.

Jody alluded to this in his response to the question of what success in terms of

being Métis meant to him,

> Like it's, um, I guess it's kind of bad to say, but you do get certain benefits
>
> from being Métis but it's just neat knowing you are and knowing the
>
> history of it and things like that and it definitely helps 'cause working up
>
> in [northern community in Manitoba], it kinda, most of the people up
>
> there aren't really Métis but are Aboriginal. They haven't had the
>
> European native ancestry just native ancestry but it's still interesting to
>
> learn about (Jody, p. 3, L125-130).

Robin spoke of opportunities for schooling where "some things [that] get

paid for that uh not many people who have, who are German or you know,

Caucasian, get…the status card helps you financially like towards schooling"

(Robin, p.3, L125). Jamie had a lot of "access to different Aboriginal

scholarships…I don't think I would ever see that if I wasn't Métis and I got some pretty awesome opportunities" (Jamie, p. 2, L88-91).

Although the participants self-declared as Métis, it is important to note that they had limited knowledge about their Métis ancestry, history, culture and languages. Because of this, they did not see themselves as different from mainstream non-Aboriginal society. As Robin stated,

I just know that yea I am Métis but not to an extent and point where I actually say, oh, this is where it came from and my ancestors came from this place, and you know, I don't know all that but I know I'm Métis, that's all (Robin, p. 8, L343-346).

Jody's dad had completed a family tree for his European side of the family and now his mom was just starting to start one for her side of the family, which was Cree, because his brother wanted to get his Métis card (Jody, p. 4, L6, L139-140). Along with learning about Aboriginal cultures at school, Jody mentioned that his identity seemed to be changing over time, saying "I think it's changing the more you learn about it…it's just neat knowing who you are and knowing the history of it" (Jody, p. 3, L125-126).

It seems apparent from the data that the participants are in the early stages of constructing their own sense of Métis identity. They did not have a lot of knowledge about the Métis culture before joining the school's cultural program. Today, Métis people are not being singled out as much as "half-breeds" with all the negative stereotypes that go with that title and these students, along with many others are more comfortable with identifying themselves as Métis,

especially if it means they are eligible for financial aid for post-secondary schooling.

Relational Success

One of the most mentioned indicators of success for the participants was having a positive supportive relationship with families and friends. Five out of the six participants came from two parent families where both parents were their biological parents. This created a stable and secure environment for the participants. Each participant highlighted the importance of good relationships with family (Jamie, p. 1, L46) and friends (Jamie, p. 2, L51), the satisfaction of reaching goals (Sam, p. 1, L29), and being happy with what he or she is doing (Jody, p. 1, L35). The sixth participant, Robin, came from a single parent family who also attributed much of her success to her Mom,

> In my school it would be people that kept me really going and making
>
> sure I did be a success is my Mom for sure. Uh, [name of teacher] as well
>
> uh and also my friends. It kind of was like I was the responsible person
>
> and I would really drag them to their class to make sure they arrived
>
> early. Um, my Mom kind of was really a push, push hard kind of person
>
> cause she wanted everyone to see that you know that I did graduate you
>
> know cause she raised me on my own on her own right. So it was a great
>
> success to her as well. So I kind of want to make people proud I guess
>
> (Robin, p. 4, L140-145).

Participants viewed success in their own lives to include successful relationships with their family (Jamie, p. 2, L78), "doing well financially" (Jamie, p. 2, L81), continuing and completing their education (Terry, p. 2, L89, Chris, p. 2, L58), and being employed in a job they enjoy (Terry, p. 2, L90, Robin, p. 2, L70). It was important to Jody that he also had his family's approval of his chosen path in life (Jody, p. 2, L71). Robin was proud of the fact that she graduated with extra credits and is currently employed, even if it means that she is earning only enough for her to get by:

> Um, I graduated, I'm employed, uh, keeping myself going. It's just enough
> for me to get by. So I feel like I'm successful. I man…. I graduated with a
> couple of extra credits more than some kids and I feel great about it
> (Robin, p. 2, L70-72).

Caring relationships, including those with teachers, was a close second. As Jamie put it, "…judging the relationships that I have with my friends and family and if those are strong and healthy then that's a pretty good indicator of being successful" (Jamie, p. 2, L78-79). Terry commented on how her parents always "made me do my stuff…and they would try to help whenever they could" (Terry, p. 8, L358) and the role of caring teachers in making "sure they're doing good…and I guess they're kind of more involved with them in their schooling, caring more about it" (Terry, p. 8, L335-337). Jody attributed his school success to his parents saying, "I think my parents were the number one thing" (Jody, p. 4, L158) and the "guidance counselor as well cause he was into the [cultural group]… and if you needed extra help he could help you out with stuff like that"

(Jody, p. 4, L163-165). Jody also mentioned that certain teachers were caring and accessible because "they helped you out with extra help after class or at lunch time" (Jody, p. 4, L169-170). Sam attributed her school success to "family and the encouragement of my family" (Sam, p. 2, L60) and "teachers that encouraged you or you could go to talk to" (Sam, p. 2, L61).

The Evolution of Success

Two of the participants, Sam and Chris, recognized that being successful requires setting goals, big and small (Sam, p. 4, L54-55) and that it takes "hard, hard work to be successful" (Sam, p. 1, L44). Chris highlighted the fact that becoming successful may occur over time and in order to be deemed successful by others, a talent needs to be recognized, celebrated and valued by society publicly (Chris, p. 2, L48). The whole notion of moving forward and progressing in one's own life is an indicator of success as Terry reflected on his aunt's life

> ...she's got a job she likes, money for things. She's got a nice
>
> house. Her kids are all grown up and they're successful too.
>
> They got jobs that they like...she goes on trips whenever, does
>
> whatever... (Terry, p. 2, L77-80).

Métis Success

Three of the participants drew attention to the fact that their success could be attributed in part to their physical appearance since it resembled more

that of Europeans than Métis or First Nations peoples so they typically were able to fit more easily into the dominant society and escaped discrimination and low expectations by teachers. Jamie commented that unless a person was "really obvious Métis" (Jamie. p. 11, L497), the physical and visual differences between Aboriginal peoples and the non-Aboriginal peoples at Cedar Falls High School, were

> like you know, if you see everyone as the same or not, it's really, there's no difference where I think … in our school, there weren't really a lot of minorities outside of the Aboriginal minority and the Aboriginal minority wasn't seen as a whole lot different per se, so, there weren't really a lot of minorities outside of the Aboriginal minority and the Aboriginal minority wasn't seen as a whole lot different" (Jamie, p. 10, L417-421)… Yea, visually. That's a huge part of it, there's always those first impressions and it's hard to get away from that when it's a, it's a pretty big school, so, um, a lot of people you don't really get to know much more than the visual level (Jamie, p. 10, L425-427).

 As Robin put it, "not a lot of people asked. They'd just think I was a white girl so they didn't really know I'm actually Métis, just 'cause my skin's white" (Robin, p. 7, L311-312). Jody adds, "…I don't look a lot like I would be Métis or Aboriginal, cause there are kids that are like red hair, like pretty pale and they're Métis as well so it's kind of hard to tell that certain people are Métis" (Jody, p. 6, L261-263).

In terms of a Métis version of success, three out of the six participants did not describe success as different for Métis students as compared to non-Métis students. On the one hand, Robin stated, "...success is success" (Robin, p. 2, L92) and Jody remarked that "you can be as successful as you want, it doesn't matter if you're Métis or anything else" (Jody, p. 2, L79) and Terry thought all versions of success were the same, claiming, "if you're successful, you're successful" (Terry, p. 3, L116-117).

On the other hand, although Jamie stated, "success should be the same all around" (Jamie, p. 3, L114), participants also commented on how there are barriers to success for Métis, as defined by the 1982 *Constitution Act of Canada* as a distinct Aboriginal group (Public Service Commission of Canada, n.d., p. 1). For example, the physical appearance of Aboriginal peoples and the stereotypes that go along with being visually Aboriginal affects the amount of success Métis people are experiencing. If a Métis person's skin colour is light, Jamie observed, "they [society] expect the same thing that they would as a white person whereas an Aboriginal [darker skinned person] they don't necessarily expect the same. They [society] expect, (pause), they [society] have lower expectations for someone that's Aboriginal" (Jamie, p. 3, L113-118) "... [and] ... it's more difficult for people that are really, um, obviously Métis [in appearance]...It's tough for them to connect being you know kind of partly rejected by the Aboriginal community and partly rejected by the Caucasian community" (Jamie, p. 3, L97-102).

There is this notion of white privilege, which is "very visible for those to whom privilege was not granted" (Kendall, 2001, p. 1), but for those who have these privileges, "it is sort of like asking fish to notice water or birds to discuss air" (Kendall, 2001, p.1). According to Maggie Potapchuk, (n.d.), "if we are perceived as white by others, than a particular set of privileges are conferred on us…we were born into a system that disadvantages…Native Americans…and provides benefits to those who are identified as whites" (Potapchuk, n.d., p. 57). The benefits the white looking Métis students experienced was that "of having greater access to power and resources than people of color do…purely on the basis of our skin color doors are open to us that are not open to other people" (Kendall, 2001, p. 1). And who notices? Not noticing is another freedom and "privilege that is afforded only to white people" (Kendall, 2001, p. 4), the critical mass that we bring with us wherever we go (Kendall, 2001, p. 8). Peggy McIntosh (1988) describes white privilege as "an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and black checks" (McIntosh, 1988, p. 1). This invisibility is linked to relations of domination and produced historically, socially, politically and culturally (Crawford, 1998, p. 1).

In terms of educational success for Métis students, participants identified sources of financial aid and "avenues for Métis people to go through to become successful" (Sam, p. 2, L68) in the form of scholarships and bursaries that are available specifically for Aboriginal students, including Métis. Although Jody stated that "the Manitoba Métis Federation [that] will help you out with

bursaries or things like that…There's a lot of like, in Grade 12, there's all those

bursaries you can apply for so you can get a lot to help if you want" (Jody, p. 2,

L79-85), only Jamie received a scholarship for Aboriginal students, stating "I

don't think I would ever see that if I wasn't Métis and I got some pretty awesome

opportunities" (Jamie, p. 2, L90-91). I think that there is a misconception in the

general population that there are a lot of bursaries and scholarships for

Aboriginal students but in reality, there are not as many as people think because

some of the grants have time limits on them and/or monies run out and many

Métis do not qualify for them (Personal communication, Jenine Walker, August

15, 2011). If one looks at the contents of this paragraph through the lens of

white privilege, these students had an unearned power as they learned that

scholarships for Métis existed and then learned how to apply for them. What is

unsaid is that they recognized that if they had different coloured skin, they

would not have these privileges. Powell (1997) discovered that "white students

know the rules of the game and are better achievers just as members of white

society know the rules of the game…they learn the rules as they grow up and

succeed in life" (Powell, 1997, cited in Crawford, 1998, p. 2).

School Factors Identified as Being Important in Supporting School Success and High School Graduation for Métis Students

According to the research and confirmed by the participants, a number of characteristics of effective schools, whether for Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal peoples, appear to hold true for Métis students as well in terms of encouraging student success. Successful students have supportive families and friends. They also have caring, knowledgeable, and well-prepared teachers, an accepting environment in the classroom and throughout the school, and a variety of extracurricular activities available where relationships between teachers and students, as well as amongst the students themselves, have an opportunity to grow and flourish.

Supportive Educational Relationships

All six participants commented on the support their families gave them with regard to their schooling even though the focus of the study was on school factors that contributed to academic success for Métis students. According to Jody, his parents were a significant factor towards his success as a student, saying, "My parents for sure. That was a big school support and uh, yeah, … I think my parents were the number one thing" (Jody, p. 4, L158). As said earlier, Robin's Mom kept on top of her in terms of getting her schoolwork done because, as a single mom, she really wanted to see her graduate, as "it was a

great success for her as well" (Robin, p. 4, L145). Jamie did not have the need for tutoring as he had strong family support and accountability

I think I grew up with a really strong um, family support so I didn't really feel that um I needed any of the support, the extra support systems in High School. Um I had, I had a really good family growing up and I always had that support whenever I needed it, whatever was going on, um, where as I think maybe some Métis students don't have that and that's a huge part of being successful too, whereas if you always have that in your mind, where as I never did in High School and it's going to hurt your grades or, you know, meeting deadlines and that sort of thing. So I think a lot of the people that, you know, that struggle in High School or don't get their High School, it's not because they're not smart enough, it's cause they don't have the social supports (Jamie, p. 6, L269-278).

Chris had help when he needed it from his parents, saying, "...my parents uh of course were there to help um yea yea, friends, brother, sister, they all helped" (Chris, p. 6, L229-230).

Terry also had parents who were involved in making sure her schoolwork was done as well as being there to help as much as they could. They made me do my stuff. I don't know. They would try to help whenever they could but my little sister was younger, wasn't learning what I was learning and my parents, they had no clue sometimes., so they would let me do my stuff, they'd make me do my stuff but they couldn't really help me much. They would try but they were always there (Terry, p. 8, L358-362).

Sam attributes her success in life so far to her family and the encouragement of her family (Sam, p. 2, L60). Having consistent, caring support from significant people in a student's life is a key element to success at school. Having this support is foundational to having good self-esteem and confidence through the good and the tough times. Schools need to look for ways to include parents and provide opportunities for them to be involved in their child's education in a supportive role.

Friends were another element in supporting the participants through high school to graduation. For four of the participants, their friends were a source of positive peer pressure in terms of studying for exams and tests. In terms of hanging out with a group of friends at school when it was not connected to academics, a negative form of peer pressure to skip classes or get involved with unhealthy choices was also a reality they had to deal with.

In terms of positive peer pressure, when Sam was thinking of putting her studying off to another day, Sam found her friends to be a positive influence. Sometimes they "would be studying and like, well, I guess since you [her friends] are, I may as well just join you" (Sam, p. 5, L207-208). Robin, a very social student who was friends with everyone said that her friends "gave [her] support saying "No, let's do this and let's study or something, you know, for classes." (Robin, p. 5, L185-186). At times, these friends were barriers in the sense that she sometimes chose to "hang[ing] around with the wrong crowd. I got into a couple of things that I guess I shouldn't have, um, just generally hanging around the wrong people" (Robin, p. 5, L201-202). Jody seemed to have two groups of

friends, one to hang out with "that made it easier to be in high school" (Jody, p. 5, L218) and another group of friends that would get together to study for exams (Jody, p. 5, L182). Terry's friends were usually in the same classes so they "would always like get together whenever we had like questions or studying for exams or homework or anything like that" (Terry, p. 6, L244-246) but then her friends were there when she "didn't want to work too and that was kind of the bad relationships with the friends when they kind of stopped you from doing your school stuff" (Terry, p. 6, L253-255). Jamie mentioned that his

> circle of friends were not necessarily in the cool group of friends, but they were, um, they kind of shone through so they ended up becoming leaders and something that they weren't necessarily used to, which is really cool. It's cool to see for sure and a lot of people that won't, might have been in the cooler group of kids, so to say, uh, um, they were forced to look up to people that were maybe on the lower rung of the ladder (Jody, p. 8, L347-352).

Even though Jamie did well in school, his friends struggled academically "because they were lazy" (Jody, p. 8, L365) but "they knew if they needed help with something, that I was, I could help them" (Jody, p. 8, L363). Jamie saw the bigger picture in terms of understanding where the importance of his education in terms of where he could go with his career and the importance of surrounding oneself with successful people because "success kind of begets or breeds success in that because you know if you're around people that are always having a negative attitude and aren't successful all the time then it's tough for

you to be successful too" (Jody, p. 13, L555-557). According to Jody, his friends, however, chose to focus on,

> looking very much at the moment and they're looking more to their group
>
> of friends... [whereas] I think a lot of the Métis, whether it's Métis or
>
> Aboriginal students, they...wind up with people that aren't successful or
>
> aren't happy...and they find themselves struggling to get out of it and it's
>
> sort of tough to find a way to get out (Jody, p. 13, L558-561).

Jamie commented on how low expectations or lack of success early in school seemed to keep a person there because "it's hard to move up if you kind of stay in the same social stigma" (Jamie, p. 5, L219-220).

A theme that emerged from the interviews was that the participant's success was in some way attributed to their physical appearance and was a driving factor in how they saw and interpreted their Métis identity. It was evident that the identifiers for Métis people come from society, government funding and their interpretations, positive or negative, about Aboriginal people, including Métis. In the first instance, programs where funding is available to students is based on federal and provincial government politics and their preferred funding of programs.

Four out of the six Métis participants did not consider themselves as having the physical appearance of an Aboriginal person. They considered themselves no different than the rest of the people in the community they grew up in which is made up predominantly of Caucasians. One participant, Robin, described herself as white, "It's cause my skin's white. Not a lot of people asked.

They'd just think I was a white girl so they don't really know I'm actually Métis, just cause my skin's white" (Robin, p. 7, L311-312). Along with racial identities of colour in Canada, "there is also a white racial identity" (Crawford, 1998, p. 1) which is "akin to normalness" (Crawford, 1998, p. 1). This stereotype assumes that "whiteness is goodness" (Crawford, 1998, p. 5) and is seldom ever questioned.

The other two participants who appeared to have darker skin and Aboriginal features did not see themselves as Aboriginal persons, even though they received discriminating comments at times. Some students made racist jokes to Jody as an Aboriginal person but Jody's comment reveals that he has a positive self-image and he seemed unaware of his visual appearance as a Métis person and subsequent possible negative stereotyping he might endure, stating that the comments were "not really to Métis but the Aboriginal side of it. Like they'd make jokes about it or something like that but it didn't bother me or anything" (Jody, p. 8, L268-270). During the interview with Jody, he seemed to refer to First Nations peoples as Aboriginal peoples and Métis separately as he stated, "most of the people up there [where he lives] aren't really Métis but are Aboriginal. They haven't had the European native ancestry just native ancestry but it's still interesting to learn about" (Jody, p. 3, L128-130).

The participants did not state how or why they chose to identify with non-Aboriginal society outside of the fact that they were not raised with any or much knowledge of their Métis ancestry. It appears that the participants and their families have been assimilated into the non-Aboriginal mainstream society

around them. In my opinion, based on talks with my dad after he found out that he was of Métis ancestry at age 71, he thought it was a natural action to identify with the majority particularly in order to escape racism. Based on this reasoning as well as studying the transcripts in terms of how the participants saw themselves as non-Aboriginal persons and being accepted at Cedar Falls High School as non-Aboriginal, it is my opinion that it was not difficult for them to adopt a non-Aboriginal identity since they could easily assume the invisible white privilege that existed around them. In addition, the fact that they also had little knowledge about their Métis culture and heritage contributed to them not questioning or identifying discrepancies due to colour or Métis background.

Jamie saw "everyone as the same…there's no difference" (Jamie, p. 10, L417) and in his school "there weren't really a lot of minorities outside of the Aboriginal minority and the Aboriginal minority wasn't seen as a whole lot different" (Jamie, p. 10, L419-420). Robin saw herself fitting in as Caucasian since "they [society] don't really know I'm actually Métis, cause my skin's white" (Robin, p. 7, L312) and Jody said "…it's kind of hard to tell that certain people are Métis but I don't think anyone really knows" (Jody, p. 6, L263-264). Robin doesn't "find it any different than any other colour or race or anything like that…I just don't find it a difference what race you are" (Robin, p., 2, L82-85). We know that historically, Métis lived in an "ethnic dilemma caused by racial stereotypes that either denigrate or ignore mixed-decent people" (Foster, 2006, p. 3)…facing both white prejudice or Aboriginal discrimination (Foster, 2006, p. 3) or unearned white privilege "built into Canadian society" (Crawford, 1998, p.

1)...like a "protective pillow of resources and/or benefits of the doubt... (that) repels gossip and voyeurism and instead demands dignity" (Fine, 1997, p. 57 cited in Crawford, 1998, p. 1).

In many instances for Métis people, and for Canadians in general, a person is a mix of more than two cultures, such as myself (who has Métis, Icelandic and French ancestry) and he or she will choose to identify with a race or ethnic group in order to connect with others when it comes up in conversation. For example, in my own life, I have Icelandic friends, who, because they know of my Icelandic heritage, choose to identify me as Icelandic and include me in Icelandic events. I am happy to be included and be a part of such a group. The same thing happens in relation to the French heritage I possess and to a lesser extent, my Métis heritage, only because I have just recently renewed an interest in building my identity as a Métis person and have fewer Métis contacts. My Métis heritage is distant from me, as this part of our family history, according to my grandmother, had been silenced due to the negative stereotypes that have historically been present.

Two of the participants used words like "part Métis" to describe themselves. Possibly they were referring to themselves as half-breeds as "blood quantum became the norm whenever these new people needed to be identified" (Shore, 1997, p. 1). It seems to me to be physically and biologically impossible to be "part" of a Métis person. Campbell (1973) in the book *Halfbreed*, "implicitly challenges the Euro-American belief that "blood" is determinant of character and experience, and thus offers a challenge to racist discourse" (Campbell, 1973,

cited in Lundgren, 2011, p. 66). Chris described being part of Cedar Falls High

School's cultural group as a "heritage experience really, knowing that I was part

Métis" (Chris, p. 5, L191). It almost seems noncommittal to admit to only being

"part" of a culture; race or ethnic group or perhaps it is a humble gesture that

one cannot consider themselves a *whole* Métis person. Some would argue that

Métis people haven't been given the choice. I'm wondering if the Métis culture

was minimized in society due to negative stereotypes to the point that modern

day Métis do not identify with it and see themselves as a whole Métis person.

Jamie said, "…I'm not a large part Métis, like it's pretty far back on my Dad's side.

I don't really know if I connect very much to it" (Jamie, p. 2, L88-91). The Métis

heritage is there but there is no living culture, language or social identification

or experience with it. It is much the same with my family in that I have a French,

Icelandic and Métis heritage but our family identifies with French and Icelandic

culturally, linguistically and socially but very little to the Métis piece but like

Jody, I'm guessing that I don't know if I identify much with it since I'm still

learning what it means to be Métis. Only then can I choose whether or not to

incorporate the culture into my life. This is where culture programming in the

school and in the curricula is important, in my opinion, as well as culture

opportunities in the community to bring awareness, understanding, and

tolerance.

Sam and Robin mentioned that learning about their Aboriginal cultures

has been empowering. Robin felt proud to be able to "see a person on the street

and [if] they want[ed] to know something like this about why, why do

Aboriginal people have their hair long, for example, … [I'd] be able to tell them. I just liked the information, just to have it, I just liked it" (Robin, p. 8, L356-358). Sam adds,

> …I want to be able to talk to other people and educate other people in my culture rather than being almost oblivious to what happened in the past about my culture and then I can't really educate and help um Métis people, Aboriginal people, in general, to get rid of stereotypes and that sort of thing (Sam, p. 2, L82-86).

She continues,

> I've already gained a lot of information from this class [cultural awareness club at school], that I'm able to have conversations with people who have these stereotypes and they say 'oh well, Métis people, blah, blah, blah, blah, and I'm like 'well, actually, it happened like this' and then I actually have facts behind what I'm saying rather than just an opinion of what I think (Sam, p. 2, L90-94).

I believe these comments reflect the need and desire for individuals to know where they've come from in order to build a healthy self-esteem and strong self-concept. From this comes the ability and confidence, because of the knowledge passed on, to be able to address stereotypes if and when they arise.

Four out of the six participants spoke about the presence of racism, against themselves as Métis and also for First Nations peoples. Jamie states:

> …people like to think that racism, racism isn't there anymore but it's definitely a huge part especially with any sort of Native uh people, I mean,

it's hugely evident in Winnipeg still where we, we look down on

Aboriginals as being lazy and unproductive and unsuccessful for sure

(Jamie, p. 3, L106-109), … you know Métis uh families have a lot more

broken homes than you know um than either Native families or non-

Native families and that mix kind of, it seems to be a struggle sometimes

(Jamie, p. 8, L500-503).

Robin also thought that some teachers struggled with stereotypes and

discriminated against Aboriginal students in that

…teachers generally, they don't see (that they discriminate), they don't

think that they do that but I kind of see it. They don't spend enough time

with a student (Aboriginal) and a lot of people have different views on, on

Aboriginal people or Métis people, or Caucasian, you know, it's just a hate

game (Robin, p. 7, L296-299).

Expanding upon learning activities and experiences for participants, as

the literature discusses, caring, knowledgeable and prepared teachers are an

additional key to student success. Jamie thought that teachers should have a

"solid plan… there's a lot of teachers that you could really tell that they had no

idea what they're talking about and it was very frustrating to get through those

classes" (Jamie, p. 10, L448-451). Jamie thought that a student understanding

his or her own learning modalities was "kind of an over-rated concept" (Jamie, p.

11, L467) but that it was "much more teachers being, are being spread far too

thin in different fields … and if students feel that, you know, the teachers aren't

capable of teaching the material, they're not going to care about the course at

all" (Jamie, p. 11, L470-472) but "there were teachers that you know that they knew their material backwards and forwards and it didn't matter necessarily what their teaching style was" (Jamie, p. 10, L454-456).

Accessibility to teachers is a very important element for students. Four out of the six participants had access to one or more caring teachers during the school day. They expressed that this was an important contributing factor to their successful graduation. Jamie became involved during high school in rugby and the students involved there became his circle of friends (Jamie, p. 8, L336). He also stated that he "had a lot of teachers, at least one in every grade where I um, I usually turned to them for advice on different things" (Jamie, p. 5, L226-227). The relationships he built with teachers were the result of being part of different extracurricular groups (Jamie, p. 5, L228). Chris developed meaningful relationships with his teachers during his involvement with school or class projects or being part of committees, stating, "I guess you'd say I've developed a good friendship with my teachers so that definitely helped...yea I guess individual relationships you can safely say got me through high school safely" (Chris, p. 6, 240-249). Jamie had also established a reputation of being a good student in elementary and middle school, so in high school, he "felt like okay, you know, if I don't live up to this, then I might disappoint people too" (Jamie, p. 5, L206-208).

Jody also had individual relationships with teachers that gave him "extra help after class or at lunch time" (Jody, p. 4, L169) but he had to also make the "effort to ask for extra help" (Jody, p. 6, L229) as well. Robin felt that besides her

Mom and some of her friends, there were teachers who held her accountable for being in class, and as a result, "I would drag them [other students] to their class [as well] to make sure they arrived early" (Robin, p. 4, L141-142). Sam found her teachers "very open and very easy to come talk to if you needed to" (Sam, p. 4, L177-178).

There were several other strategies that caring teachers used that helped students learn in the classroom besides being prepared and knowledgeable instructors. Robin thought that hands-on learning experiences (Robin, p. 4, L172) such as in her Canadian Studies course where students were learning about different equipment to find metals where "we actually went outside and tried to look for them with coordinates and all that" (Robin, p. 7, L279-283), one on one coaching between the teacher and student (Robin, p. 6, L251), and having choices and options, especially ones where you could be creative (Robin, p. 6, L269) were valuable to student academic success.

Terry thought that independent learning experiences where "you get to do things yourself" (Terry, p. 7, L317), field trips and project based activities where "you get to work with partners" (Terry, p. 7, L314) where "you were able to actually be there and do that stuff really, you really learn a lot more than just sitting there and reading a book about it" (Terry, p. 8, L319-321). Jody found that hands on activities such as band, jazz and art classes that were visual in nature were classes that he enjoyed the most and the ones in which he excelled (Jody, p. 7, L277-279).

A Sense of Belonging

Being in a school that offers students cultural programming, in this instance at the Cedar Falls High School, in the form of a bi-weekly lunch club for all students, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, is important in creating a sense of belonging for students. According to the participants, this activity as well as other extracurricular activities makes school more enjoyable and helped them build important relationships with their peers and their teachers. In the case of the cultural group, students also have the opportunity to learn more about Aboriginal cultures, which many participants have found meaningful in constructing their Métis identity.

Participants could take part in a variety of Aboriginal cultural activities such as listening to guest speakers from both Métis and First Nations, attending pow wows, Elder and tipi teachings, pipe, smudge and naming ceremonies, learn about drum construction and drum teachings, basic language lessons in Anishinaabemowin and Cree, attending Métis Days in St. Boniface, Manitoba and art activities that included bone and antler carving with an Artist in Residence. Students also had the opportunity to participate in field trips and complete assignments in order to earn a cultural credit towards graduation and participate in scholarship interviews. Several teacher focused professional development occurs in the school also such as participation in Aboriginal book studies, workshops with Aboriginal authors, integration of Aboriginal perspectives in the curricula, cultural lunch and learns, and attending tours and workshops held at the Manitoba Métis Federation in Winnipeg.

Most of the participants who joined the group did so because they were interested in the subject area and the cultural credit they received at the end of the year was an added benefit (Personal communication, February 6, 2012).

Groups where successful and unsuccessful students were forced to work together in the classroom did not work, however, the cultural group held during lunch hours at the school and the cultural field trips held at the school did encourage all different types of students to interact in a non-threatening atmosphere.

Chris thought that there was possibly a Métis version of success in that there was a cultural group put into the school

> and I guess Aboriginal students had a place to go with, you know, the
> other students, that alone I think was a pretty good indicator that
> everybody, you know, um, they're, um, the field trips and they can actually
> be a little bit more involved and even I found out a little bit more like
> when I found out I was Métis. I mean, of course, it was a shocker 'cause I
> know my skin doesn't say that I am but then afterwards it was as though,
> the bottom line it was okay, all right, and then I had become involved and I
> was interested but like, I didn't know, like, you know, what sage was and
> then how it was used and like all that. So again, it was all a learning
> experience and I just felt it was interesting (Chris, p. 2, L80-90).

Kendall (2001) states that "most of us go through our days unaware that we are white or that it matters" (Kendall, 2001, p. 2), however, when we realize

that we are something different than white, it is a "shocker" as Chris puts it"
(Chris, p. 2, L86).

Sam enjoyed being a part of the cultural group and found learning about
Aboriginal cultures inspired her to continue learning

Yea, I was a part of that. Yea, um, yea, that was fun, I mean I did enjoy that.
It was again tying into how I'm taking Native Studies. It helped me learn
more about my culture and being involved in it. Like going to sweat lodges
and smudging and I'd never really been exposed to that before the [name
of cultural group] and then that sparked an interest in me to learn about
my culture cause it never really occurred to me before. Um, and they, and
through the [name of cultural group] they offered a Cree, a Cree language
course at lunchtime and that was cause I'm Cree. So my Mom's side of the
family is Cree, um, I really enjoyed that cause it was very catered to my
needs in particular I guess and then they also had an Ojibwa language
class, so Ojibwa kids could learn about their language as well. It was…I
liked it (Sam, p. 4, L166-175).

Robin felt that the cultural program helped her concentrate in her classes
a bit better. "You know I had a little bit of extra activity on the side, you know,
having fun and doing activities and learning still and then I'd have my regular
school sitting in the classroom, boring, you know?" (Robin, p. 4, L177-179).

The learning experiences the participants experienced in this group were
valuable to them; however, they only provided a brief and general overview of
aspects of Aboriginal cultures and were not related to any particular subject

area. A more in-depth curriculum with complete and accurate historical information needs to be provided within the mainstream subject areas if students are to become knowledgeable about Canadian history in such a way that it provides an opportunity for them to construct their own identity and see where they fit into this history as a Métis person. This, in turn, in my opinion, will help them build and sustain self-confidence and self-esteem and subsequently, achieve more academic success. This knowledge will be helpful to all students in order to debunk myths and stereotypes.

Jamie thought that "being part of groups is really important and having that social support is a lot more important than any sort of academic programs" (Jamie, p. 12, L510-511) and it has "to be a group where they feel accepted…and they have to feel a part of something too" (Jamie, p. 12, L526) instead of forcing them where they don't necessarily fit similar to "a square peg into a round hole" (Jamie, p. 12, L531). This open and accepting environment were attributes to its success, as Sam put it, "like you never really got anyone not liking someone because of race or anything" (Sam, p. 3, L149-150). This group created a safety net for students. It is important for students to be around positive influences and have enough relationships within a group that they gain the support they need in order to graduate because "if you're around people with a negative attitude and aren't successful all the time then it's tough for you to be successful too" (Jamie, p. 13, L554-557).

Extracurricular activities in general helped round out the school experience for students and taught them such things as work ethic, the value of

teamwork and organization skills. Some attended intramural sports, the photography club and the band program while others took leadership opportunities such as mentoring other students or like Robin, became Chief of Council (Robin, p. 3, L170) for the cultural group. Attending such things as the noon hour cultural group, which met every few weeks, and going on cultural field trips together was fun and educational for students, and "it just made school all better to go to sometimes" (Terry, p. 5, L202-203).

In terms of students learning and constructing more about their Aboriginal identity through pow wows, sweat lodges, drumming classes, beading, or medicines, attending the cultural group was only the beginning of their exploration of other cultural opportunities. While Statistics Canada (2006) report that Métis cultural activities include fishing, gathering plants, hunting, and traditional arts and crafts, the online Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture which is part of the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research shows key cultural components include the Michif language, music (fiddling and dancing), the oral tradition of story telling, the history of their cultural beginnings in the fur trade, and traditional art forms such as beading and the Métis sash (Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, (n.d.), p. 1).

Sam signed up for Native Studies at university because she wanted to learn more about her Métis history and "get in touch with my [her] past" (Sam, p. 2, L80). As noted earlier, Robin said that belonging to the cultural group helped her concentrate on her other school work more, giving her an

opportunity to learn about something meaningful to her and explore independently. Chris stated that the group encouraged him to learn "more background about myself" (Chris, p. 3, L118) …you know, background, history, and just more about searching like from well history, not searching history but learning a little bit more" (Chris, p. 3, L124-125) as opposed to learning to become "bigger, faster, better in terms of physical [sports]" (Chris, p. 3, L122).

In addition, this sense of belonging doesn't end when a student turns eighteen and has not graduated. There needs to be more ongoing support in schools for these students who may not be ready to graduate. The graduation rate may be low for Aboriginal students at age eighteen but it is much higher by the time these students are 25 years of age. Jamie felt bad for some students in his school who were "kicked out of school for being too old which is really frustrating…they were only nineteen…they were all kicked out and told they had to go to adult ed which I think was really hard for them" (Jamie, p. 7, 280-284). This was "just an incredibly poor decision by administration" (Jamie, p. 7, L295) which was isolating for them and "I'm pretty sure it's not going to set them up for success in the future" (Jamie, p. 7, L292-293).

This seemed important to three of the participants because they liked learning experiences where they had choices and could discover and learn things on their own, "cause everybody's different depending on who they are" (Terry, p. 7, L299). Terry liked learning opportunities where "you get to do things for yourself… build things … go on field trips" (Terry, p. 7, L317-318). Robin liked being creative…"do my [her] own thing" (Robin, p. 6, L263-264).

Jody did not see education as something that only occurred in school because "you have to learn to do the thing in order to get there. It doesn't matter if it's university or college or just learning on your own, you've got to learn something, so education is pretty well the key to success" (Jody, p. 3, L114-116).

The cultural awareness club met the needs of students who weren't necessarily interested in sports because sports "was really, really competitive and to the point that it was just like overbearing" (Chris, p. 7, L287-288). Chris mentioned that groups that formed within the school for different reasons were important and although most of these groups tended to occur around sports, the "cultural club was a huge one right there" (Chris, p. 10, L431) in terms of being a contributor to academic success. The club met regularly in the school and was an important contributor to students' success because the teachers were caring and "everyone is kind of involved with them [teachers] more [afterwards]. They kind of "help them along and make sure they're doing good and, like, with the field trips and I guess they're kind of more involved with them in their schooling, caring more about it" (Terry, p. 8, L334-337). Parents are also a vital component of the club because students would "get their parents to come and then they would explain even a little bit more about their heritage" (Chris, p. 10, L446-447).

Sam thought that "the [cultural group] and that stuff definitely helped [her] me, um, I guess also get to know other Métis students and then I think that in itself helped me become successful in a way" (Sam, p. 5, L225-227). Robin reflected that not many other schools have a cultural awareness club "where

everyone feels accepted" (Robin, p. 8, L330) and that having this club in the school "was a great thing in school for everybody to learn" (Robin, p. 8, L333). It is important that students have the opportunity to learn about their history as Métis people in school. The cultural club is a beginning for many students and teachers. In my opinion, it is important and necessary to have Aboriginal perspectives in every curriculum, especially because many students do not have the opportunity to learn about this at home or in their communities and consequently, they do not develop a strong sense of identity because of it. Many of Robin's Aboriginal friends in the city "don't know anything about their culture or anything cause they didn't have that in school (Robin, p. 8, L336).

Extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs and band are important ways for students to get to know their teachers and then afterwards feel more comfortable in going to see them during class time. For some students, such as Terry, a barrier she had was her shyness (Terry, p. 6, L270), which she started to overcome once she became involved in the cultural club. As Jamie points out, "having a lot of different things going on at once helps you stay organized with the school stuff" (Jamie., p. 5, L196-197) because "you have somewhere to be and something to do that was really important and having, you know, being accountable to people" (Jamie, p. 5, L200-202).

School Factors Identified as Being Barriers to School Success and

High School Graduation for Métis Students

There are several barriers that the participants discussed that they

needed to overcome in order to graduate from high school. Schools related

barriers include lack of relevant curriculum, low quality of teaching, racism and

negative peer pressure. A lack of identity and inability to fit in were also seen as

obstacles at school. Other school barriers include the family and the community

a person lives in, which affects such things as homework because many of the

participants do not have adequate supports at home to help with homework,

even when parents were there willing to help. In this regard, school can do a lot

to support students in this situation by offering extra supports throughout the

day and by providing an inclusive community where a variety of extracurricular

activities are available. One of the barriers not included in those mentioned

above mentioned by Jamie was about post-secondary educational success in

that high school did not prepare them adequately for university.

School Related Barriers

In relation to schools and curricula, there is a responsibility and

obligation to educate students fully and accurately about Canadian Métis

history. Incorporating cultural programming in regular curricula will help

students build their knowledge base about many Aboriginal cultures, increase

acceptance of differences, and hopefully in the long term minimize stereotyping as well.

A barrier noted by the participants in this study was "homework…That was a huge one" (Chris, p. 8, L332), and negative peer pressure such as "the influence of someone, your peers skipping class…or just like not really paying attention in class, like just talking a bit…at times it was a distraction from what you were doing in class or again, not going" (Sam, p. 5, L216-219). Jody found some classes tougher than others and "you would need to make the effort to ask for extra help (Jody, p. 6, L230). The lack of knowledgeable and lack of prepared teachers was seen as a barrier in the sense that if students felt that the teachers were not "capable of teaching the material, they're not going to care about the course at all (Jamie, p. 11, L472). Robin cites racism by teachers as a barrier at school, recalling that

> It's just, um, what can I say? Uh basically I think teachers have views on
> certain students and would rather just not work with them the way they
> should, that they need to be working with them. Uh, it's like cause me and
> my friends are finding an apartment (I'll use this as uh) me my friends are
> finding an apartment, OK. My boyfriend's friend is Aboriginal. We went to
> this one place, we walked in and they wouldn't even let us in because he
> was with us. It was, it was total discrimination, it was, just the way they
> are. Just teachers generally, they don't see, they don't think that they do
> that but I kind of see it. They don't spend enough time with a student and
> a lot of people have different views on, on Aboriginal people or Métis

people or, or Caucasian, you know, it's just a hate game (Robin, p. 7, L290-

299).

As well, another barrier for Métis students is that teachers do not

understand the experience of students living in poverty nor do they understand

the students' culture. School staff often has a preconceived notion of preschool

kids where mothers are at home. There is also the stigma of being poor, or less

affluent, as is the case of students in poverty who are not surrounded by other

poor students. Teachers, as well as other community members may assume that

parents are not involved because they do not care when, in fact, the demanding

and unrelenting stress of living day to day, is consuming and very tiring.

Accessing help for the family is more difficult as well because of the lack of

finances available in a family living in poverty. Help has to be free and there are

not many free programs available. Those that are free are difficult to access

because of transportation requirements, internet access availability, and/or the

level of literacy required to read information and fill out forms.

A barrier mentioned by three out of the six participants was negative

peer pressure. A barrier to success for Robin was "hanging around with the

wrong crowd" (Robin, p. 5, L201), and trying to "break the cycle" (Robin, p. 6,

L243) of poverty and drug addiction (Robin, p. 6, L244). Jamie stated that

having the ability to identify with someone in a positive way is an important

part of a person's well being, "you know, success kind of breeds success" (Jamie,

p. 13, L554) because "if you're around people that are always having a negative

attitude and aren't successful all the time then it's tough for you to be successful too" (Jamie, p.13, L554-557).

Terry found that friends could be a negative distraction from getting her school work done as "there's times when you want[ed] to go hang out with them and didn't do work too and that was kind of the bad relationships with the friends when they kind of stopped you from doing your school stuff" (Terry, p. 6, L252-255). Sam found that peers could be a negative influence in terms of "skipping class or just like not really paying attention in class" (Sam, p. 5, L217).

Although not a school factor in a sense, Jamie said that another barrier to Métis students graduating was a lack of family support that resulted in Métis students looking for a place to belong. This lack of support undoubtedly filters into the school environment. Jamie stated that "the family support isn't always there and they [Métis students] don't necessarily find themselves as part of a group" (Jamie, p. 11, L507-509). He continues that this lack of support stems from broken homes and that Métis, being a mix of native and non-native families "seems to be a struggle sometimes" (Jamie, p. 11, L502-503) in terms of finding a place where they fit in. Sometimes the most accepting groups were not the groups that would have helped them graduate and stay in school. Gangs sometimes presented a solution to students not fitting in elsewhere.

Lack of support could be extended to the lack of community support and the location where a student was living such as "if they're in the inner city" (Jamie, p. 12, L526-527). Living in an impoverished area of the city where many are struggling with trying with the daily business of living may lessen the

chances of becoming successful academics. There may be many reasons for this such as students coming to school hungry which affects their mood and ability to concentrate, having caregivers so preoccupied with their daily lives and troubles that they don't have the energy to focus on their children or their schooling, not knowing how to support their children due to their own lack of success at school, parents feeling blamed for what goes on at school in terms of their child's academics and behaviour, difficulty providing for basic school supplies, parents in the midst of their own crisis', and transiency resulting from looking for work or support.

Lack of Identity and Ability to Fit In

Another barrier for Métis students is that they do not know about their Métis ancestry and have been unable to construct their Métis identity as they walk on their life journey. Trying to find an acceptable definition of Métis identity

> is not a simply undertaking and one reason for the difficulty lies in the historical identity of the Métis as "a people between two worlds". Another reason is that the original biological definition "half-breed" remains fixed in the mind of the unenlightened and continues to contribute to the confusion. For their part, the Métis people have always known who they were, despite the lack of control they later experienced when others identified them for their purposes (Shore, 1995, p. 1).

In short, the origin of the Métis was in the St. Lawrence Valley French fur trade and as the fur trade moved west, so did the Métis (Shore, 1995, p. 1). As nations co-existed and crossed paths, and as those involved in the fur trade began to winter over instead of travelling the distance back to Quebec, the French married women from Aboriginal nations (Shore, 1995, p. 1). The intermarrying of these peoples and subsequent geographical isolation of the fur trading posts required these cultures to blend and bend into a new culture with it's own customs, traditions and language (Shore, 1995, p. 2).

Three of the participants mentioned that they do not know much about their Métis history because relationships have been severed with this part of the extended family. In addition, many Métis assimilated into mainstream Caucasian societies after Confederation in 1870 "when Canada and immigrant Canadians displaced and dispossessed the Métis, in effect, scattering them over the breadth of their former homeland" (Shore, 1995, p. 2) and the presence and strength of the Métis nation that had formed dispersed. It was easy enough for the Métis to assimilate, as many Métis do not have strong Aboriginal features and thus, they physically blend in without too much difficulty. On the one hand, assimilating had financial advantages since many Métis speak more than one language, which helped them during fur trades between different groups.

Yet not all Métis have escaped negative stereotypes. Five of the six participants claim that they were not being discriminated against and that they did not see themselves as different from the mainstream student population and yet they also felt a strong desire to join the cultural program in the school so

that they could learn more about their heritage and have a place to belong. It appeared very important to all the participants to be given the opportunity to learn about Aboriginal cultures because they had the desire to learn and reconstruct their identity to include a positive connection with their Métis heritage. A major contributing factor to the barrier of not fitting in is the lack of correct historical information being taught in schools as well as the continuation and embracing of the oral tradition where family history is being passed on.

Two of the participants, Robin and Jamie, commented that they never had the chance to grow their identity as a Métis person because their nuclear and extended family relationships had been severed because of alcohol abuse (Robin, p. 6, L243-245) and because they didn't get along (Jamie, p. 4, L153-154). In both cases, families have chosen to disassociate themselves with one or both sides of their extended family where sharing of family history and values is typically shared.

Other contributing factors to a lack of identity that go beyond the scope of this thesis is the role that residential schools played in assimilating Métis people into mainstream society and eliminating culture from being passed on from Métis adults to their youth. What happened to the Métis during the residential school movement? According to Chartrand, Logan and Daniels (2006), "in the eyes of staff and administrators [of residential schools], a Métis child in one instance could be seen as better off than an Indian child and, in the next, could be seen as worse off" (Chartrand, Logan, & Daniels, 2006, p. 3). In addition, residential schools play an interesting part in Métis history, as

in many cases, during the early twentieth century, as common as it was for a Métis person to be taken to residential school, it was also just as common to be not taken to school at all. The Métis who lived on the road allowance or in a non-Aboriginal community were often left out of opportunities for consistent education (Chartrand, Logan, & Daniels, 2006, p. 2).

Jody discussed the richness of information available to his western European dad, who was doing family tree research, where "he went all the way back...put it all into a book so I read the whole side of his family" (Jody, p. 4, L137-138) whereas it has been very difficult to find information for his mom's side of the family because the extended family are in different parts of Saskatchewan and southern and northern Manitoba. Researching the family "is just so hard … cause like they could have been born in the middle of Saskatchewan in the fields and they don't have any record of them being born" (Jody, p. 4, L141-143).

Home Life

It was interesting to note how many times the participants referred to home life and how passionately they spoke about the support they gained from their families even though we were discussing school factors that influenced their academic success. Since family and community are so intertwined with each student and have a direct impact on their academic success, it is worthwhile looking at ways to increase parental involvement at school.

In this regard and as mentioned earlier, Jody thought that a barrier to academic success for Métis students was the type of community a person lives in, such as impoverished areas, like the inner city (Jody, p. 7, L292-294). Jamie believes that a huge barrier to success for students can be the lack of social support from family and community as this "is a lot more important than any sort of academic programs that they're into" (Jamie, p. 12, L511). If a student's basic needs are not met and they do not feel safe, it will be very difficult for him or her to reach their potential. Sam's statement reflects that if "they're in poverty, they can't really afford to buy healthy food so that your brain develops properly and to have the energy to get to school and have energy to study" (Sam, p. 7, L284-288). Children may not always come from healthy homes with "healthy family relationships sometimes and that hurts…and Métis families have a lot more broken homes than you know um than either Native families or non-Native families and that mix kind of, it seems to be, uh, it seems to be a struggle sometimes" (Jamie, p. 11, L501-503).

Schools can do a lot towards meeting these needs with breakfast and lunch programs, incorporating anti-bullying programs and offering a variety of extracurricular programming where students can feel a sense of belonging and develop relationships with other students and teachers. Sam gives an excellent example of how this plays out in a less fortunate community. Students who can't "join the hockey team because they can't afford all the equipment and they can't afford to pay the bills to play hockey… hinders them in making friends and, like, having a support system" (Sam, p. 7, L290-292). Family members can and

should be encouraged to become a part of the circle by joining any cultural programming or cultural events held at the school. Stereotypes and racism need to be addressed and educating youth about Aboriginal cultures is an important way to begin diminishing them.

In conclusion, the data from the participants brings awareness to important barriers that need to be addressed so that Métis students can have greater success at school. Because of the heavy reliance on student voice and their perspective on this subject, only limited parallels were able to be made with the literature on successful education for Métis people. Only one reference was made to leadership, which is seen in the literature as an important contributing factor to success for Métis students (Fulford, 2007, p. 344). There was some disappointment by Jody who spoke about the lack of visionary leadership in the school that sent Aboriginal students to alternative education when they failed to graduate. As Jamie put it:

> I had a really good family growing up and I always had that support when ever I needed it with what ever was going on um whereas I think maybe some Métis students don't have that and that's a huge part of being successful too whereas if you always have that in your mind where as I never did in High School and it's going to hurt your grades or you know meeting deadlines and that sort of thing. So I think a lot of the people that's you know that struggle in High School or don't get their High School it's not because they're not smart enough it's cause they don't have the social supports. Cause they're definitely a lot of people, there's a point in

my graduating year where I had a lot of friends uh that were actually

kicked out of school for being too old which is really frustrating. Um they

were, I think they were only 19, they had to go to adult ed and er they're

19 or 18 or 19 and they were just an extra year in and they were all kicked

out and told they had to go to adult ed which I think was really hard for

them. It was kind of a poor management or administration that actually

made that happen (Jamie, p.7, L271-284).

While the school's cultural program plays an important part in creating a

greater sense of belonging, I believe that a more inclusive curriculum as well as

resources needs to be created to assist teachers in bringing this to life in the

classroom. Although participants stated that dedicated and caring teachers

contributed to their academic success, there are no Métis or other Aboriginal

teachers or staff at the school. Finding ways to encourage more Métis people to

become teachers needs to be investigated. Participants stress the importance of

authentic, culturally relevant instruction along with the high value of setting

goals as keys to academic success and success beyond school. Teachers'

expectations need not be lowered for Métis students, in fact, they need to

remain high if we want to see Métis students not only graduate but also succeed

in all aspects of life.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

According to the participants, education is the key to a country's social-economic, cultural and psychological well being. We know from the research cited in this study that Aboriginal people, including Métis, are not experiencing the same type of academic success as non-Aboriginal people. This study addresses, in part, this gap by looking at school factors that contribute to increased academic success for Métis students through student voice. The Métis are a growing population and this study provides a different perspective for educators working with Métis students. Demographic statistics show that Canada's Aboriginal population is outgrowing the rest of non-Aboriginal Canada with the Métis in the lead, growing by 91% over the last ten years. Manitoba has four times the national average of Métis school age children. Along with the fact that educators are being required to adapt to the growing number of Métis students in the classroom, this increase is significant in terms of the number of children affected by the growing achievement gap and lower than average graduation statistics for Métis children.

There are discrepancies between what the literature says about who the Métis are and how the Métis participants in this study see themselves. According to Fred Shore (2000), the Métis culture is distinct from First Nations and European societies. The history of the Métis culture grew out of the fur trade posts where First Nations men and women cohabitated with European

men and women in a place where they could live free from lack of acceptance from their respective peoples. These posts were physically remote from both Aboriginal and European villages and culture, which resulted in a meshing of cultures and a new language and a new culture, was born. The Métis found themselves at a crossroads after Confederation in that the Government of Canada forced them to identify either with either First Nations or European peoples. Identity of the Métis people is a complex topic that goes beyond the scope of this research and is an area that I believe requires more exploration and investigation.

The three research questions I attempted to answer were:

1. How do these students define success?

2. What school factors do these students identify as being important in supporting their school success and high school graduation?

3. What factors do these students identify as having been barriers that they needed to overcome in order to be successful in school and to graduate?

Six recent Métis graduates from a rural Manitoba high school, three male and three female, were the participants for this study.

The rural school in this study is located in a stable rural community that is occupied by a primarily European affluent population. As in many rural communities, and certainly this is true of the community where the participants attended school, there is a high degree of overlap between the school and community. There is a shared consensus amongst many parents and community

members that rural schools are safer with a higher level of caring teachers and community involvement.

Many chose and continue to choose this community because there are three level schools (elementary, middle and high school) within the town itself, which makes school within walking distance or a short bus or car ride for students in Kindergarten to Grade 12. The school is one of the largest employers in the area and the school is the location of most community-wide events, which reinforces a sense of ownership and a sense of community. The community, over the past twenty years, is experiencing an influx of urban dwellers that want the peacefulness and tranquility of country living along with lower property taxes, and a short commute to work. There is often conflict between growth and tradition in this community as its members hold onto traditional views (Wallin, 2003, p. 10).

What Schools can do to increase success for Métis students

1. Offer extracurricular programs such as the cultural awareness program offered at Cedar Falls High School.

Success, according to Verna Kirkness (1992) for Aboriginal students involves making education culturally relevant and giving children a strong sense of identity with confidence in their personal worth and ability (Kirkness, 1992, p. 2). According to the participants in this study, all of whom had quite limited knowledge of the their Métis roots, the cultural program held at the school was significant in that the participants connected with others with a similar history as well as learning something significant to them which contributed to their

overall identity as a Métis person. Fulford (2007) in *Sharing Our Success*, listed

six categories of recommendations for educational policy makers, namely,

leadership, successful pre-school programs, Aboriginal language programs,

increased teacher quality, fewer transition barriers and improving

accountability in terms of tracking Aboriginal student progress (Fulford, 2007,

p. 344).

Teachers need to be made aware that building relationships with

students happens best out of class, one on one, which usually means during

extracurricular activities before and after school, during lunch hours at clubs or

in the classroom at breaks. The challenge is how schools can support this

practice in order to protect teachers from the hazards of an already heavy

workload and burn out.

2. **Hire and support good teachers and teaching practices.**

Two students commented that accessible teachers made a difference for

them but that knowledgeable teachers in their subject areas were equally as

important in keeping students engaged in their learning. The Cedar Falls

High School has started tracking the graduation rates of their Aboriginal

students since the inception of the voluntary cultural program in the school

in 2005 (see Table 4 on page 52).

3. **Use holistic approach to success by involving parents and the**

community.

Schools need to look for ways to involve and accommodate single

parents, especially single moms. Discussions continue to take place in school

staffrooms throughout the school division where this school resides about how to attract and keep more male teachers in order to provide male role models for students who come from single female parent families.

Fulford also states that school leaders need to value parent and community partnerships and that the school climate needs to be one that recognizes the importance of maintaining Aboriginal cultural traditions through programming (Fulford, 2007, p. 304). In this regard, students spoke about cultural programming, increasing teacher quality and barriers that they needed to overcome. Students found value in the school's cultural programming in that it helped them have a greater sense of belonging as well as giving them an opportunity to make connections with teachers and other students that they normally would not have crossed paths with. It also helped them gain meaningful knowledge about a topic that was not addressed anywhere else in the curriculum. The barriers recounted by students included ongoing low expectations related to stereotyping and racism by teachers, poverty, lack of sense of identity, negative peer pressure, and lack of family and community support.

Another school factor that cannot be overlooked and one that has had a significant impact on student success according to the participants is the influence of their peers. School peers at the high school level can be positive or negative influences. Choosing supportive friends was a key to success for participants. Schools, even at the high school level, need to remind students how

to choose positive and supportive peer groups and to look at their influence beyond the school walls.

Friends can be a positive influence and bring out the best in a student and schools need to figure out a way to encourage friendships and peer groups that will benefit students. Often the cool kids hang out with the cool kids, the sports jocks with the sports jocks and the intellectual students with the academic types. How can a school break down these barriers? What activities at school would encourage more cross-pollination of personalities?

The *Simcoe County District School Board First Nation, Métis and Inuit Student Achievement Plan* 2008-2009 outlined eight common success factors for Aboriginal schools, however, the only two that were mentioned by the participants were the language and cultural programming at the school and the fact that the school had a secure and welcoming environment (Simcoe County District School Board, n.d.). These factors were contributing features to the graduation of the Métis participants. The students discussed the importance of learner-centered instruction, open communication between teachers and students and resources to support teaching and learning which were factors described in Hawley's (2007) work, The *Keys to Effective Schools* (Hawley, 2007, p. x). Tunison's (2000) work and the data provided by the participants identified factors that inhibit learning such as the lack of identity and lack of and eroding voice of students since there are few other Aboriginal students in the learning environment and no Aboriginal teachers (Tunison, 2000, p. 12).

Success to the participants comes from the media version of success being that most young people are "connected" to media in many different ways such as through the Internet, Facebook, Twitter, and text messaging. They are seeing these media images much more often than in previous generations. These images mostly portray monetary success and notoriety due to a special talent, skill, or appearance. They see having money as resulting in not having to worry about anything.

4. Set up a school culture focused on goal setting.

The participants see personal success as coming from having an education so you can get a better paying job but also doing something one enjoys. I believe schools need to promote this idea more but in very specific ways as not all education ends up providing a sufficient enough income that can support needs nor does all work fulfill job satisfaction. With many more single parent families made up of women and their children, it is important that obstacles be removed for women to not only be educated and enable them to compete for jobs that bring in a reasonable income that can support their families comfortably but to also continue to open up fields of work that have typically been occupied by men.

The participants described successful people in their lives as company owners, wealthy relatives and people they know who earn enough money to live comfortably. However, delving further into the data, participants highlight that goal setting and finding meaningful work is also important to happiness. There is a difference between earning a lot of money and finding meaningful work. The

goal would be to do both. As one participant shared, his dad became a doctor, not because he could make a lot of money but because he wanted to help others. He chose this occupation because he knew he would also make enough money to support his family and be comfortable but at the same time fulfill his desire to help others and make a difference in the world around him. Therefore, success means being happy in a chosen field that brings in a reasonable income rather than working at a mindless job that brings in a lot of money.

Five out of six participants mentioned that being successful required strong supportive relationships. Having strong relationships with family, friends, and teachers created a stable and secure environment in which to learn, explore options, and become successful.

What School Divisions can do to increase success for Métis students

1. Require schools to annually include anti-racism, cultural awareness programs in school plans.

Participants described Métis success as having access to scholarships for Aboriginal persons. In their eyes, they did not see a difference in success for different people or races. They saw themselves as no different than their peers, who happen to have predominantly white skin. They had little knowledge or historical information from their families about what it means to be Métis and what they did know came mostly from information they gained through other sources such as the school's cultural program. The knowledge they gained through the program tended to be general information related to similarities

amongst all Aboriginal peoples and not information specific to the Métis. As mentioned by three of the participants, the split of families because of dysfunctional family members resulted in their lack of knowledge about their family history. Once these ties were severed, they were never restored. In addition, Fred Shore, Professor of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba stated that many families were split during Canada's confederation in 1867 because many Métis were forced to choose to identify with First Nations communities or be assimilated into the European culture (Personal communication, November 14, 2011). These students were the result of families assimilating into the European culture.

In terms of success, it appears helpful for students to belong to a cultural group at the school and more needs to be done at the classroom level to address racism and the lack of accurate information students receive about Métis and Aboriginal peoples. The cultural group is a step in the right direction, however, it still segregates students from the general population and the information received is not shared with all non-Aboriginal staff and students. More accurate resources need to be produced, purchased and made available to teachers in terms of Aboriginal history along with mandatory professional development that educates teachers and addresses stereotypes. Knowledge is power to those that are Métis and for the rest of the non-Aboriginal population; this knowledge builds understanding and tolerance of different cultures.

Three of the participants attributed their success to the fact that they did not look "Aboriginal". According to Crawford, (1998), inherent in the

construction of these static stereotypes is the assumption that whiteness is goodness" (Crawford, 1998, p. 5)…"there is no room for the other [race] unless they are in their purist form (i.e. unless the Indian remains primitive and stays on the reserve where s/he belongs). Otherwise, they should be assimilated into Canadian culture (Crawford, 1998, p.5). For these three participants, their skin was light coloured and this allowed them to assimilate and escape stereotyping by others as well as avoiding lower expectations by teachers. On the other hand, since no one saw them as Métis, they didn't see themselves that way either and that anything that could be gained from knowing who they are and about their culture has been lost.

Although it was difficult to pinpoint, I felt a sense of loss by the participants. They had difficulty putting into words who they were and what it meant to them. The Métis played an important part in Canada's and Manitoba's history and very few people have an understanding of their contribution. The education system is in a key position to correct this injustice. Furthermore, I would argue that the potential for a loss of valuable knowledge that could contribute to success for future Métis and non-Métis is being lost. It is still there, but will take perseverance, courage, devotion and tolerance to allow it to be uncovered and recognized.

Métis education should not be like multicultural "celebrations that take place on special occasions and showcase historic traits such as food, clothing, music, material objects and language (Legare, 1995 cited in Crawford, 1998, p. 6)…taken out on special occasions but afterwards (they) are put back and

everyone returns to *normal* or British customs" (Crawford, 1998, p. 6). True

education should recognize diversity more than just superficially as "Canada is

no longer just a country of *whites"* (Crawford, 1998, p. 6)...and perpetuating

racism "by omission or by what is not being said" (Crawford, 1998, p. 11) is no

longer acceptable if we want equitable education for Métis students. I agree

with Crawford (1998) that "there are other cultures and other ways of looking

at the world" (Crawford, 1998, p. 11) and Métis education can unleash much

knowledge and wisdom to be shared with all Canadians.

The participants did not see being Métis as a hindrance to any sort of

success they might be able to achieve. Most of them agreed that skin colour

should not enter into whether you can or will be successful but they all

mentioned that skin colour does affect success for non-Caucasian individuals,

just not for them, because their skin colour was light.

What Manitoba Education can do to increase success for Métis students

1. Ensure that Aboriginal funds in schools are being spent on relevant

   cultural curricula and that schools are tracking the performance of

   Aboriginal learners. It is only in closely and consistently monitoring how

   Aboriginal students are doing over time and flushing out what is

   contributing to their success that will increase their chances of

   educational success.

What Universities can do to increase success for Métis students

1. Recruit Aboriginal students for Faculty of Education programs so that more Aboriginal teachers are in all schools as visible role models and to help support Aboriginal perspectives in curricula and school cultural education programs.

2. Require more in-depth training around Aboriginal education. The sprinkling of Aboriginal perspectives here and there is occurring partly because teachers are not confident in delivering this type of programming and also because of negative stereotypes. Education in this area would contribute to a more positive attitude towards Aboriginal education.

Future Research

The following are areas that need more exploration related to this topic:

1. The politics of identity and identification for Métis and Aboriginal peoples.

2. Studying parallels between First Nations and Métis literature in terms of a critical analysis of both parallels and divergences in the literature.

3. The role residential schools has played in assimilating Métis people in the Western European culture.

4. Filling in the gaps with Métis stories, and

5. Unlocking culture through the study of language and lexicology.

Conclusion

In order to make a difference for Métis learners, the opportunity needs to exist in school to learn about history and culture in order to have it legitimized and valued. Students need an opportunity to be exposed to cultural aspects that have not been supported by their families and society at large due to forgotten identity and racism. In this way, students can discover who they are, where they came from in order to decide where they are going and how to get there.

It takes more than one adult to raise a successful child and schools need to look for ways to connect and involve parents. School factors that contribute to success include involving parents. Having a healthy, supportive, loving, biological two-parent family that provided stability and ongoing support contributed to success for the participants. Their parents believed in them, ensured that they got their homework done, and gave their children consequences when need be. The parents also participated in their children's school lives in terms of attending parent-teacher conferences and school activities such as band concerts.

The parents of the participants in this study have the means to provide extracurricular activities for their children where they had opportunities to learn important skills such as how to be a team member or becoming adept at a particular sport, which brought them recognition. At home, the parents were able to provide resources to help them in school such as having home computers with Internet access. One participant had extended support not just from parents but from older siblings as well.

The data has shown that the cultural program held at the high school was effective in creating a venue where everyone was on equal footing and where it did not matter what type of background you came from or what skills, strengths or weaknesses you had to be a part of the group. We need to create opportunities in schools where students can explore their identity in a non-threatening and non-judgmental environment if we want them to self-construct a strong identity that results in a strong self-esteem. Most Canadians come from multiple cultures, therefore, it is important to learn about these cultures to increase tolerance of people different than ourselves. This knowledge could come in the form of letting students explore those cultures that might interest them.

Regarding Aboriginal heritage of students, it is important that students have opportunities within the school to share and showcase aspects of their culture in order to continue to dispel myths and stereotypes. Creating a sense of belonging through clubs and cultural programs makes school more enjoyable where students from different backgrounds have the opportunity to interact and feel accepted. This also provides opportunities for students to learn on the land in a venue of experiential learning, which is authentic for students. This inspires students to learn more in the future. It also provides an opportunity for those students who don't fit into sports or band programs with a place to go and learn. Hands on learning activities and giving students choice are important ways to engage learners. Independent learning activities including field trips

and project based activities, band, jazz and art classes are important ways to increase engagement. This is an area that requires more research.

There are many best practices that not only affect Aboriginal students but result in success for all students. Factors such as ensuring that teachers are prepared, well resourced, supported and professionally developed in subject areas including Aboriginal education will result in engaged, motivated students in the classroom.

Addressing barriers for Métis students, such as continuing to support students when they are 18 and still haven't graduated rather than removing them from the school where everything is familiar and where they have built up a network of supports, and then transferring them to an adult learning centre, does not set these students up for long-term success. Barriers need to be recognized and overcome such as homework and addressing how to support students with work that goes home, educating students about negative peer pressure, and teaching them strategies to help them overcome it. Focusing on professional development for teachers that will help eradicate racism/stereotyping by teachers and increasing teacher knowledge about obstacles for students living in poverty, such as understanding the effects of living in an impoverished neighbourhood so that they can direct students and their families to supports are important steps to removing obstacles for Métis students. Holding regular anti-racism and anti-bullying campaigns in the school will all begin addressing the truth about what is happening in our schools and society at large.

People do not want to hear about racism and oppression, however, the cost of not addressing it results in lack of self-identity and self-esteem for Métis students, which I believe, ultimately affects chances for parity with non-Aboriginal students when it comes to educational success. The cultural awareness club is one program that helps Aboriginal students learn about their culture and gives them an opportunity to begin or continue reconstructing their forgotten Métis identity, which is an important factor contributing to their success.

Métis people have a long history in Manitoba. This focus grew with Louis Riel, second cousin to my grandmother, born in 1844, who became Manitoba's Founding Father, and political and spiritual leader (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2010, p. 1). Along with other Aboriginal peoples, the Métis are the first peoples of Canada. Minimized but not forgotten, the Métis deserve a significant place in the history books beyond mention of their leader, Louis Riel. There is a lot of work to be done to get to this point. For one rural Manitoba school, Cedar Falls High School's cultural awareness program is lighting the fire to more success for Métis students. I trust that this study will be a small contribution to further research to encourage greater success for Métis students in Manitoba in the future.

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Appendices

A. Information letter shared with the cultural awareness club's Chief and Council to encourage former Métis graduates to participate in the research

**RESEARCH STUDY SEEKING TO INTERVIEW
RECENT MÉTIS GRADUATES**

Title of Study:
**<u>Successful Métis Education:
The Voices of Métis Graduates of a
Rural Manitoba High School</u>**

The Researcher, Kris Friesen, is a graduate student at the University of Manitoba, and she is seeking to interview Métis students who have recently graduated from high school to investigate their experiences and opinions as a means of identifying school factors that have contributed to their school success. This study is part of the thesis requirements for a Masters degree at the University of Manitoba. Thank you for taking the time to read this and explore your possible participation in the study.

Please share this information with people in the community that might be interested in the study. Information about the study is included below. Please contact the Researcher if you are willing to participate in the study or would like to learn more about the study.

What is the study about?

- "Educational success" is eluding many Aboriginal People – defined as Métis, First Nations and Inuit. Aboriginal people (including Métis) do not experience academic success at levels similar to those of the non-Aboriginal population.
- Emerging out of the many initiatives that have been undertaken over the last four decades to address this achievement gap is a growing body of literature that describes successful schools for First Nations students and analyzing the features that contribute to this success but there is ***very little research on effective schools for Métis students.***
- This study seeks to examine the perceptions of Métis graduates on the school factors that they consider as important in contributing to their educational success – measured, in this first instance, as high school graduation.

What's involved?

- The principal data collection strategy used will be an interview conducted by the researcher that will last for no more than one hour, at a time and location convenient to the interviewee.
- This method will give voice to the students themselves. Aboriginal knowledge has traditionally been passed down orally and performing the research in this way recognizes this method as viable, important, and honorable. It is deemed a privilege to hear the voices that will come forward and each will be treated with respect and dignity.
- At each interview, the interviewee will be asked to read and sign the ENREB Consent Letter (attached).
- All interviews will be taped. Once transcribed, each interviewee will be given the opportunity to review the interview for clarification purposes.

What will come of this research?

- It is hoped that the outcome of this research will provide an opportunity to learn to create an environment at school where Métis students will be increasingly successful.
- The research will be published as a Masters Thesis to add to the existing and growing number of studies done to improve academic success for Aboriginal People.

Researcher Contact Information:

IF YOU ARE WILLING TO CONSIDER PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY PLEASE CONTACT THE RESEARCHER