

*Eh chet tey* (A way of life):

Re-indigenizing the Governance of Lac Brochet

by

Glenn Tsessaze

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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## **Abstract**

The colonization of the Dene of Lac Brochet has led to the Dene internalizing the Indian Act based Chief and Council political system firmly. Based on their own principles and philosophies, the Dene had unique systems to govern themselves before colonization. Over the past four hundred years, colonization damaged the social and political organization of the Dene. Despite of the challenges, the Dene people of today have a dream to live as a healthy nation. Through interviews the Dene people of Lac Brochet shared their views about the values that kept their nation strong in the past. From their own perspectives, they present the problems that they see regarding the current system. They also share their views of the ideal governance system that they want for their future. The thesis argues that it will benefit the people of Lac Brochet to incorporate their indigenous values into their current governance system.

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## **Chapter One - Introduction**

Incorporating the traditional Dene values into the current community governance system of Lac Brochet will help the people deal with the problems of the community effectively. One approach to determine that the Lac Brochet governance system is indigenized is by seeing if the traditional values of the indigenous people are reflected in the system. I use the term “indigenization” to refer to a process of grounding a governing system in the values and worldviews of the Dene people as indigenous people. The word “traditional” in this thesis means the Dene knowledge based on the unique history, experiences, language and ways of life. In the dictionary, “governing” means to be in charge or to be in control (Hawker, 2003, p.266). Alfred (1999) describes governance in the western world: “By contrast, in the European tradition, power is surrendered to the representative of the majority, whose decisions on what they think is the collective good are then imposed on all citizens” (p.25). The word “governance” in this thesis means a system that helps people of the community share positive values and a collective identity. In addition, “governance” means a system that directs the people to communicate with each other and it leads the people to help each other build a safe and a healthy community.

The meaning of colonization and how it has affected the Aboriginal people in general are examined. The population of Lac Brochet, Dene culture and the history of the community are explored. This thesis also looks at the conditions of Lac Brochet and presents ideas for solutions to the community problems by incorporating indigenous values into the community governing structures. The background and the position of the researcher are presented in this thesis so that the reader comprehends

the perspective of the researcher who is analyzing the data. Previous studies on Indian self-government in Canada were reviewed and the findings are incorporated into this thesis. Interviews with the Dene people who reside in Lac Brochet are also made to pinpoint the values that these people want incorporated in their community governance system.

Initially, the important work of a number of authors is examined to see what the implication of the research is in regard to self-government and how the ideas in these works could contribute to the self-government of Lac Brochet. First, colonization and how it caused damages to Aboriginal communities must be understood before appropriate solutions can be adopted by an Aboriginal community like Lac Brochet.

### ***Colonization***

Colonization is a negative term in the Aboriginal communities because it is responsible for the “on going crises” in the Aboriginal communities (Alfred, 1999, p.1). The idea of colonization and what is meant by it in the context of an Aboriginal community is examined in this section. The ways that the process of colonization affected the northern Aboriginal communities and the current community problems this process caused are also very briefly explored. Colonization is something that has altered the lives of the Aboriginal people.

The impact of colonization can be explained in three ways; it forces people to change the way they live, it is Eurocentric, and it is capitalistic. The changes that the process of colonization makes in the Aboriginal community benefit the colonizers primarily. On the other hand, these changes leave the colonized Aboriginal people in

poverty and destitution. The process of colonization changes the way people live because the colonial government wants its citizens to follow the dominant way of life (Kulchyski, 2005, p.267). The colonial state polices people to be the way it wants the people to behave (Kulchyski, 2005, p. 267). The colonial state requires everyone to be alike so that it can exercise authority over them. It usually forces people to change when the people are not “normal” according to the state. Therefore, the state forced Aboriginal communities to change and the way it forced change has resulted in devastation for the Aboriginal people. The state changed the way the Aboriginal people live because of its belief that the European culture is superior and the Aboriginal cultures are inferior.

Eurocentric beliefs and acting on those beliefs can cause negative damages to people that do not live their lives according to the European standards. People who hold Eurocentric beliefs can be very self-centered and they behave in ways that could harm people. Blaut (1993) states, “Europeans are seen as the ‘makers of history’. Europe eternally advances, progresses, and modernizes. The rest of the world advances more sluggishly, or stagnates; It is ‘traditional society’” (p.1). Consequently, people who are Eurocentric structure the society in a way that it supports their lifestyles. Blaut (1993) states, “the development of a body of Eurocentric beliefs, justifying and assisting Europe’s colonial activities has been, and still is, of very great importance (p.10). Eurocentric beliefs can be very dangerous to Aboriginal people because they justify colonial activities which usually damages the Aboriginal way of life. The Aboriginal people are pressured to leave their way of life and assimilate into the Eurocentric society.



Colonizing the Americas was very important to Europeans because colonization would pave the way for the European settlers who want to make profit that would accelerate them economically. Blaut (1993) states, "The goal of all European individuals and groups involved in the enterprise, clergy apart, was to make money, for one self or one's country (usually the former)" (p.188). The most important end result of colonization is making money for a few people no matter what the cost would be to achieve this goal. In the northern communities, the fur trade industry helped deeply colonize the Aboriginal people in that it changed the way Aboriginal people viewed the animals. As a result of the fur trade industry, many Aboriginal people began over trapping and they started creating habits of accumulating resources for personal gain. Therefore, colonization is not a positive thing for human beings because it destroys community values and it teaches people unhealthy habits.

Colonization affects the Aboriginal community negatively because it tries to erase the history of the Aboriginal people. Furthermore, the way the state treated Aboriginal people because of colonization has caused many problems within the Aboriginal community today. The main concern of a capitalistic state is to set up the territory where it smoothly functions in such a way that it will achieve its primary objective: accumulation of capital. It attempts to erase the language of indigenous people because the indigenous language is not consistent with capitalistic goals of the state. Kulchyski (2005) states,

Places have names that are tied to stories; people have names that link them to their past and to each other. Colonialism was in part a process of reinscription: ruthlessly erasing not only the actual names of places and

replacing them with appropriate colonial designations, but also establishing new processes of naming (p.83).

Erasing the culture of the Aboriginal people through colonization has left the Aboriginal people with negative conditions. The tactics that the state employed on the Aboriginal people to colonize them has made Aboriginal people devalue their culture and their own lives. The state attempted to destroy Aboriginal identities and histories through the residential schools. Wastesicoot (2002) states, "For many, residential school was a home and the experiences they had were not always pleasant as many children were violated physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually" (p.116). As a result of Aboriginal people being abused in the attempt by the government to erase their identity, many social problems were created for the Aboriginal people.

This part of the thesis looked at the meaning of colonization in the context of the Aboriginal community. The idea of "colonization" is destructive to the Aboriginal people as it purposely strove to dismantle the work, dreams, and lives of the Aboriginal people of North America. Colonization changes people. At one time Aboriginal people had healthy systems based on their culture; now many of their ways were destroyed leaving Aboriginal people in poverty within the mainstream society.

### ***Lac Brochet***

Lac Brochet is a beautiful Denesuline community that is over thirty years old and is located in the northwest corner of Manitoba. It is a reserve rich with people

who have unique values and talents. The First Nation is called Northlands Denesuline and the band membership consists of 948 registered Indians (Danttouze, personal communications, August 14, 2006). Out of the 948 registered Indians, 303 live off the reserve (Danttouze, personal communication, August 14, 2006). In addition, the homes of the people are located near each other so privacy is limited in the community. The isolated community is called Lac Brochet, a French word that means Jack Fish Lake. Furthermore, the indigenous culture and language of the Lac Brochet Dene is called Denesuline. There are many social problems in the community that are associated with a colonized Aboriginal community which this thesis examines. Indigenization of the community governance system is explored as a means to deal with the community problems that colonization caused in the community.

The roots of the Denesuline people who currently live in Lac Brochet go back many years to the traditional Dene lands in the area that they continue to live in. When the Hudson's Bay Company and the Roman Catholic Church missionaries started establishing permanent residence in Brochet, Manitoba, the Dene people started settling in Brochet as well. The Cree/Inwewin people who were present also started settling at that location (Florence Tssessaze, personal communication, December 1, 2006). Brochet is where the Lac Brochet Dene signed an adhesion to Treaty number 10 in 1907 (Archie Enekwinnarre, personal communication, October 12, 2005). The adhesion to Treaty number 10 was originally scheduled by the government to be signed with the Dene in 1906 in Brochet but it was signed in 1907 instead (James Tssessaze, personal communication, Oct 18, 2005). The reason why

this treaty was not signed with the Dene in 1906 as scheduled by the government is because Casimir, who was the official representing the Lac Brochet Dene, would not sign the treaty until the government honored the demands that he made. Casimir stated that he would not sign the treaty unless his people received one dollar for every needle of each spruce tree that is located on the land that the government asked the Dene to surrender to the government in the treaty (Archie Enekwinnarre, personal communication, Oct 12, 2005). The government and the Dene of Lac Brochet could not reach an agreement so the government postponed the treaty signing until the following year. James Tssessaze states that when the government came back to Brochet in 1907, Casimir continued demanding respect for his people: "Casimir said that he still wanted his wishes to be honored so the government disregarded him because they did not take him seriously and appointed another Dene man to sign the treaty on behalf the Dene people. The name of the other Dene man that the government unilaterally appointed was Aromeé" (James Tssessaze, personal communication, Oct 19, 2005). Aromeé was the kind of man that did not question and took things at face value. Although it was not Casimir who signed the Treaty 10 adhesion, it is documented with Casimir as being the one signing for the Lac Brochet Dene (Archie Enekwinnarre, personal communication, Oct 12, 2005). After the treaty was signed on behalf of the Lac Brochet Dene in Brochet, they settled in Brochet and a reserve was established for them. Therefore, the original reserve of the Lac Brochet Dene is Brochet.

After living in Brochet for many years, many of the Dene people decided to relocate from Brochet and established a new community in a new area; consequently,

Lac Brochet was created in 1973. Before the Dene people established Lac Brochet, they lived in Misty Lake for a few years first after leaving Brochet. Smith (1981) states:

In 1969-1970, several families returned to their traditional settlement at Misty Lake, and in 1972-1973 the local band had reconstituted itself at that point. In the summer of 1973, the Misty Lake band was relocated a few miles to the south, at Lac Brochet, where they were constructing log-cabin homes, one-room school, and a nursing station. The Indian Affairs Branch of the government had agreed to provide, if possible, a teacher; a nurse was to visit regularly, and a radio was available for emergencies (p.282).

The primary reason why the Dene people moved away from Brochet is because there were too many problems associated with substance abuse developing which turned into conflicts between the Cree residents and the Dene residents in Brochet. Since this move was only over 30 years ago many people of Lac Brochet remember the experiences they had when they moved from Brochet to Misty Lake and then to Lac Brochet. Some of these experiences are conveyed in the community adult education booklet of student writings (Gazayou, 2005, p.1). The Cree people started moving to Brochet after the Dene started settling there in the early 1900s (Florence Tssessaze, personal communication, Dec 1, 2006). The Cree and Dene were living together for a long time peacefully but problems started occurring when people began abusing alcohol. The Dene people decided to move and practice their own culture and language at a different location.

There are two characteristics of Denesuline culture, a distinct native way of life, that show that the Dene culture is practiced in the community of Lac Brochet. Firstly, the caribou are very important to the Denesuline culture of Lac Brochet as the Denesuline have lived off caribou meat and used caribou parts as tools, shelter, and

clothing for thousands of years. Today, many of the Lac Brochet Dene people continue to use the caribou for its meat, skin, and bones. Secondly, the people continue to use their indigenous language. Hobbs & Associates Ltd states, "According to the 1996 Canada Census, about 95% of the on-reserve population speaks Dene, the language they first learned as children" (Hobbs & Associates Ltd., p. 8). The fact that the families are speaking the language at home is one of the main reasons the language is still alive in Lac Brochet. Research states, "About 88% of the people speak Dene at home, again, according to 1996 Census results" (Hobbs & Associates Ltd., p. 8).

Furthermore, the Dene people of Lac Brochet are part of a larger group of people that share a similar language, history and identity. Today these people currently refer to themselves as Denesuline people or Denesuline nation. The Denesuline families that make up this group are disbursed in northern Manitoba, northern Saskatchewan, northern Alberta, and southern Northwest Territories. These families gather seasonally for social, religious, economical, and political purposes.

Smith (1981) states:

From about the mid-nineteenth century into the modern period, the Caribou Eaters were divided into five regional bands, deriving their names from some geographic characteristics: the sayisedene 'east people', officially known as the Duck Lake or Churchill band; the hotel-nade dene 'flat-area-dwelling people', known officially as the Barren Lands band; the Nunarna dene, 'people of the south' or oel-tue dene 'hatchet-lake people', the Hatchet Lake band; the yoday dene 'upland or western people' or delzen-tue dene, the Black Lake or Stoney Rapids band; and the gane-kue dene 'pine-house people', the Fond du Lac band (p.280).

One of the reasons why these Denesuline communities are still relatively united is because there are maintained kinship ties between these communities (Goldstick,

1987, p. 44). The people from these communities visit each other and they do things together occasionally. Long time ago, these people made their livelihood by being close to nature. In the past the Denesuline people lived “in harmony with the land” (Goldstick, 1987, p.33). The Dene people were living in harmony with nature by hunting and fishing to make their living. Their culture and livelihood strategies were handed down to generations orally. Hand drums, an instrument used by the Dene for honouring and entertainment, were also very important to the traditional Dene culture (Goldstick, 1987, p.33). Many people continue to sing with and entertain with the drums in the modern Denesuline communities. Today, the Denesuline live apart in smaller groups consisting of 500 to 3000 people on several Denesuline reserves. These Denesuline people have annual gatherings to strengthen the relationship among the contemporary Denesuline communities and reserves.

The current community governance system consists of an Indian Act based Chief and Council that is not successful at bringing the community together to solve communal problems to the satisfaction of some of the people (James Tssessaze, October 18, 2005). The people of Lac Brochet elect the Chief and Council every two years as stated in the Indian Act. In addition, the band governance procedures of Lac Brochet are currently guided by the policies of the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Therefore, the Lac Brochet governance system has not been created or designed by the people who live in the community. The Canadian government imposed this governance system on the Dene people through the Indian Act. The people continue to practice this system today as their primary means to politically deal with community issues. Many people of the community do not explicitly

announce that they do not like the Indian Act-based Chief and Council system, but there are still issues of poverty and social issues that the people see which the Chief and Council has not solved (Appendix A, p.116, 117, 121, 126 & 128). Many people are dissatisfied about the Chief and Council no matter who holds those seats because this system struggles to bring people together to create positive change in the community. The Chief and Council system as it is currently has been unsuccessful at addressing the issues to the satisfaction of everyone in Lac Brochet.

The Denesuline of Lac Brochet once lived on their traditional lands in their own way; however, things started changing when the colonization process began accelerating in their area. As a result of the abuses that the people had to endure due to colonization, the people are left with many social problems that they have to deal with before they can move on and become the healthy people that they once were long ago. Poverty and social issues are the primary problems in Lac Brochet. People would be better equipped to deal with the above mentioned issues if they had an indigenous governing system supporting them.

Poverty is a big issue in Lac Brochet as there are many people that live in crowded and unhealthy homes. Furthermore, many of the houses that the people live in have broken windows and lack proper materials to complete them. There are also many people who have health problems such as tuberculosis, cancer, poor nutrition, and diabetes. There are also many social problems such as gambling problems, child neglect, depression, alcohol abuse, and gossip. There are many people who need jobs and there are many children who have a hard time being successful in the education system. These are some of the problems that the people who participated in a band



governance research project 2004 want addressed (Appendix A, p.115, 116, 126, 128 &129).

Many of the people who participated in the band governance research project 2004 said that their community will become strong when the people relearn to respect the elders at community gatherings because elders will help them discover a system to solve community problems and achieve positive goals (Appendix A, p. 116 – 124, 131 &132). Some people who participants of the band governance research project also felt that there were mental problems that were needed to be addressed in the community. Furthermore, people said that through healing gatherings and workshops with the help of the elders, many of these issues could be addressed (Appendix A, p. 115, 116, 122 & 126).

Indigenizing the governance system in the community will motivate the people to find solutions for the issues with poverty and social problems among the people. The way that indigenization of the system will help the people is that it will help them recognize the negative effects colonization has on their community, people will learn to respect their people's values, and it will eventually help them value their own lives as Indigenous people. It is important for the people to know the truth about how colonization affected their lives. Taiaiake Alfred (1999) states:

The challenge, and the hope, is for each person to recognize and counteract the effects of colonization in his or her own life, and thus develop the ability to live in a way that contests colonization. We are all co-opted to one degree or another, so we can only pity those who are blind or refuse to open their eyes to the colonial reality, and who continue to validate, legitimate, and accommodate the interests of that reality in opposition to the goals and values of their own nations (p.73).

It is important that the people realize the root cause of the problems in their community so that they disregard the colonial activities that they engage in. For example, people need to relearn to value their people and the land more than the accumulation of material possessions. It is important that the people help themselves and relearn the positive values that kept their ancestors alive for thousands of years. It is unfortunate that the people forgot positive values as a result of the negative colonial experiences they lived through. The band governance research project 2004 suggests that when the people relearn the positive values of the Dene, they will become pleased that they are a strong people with valuable qualities (Appendix A, p. 120-123). It is through community gatherings with the involvement of elders that the people will start caring about their lives and get motivated to advance their lives to live to the best of their ability.

### ***Positionality***

The research for this thesis is conducted from the approach of an insider. Along with being an insider researcher, I am also pursuing to contribute to the development of a strong community governance system of the future of my community. To elaborate on my position, this part of the paper examines my personal background, the communities that I was raised in, my formal education, the concern I have about my community, the approach I am taking in the research and the views I had when I conducted the interviews. My upbringing and the culture of the Dene have influenced me in choosing to study the governance issues in Lac Brochet.

I am a Dene person who was raised in Lac Brochet so the people of the community are familiar with my identity. They know me as a person from the

community that gets involved in work for the community. My father and my mother have been married for over thirty years and they continue to live with each other in Lac Brochet today. I have three older brothers, three older sisters and one younger sister. My parents had eight children whom they both raised together. Both my father's parents are Denesuline from northern Denesuline lands. My mother's father was Cree from Brochet and my mother's mother had a Denesuline mother and a Cree father. Therefore, I have Dene and Cree ancestry. However, I have been raised primarily in a Dene community.

The two First Nations communities that I lived in during my childhood are Wollaston Lake and Lac Brochet. During the time I was born, my family was living in Wollaston Lake because my father was working at a mine located near Wollaston Lake. Wollaston Lake is located in northern Saskatchewan and it is a Denesuline First Nation reserve. The community of Wollaston Lake is located very close to the community of Lac Brochet. These communities also share a similar culture and identity. When I was six years old, I moved to Lac Brochet with my family. Most of the people in both the communities that I was raised in all speak Dene; consequently, I was raised speaking Dene as my first language. Furthermore, I have been raised eating caribou meat as part of my diet. I lived in Lac Brochet exclusively from 1984 to 1993 and went to school in Lac Brochet from grades one to the end of grade eight. Although the Denesuline culture of hunting, trapping, and fishing were very strong during the time I was raised, I never learned those skills because I went to school most of the time. Through first hand experience by living in these communities, I know the issues that exist there. I know that there are skills and talents that can be

nurtured and developed as a community if the community knew how to work together. However, it is very difficult for the community to work together because it is hard to achieve a community vision that is acceptable for everyone in the community. As a result, I believe that an effective community governance system will help facilitate the community to determine one vision for everyone as a community to work towards. I have always been into school because I know it will help build the future that I want for myself and eventually contribute something significant to Lac Brochet.

My formal education background includes a primary, secondary and post secondary education. I moved to Thompson without my family in 1993 to start high school; I had to relocate and stay at a Keewatin Tribal Council student residence to continue my education, as there was no high school in Lac Brochet at the time. I really enjoyed my time at this student residence. From grades nine to eleven, I went to school in the urban centers away from my family. I moved back to Lac Brochet in 1995 at the age of seventeen to enroll in grade twelve at the new school in Lac Brochet and graduated with a high school diploma in 1996. After graduation, I moved to Winnipeg to upgrade myself for university and live on my own in Winnipeg but only lived there for four months and left the education program that I was in because I was not well adjusted in an urban center. After moving home to Lac Brochet, I took some courses at the high school in Lac Brochet and finished them that year and got hired as a Community Health Representative. After working as a Community Health Representative in Lac Brochet for a year, I moved to Brandon in 1998 to get a university education; I have been enrolled as a university student ever

since. When I finished taking my courses in the summer of 2006, I moved home to Lac Brochet in the fall. I am a reserve-raised person with a formal education who has always been involved in his community because I have hopes and dreams for my people.

When I was a full time university student living in Winnipeg during the academic year, I went home to Lac Brochet for my summer breaks and worked on community development projects as a summer student. I organized community events to honor the accomplishment of the community youth. I know that the youth are the future of the community and that the future will be exceptional by supporting the youth today through recognizing their achievements. I also represented the youth of my community in the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Organization. I helped initiate regional youth empowering activities for First Nation youth with other First Nations youth in Manitoba. Currently, I am dreaming about establishing an organization with a vision and a mission to motivate and inspire the youth to follow their dreams. I am writing this thesis to empower my community because I want my community to be healthy in the twenty first century.

I am concerned about the community that I am studying because my family and my people reside in this community. The vision that I have is that my family and my people will live healthy and happily within an effective governing system that facilitates positive changes in the community and maintains a vibrant socio-economic state. A strong community governing system supports healthy and happy families; therefore I think that political decisions should be made diligently today so that the people of Lac Brochet will enjoy the maximum benefits from the results of those

decisions in the future. This research is one avenue of seeking productive ideas that can strengthen the community of Lac Brochet.

As I am from the community that I am studying, I am taking an insider approach in this research. The following are the three advantages about being an insider researcher of Lac Brochet: people know who I am in the community, I understand the native language of the community, and I am familiar with the living conditions of Lac Brochet. The interviewees were able to talk openly because they know who I am and they know how to hold me accountable if I misrepresent their information. As a researcher that understands the native language of the elders of Lac Brochet, I played an important role in helping the voices of the people that do not understand English be respected. Speaking the native language of a community that you are studying as an insider is one of greatest things about being an insider researcher of a native community. Finally, being an insider researcher of Lac Brochet, I know the community issues that are talked about by the people. I am familiar with the stories mentioned in the interviews so I understand the interviewees in that respect. Being an insider researcher of Lac Brochet is a great thing because I am known by the people, I understand the language, and I know the community that these people live in because I have lived there myself.

I conducted this research from the perspective of a learner because I want to facilitate the people's voices to come out freely about how they want their governance system to operate. Therefore, it was necessary that I asked direct and indirect questions about the Lac Brochet governing issues as neutrally as possible. I refrained from expressing my own opinions about the community politics if they were

opposing to those of the interviewees so that interviewees would feel comfortable to express their own views. I made sure that the interviewees knew that I wanted to learn from them and that they could speak freely. Simpson (2000) states: “When a researcher goes into a community, he or she is a learner and the community members and elders are the teachers” (p.172). When I was interviewing I reminded myself to be objective so I was open-minded to new views of governing practices. As a result, asking people questions about their political views requires self-regulation on the part of the interviewer so that he does not react to opposing political views the interviewee may express during the interview. Therefore, the way I interviewed to gather information for the thesis helped the voices of Lac Brochet come out in a safe environment.

I am writing this thesis from a personal position and from an activist position because I want the community to develop a good community governance system. This section looked at the personal background of the researcher which is myself, the reserves I was brought up in, my educational background, my community, the concerns I have, my insider approach in the research and the way I asked the interviewees questions. Previous work on Aboriginal self-government is reviewed in the following section.

### ***Literature Review***

In *Indian Government: It's meaning in practice*, Cassidy and Bish look at the dynamics of how First Nations governments are exercising their right to self-government by taking on initiatives within the current structures between First Nations and the Canadian government while seeking recognition in principle in the

Canadian constitution. This is a notable book in that it highlights the initiatives of First Nation governments that demonstrate that they are empowering themselves by taking control over their own lives. However, this book does not specifically examine how the cultural values of First Nations people can be integrated into their respective community governing system. It just briefly mentions the important elements of historical cultural governance practices. This book is useful to this thesis because it talks about how the First Nations governments are standing up for themselves by taking on programs that other governments administered for them in the past. The weakness with this idea is that there is that possibility that Indians taking over Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) programs that are designed by the Canadian government unilaterally will not change the fundamental nature in the relationship between the Canadian government and the First Nations governments. From the perspective of the people who do not believe that Indians running INAC programs will advance Indian way of life, this practice only replaces white faces with brown faces in a system that oppresses the First Nation right to self-government. To a certain extent this may be a valid point, however there will be positive accomplishments towards First Nation self-government in the long term by First Nations people operating INAC and other government programs today because this arrangement will cultivate innovation and the transmission of First Nation values into the existing structures through the First Nation employees. However, care has to be taken on the part of the Indian so that he or she does not lose his or her Indian values in the process. I agree with this book with regard to the notion that as First Nations governments take on more responsibilities today within the current



framework, they will gain skills and expertise to govern their nation in the future when First Nations self-government becomes a reality within the Canadian federal system.

Another point that this book mentions which I find useful to my thesis is about how some First Nations leaders see the indigenous governance institutions as legitimate. The point of indigenous governance institutions being legitimate supports my thesis because this thesis argues that Lac Brochet Dene adopting their cultural governance practices officially can effectively improve the current political institutions. The indigenous governance institutions as mentioned in this book usually have the following elements: citizenship involvement, the consensus decision-making system, and the central role of elders in governance. Cassidy & Bish (1989) note that some Indian leaders argue that “traditional Indian political institutions” are the legitimate foundation of Indian government (p.18). It is possible to replace the current governance system in modern First Nation communities with the indigenous political institutions. It is also possible to integrate indigenous political practices into the modern governance systems. Therefore, I am interested in learning about how the government in the current community of Lac Brochet can reflect the Dene values, for example by centralizing the role of elders in the governing system, respecting everyone in the community and treating everyone fairly. Rather than just implementing INAC and other Canadian government policies, it would be a great deed to integrate the Dene values into the governance system of the community.

In his book *Citizens Plus: Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian State*, Allan Cairns suggests an approach on how the Canadian state should interact with the

Aboriginal people in regards to Aboriginal and Treaty rights in a way that is not consistent with the suggestions made by Peter Kulchyski on the same matters. Cairns would like to see Aboriginal people integrated into the mainstream like other Canadians as Canadians. Unlike Peter Kulchyski, Cairns (2000) does not think that Indians should organize as a nation in the following statement:

Nation, however, may come at a price. It has a distancing effect. It reduces the likelihood that those outside the 'nation' will treat those inside it as fellow citizens. In at least a limited sense, it internationalizes domestic relations. Treaties, as the preferred instrument for regulating relationships between nations, generate perceptions of 'otherness' between the parties to the treaty. Treaties create obligation but they also presuppose and create boundaries (p.94).

In the above statement, Cairns argue that it would be convenient for everyone if Aboriginal people do not organize as Nations within Canada. He is looking at this relationship only from the non-Aboriginal perspective when he is making this argument. He is not considering the demands that the Aboriginal leaders are making about how the Aboriginal people should be treated in this country. Many Aboriginal leaders would argue that Aboriginal people as a collective are the people who should make the final decision on how they should be organized in this country.

In his book, *Like the Sound of a Drum: Aboriginal Cultural Politics in Denendeh and Nunavut*, Peter Kulchyski talks about governance activities in the northern communities that appeal to my community because these communities are very similar to Lac Brochet. The governance ideas presented in this book could be useful to the future governance system of Lac Brochet. These northern communities that he studied are in the Northwest Territories and most of them are Dene. Like Lac Brochet, these communities are isolated and the Dene people that live there still have

a traditional hunting and fishing economy. The culture of the Dene people in these communities shapes how they practice their community governance. Kulchyski (2005) says that the “Aboriginal communities often involve in intensely participatory forms of community decision making” in that the community members are active in making decisions for the community together (p.59). The people participate in the governance system because that is the kind of people that they are. They like to gather and talk amongst themselves about issues that matter to them. I like this book because it conveys that community members know their communities, therefore their knowledge should be respected by their community governance system. This book presents the kind of governance system that the people whom I interviewed in Lac Brochet want for their community.

The other interesting activity that Kulchyski paid attention to in this study is the concept of ‘you only take what you need’ in the nomadic hunters and gatherers society of these Dene people. This mode of production of ‘taking only what you need’ is also part of the Dene culture of Lac Brochet. The traditional culture of Lac Brochet Dene is a hunting and gathering culture. In a nomadic hunting and gathering society, people honor values more than the accumulation of material wealth. This statement corroborates with the teachings of the elders of Lac Brochet who emphasize the importance of values more than material possessions.

*The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Volume 3: Gathering Strength)* looks at governance issues in the Aboriginal communities and makes recommendations on how the Aboriginal people should govern themselves in the future. The traditional governance ideas it talked about were useful to me because

a lot of what was written in the report on traditional governance was similar to the way the people in Lac Brochet described their traditional governance practices. The nation model that this report recommends could work for the people of Lac Brochet. However, one of the issues with this report is regarding professional development. Although it is necessary that the people need to develop professional skills for self-determination in the Aboriginal community to be successful, it can also be dangerous because it could widen the gap between the rich and the poor within the community. I would support capacity-building by training people in administrative and policy development skills for self-government if the training were executed based on the cultural knowledge of the Dene elders and educators.

The report talks about how the elders and the families have significant roles within the traditional Aboriginal governance system. This statement is similar to the comments made by my interviewees. The interviewees of Lac Brochet had expressed that in their traditional governance system, elders have an important role. However, in the modern days, people seldom follow the traditional ways of governing in Lac Brochet. To strengthen the governance system of today in the Aboriginal communities, RCAP suggest that the people be self-determined and develop a system that will suit their needs of today. I think that the nation model will work for Lac Brochet because Lac Brochet meets the RCAP nation model criteria in that Lac Brochet is part of a nation of people consisting of a couple of thousand people, that occupies a territory exclusively and that shares a similar national identity.

One of the concerns that I have with the RCAP recommendations is the nature of the system and capacity-building that it proposes. Although RCAP agrees with the

idea that the Aboriginal communities need to revitalize the culture and deal with the social ills of the community, I felt that they did not elaborate on what they meant by this. The kind of governance system this report suggests for the Aboriginal people looks very close to the governance system of the western-euro society. A system that is developed by the Aboriginal community based on their own values would be more appropriate for the Aboriginal people.

The book *Yamora* that is written by a Northwest Territories Dene Elder, George Blondin, highlights the Dene values that are also shared by the Dene of Lac Brochet. In the book, he talks about spiritual helpers that came to the people long ago to help the Dene when they were lost and in need. He also talks about the values that the people need to have in order for the people to be happy and live a good life. These values include sharing with one another, working hard to survive, having gatherings, and singing with the drums. He also talked about the Dene laws of helping, having love, showing respect and being happy. The values and laws that Blondin talks about are very similar to the values and laws that the elders and people that I interviewed want to protect for their community. In Blondin's community, the stories of how the spiritual beings helped people are similar stories that are told in Lac Brochet. Lac Brochet would appreciate these spiritual helpers again so that the people can re-practice sharing with one another, working hard to make a good living, holding community gatherings for healthy purposes, and using their own drums to pray. They also need guidance to abide by the laws of helping people, having love, having respect, and being happy. This book articulates the values and laws that can strengthen the community of Lac Brochet.

The book *Inkonzi* is about the Denesuline history as told by the elders of the Denesuline people. This book was co-written by a Denesuline woman from northern Alberta by the name of Lorrain Hoffman-Mercredi and an anthropologist by the name of Phillip Coutu. The people that live in Lac Brochet are also Denesuline so the stories told in this book about the Denesuline history are the same as what is told by the people of Lac Brochet. I found some of the analysis this book makes about the Aboriginal issues interesting, especially about the governance system the Aboriginal people employ currently. This book conveys Denesuline cultural knowledge that will help with this thesis.

The Dene community of Lac Brochet could build on the cultural strengths of the Dene. These cultural strengths are evident within the Dene history. The book *Inkonzi* talks about the important heroic figures that have helped the Dene in the past. The heroes include Copperwoman, the Caribou person, Wolfman, and Thanadelthur. The book tells about the extraordinary things these Dene people did for the Dene people through utilizing gifts that they possess. These extraordinary leaders left values with the Dene people, which can be incorporated in the Dene political system of tomorrow. These values include women's leadership, respect for animals and respect for the people.

I agree with this book when it states that the current system of government that the First Nations use today "centralizes power, promotes nepotism, invites corruption, and lacks accountability" (Coutu & Hoffman-Mercredi, 1999, p.273). This book goes on to state that the Aboriginal leadership must stop employing European concepts of what power is and start practicing consensus building from an

Aboriginal perspective. Introducing a system of practicing governance in a way that is different from the current Indian Act approach in Lac Brochet would require time and effort but it can be accomplished. Change for the better would mean changing to a system that meets the needs of everybody in the community politically by sharing power with everyone, especially with those that feel powerless.

In his book *Peace, Power and Righteousness*, Taiaiake Alfred addresses the need for a governance system to be based on a traditional framework. He talks about how indigenous nations should develop solutions for themselves by using the knowledge from their people. Taiaiake Alfred presents his ideas from a Mohawk perspective, which is not exactly the same as the Dene perspective. However, he generally makes a point about how an indigenous governance system of a certain area should ground its system in the indigenous culture of their area. Therefore, it would be parallel to Alfred's recommendations to have the governance system of Lac Brochet honor the Dene cultural governing and decision-making values.

In *Surviving as Indians*, Menno Boldt states that the Canadian society has to awaken their sense of humanity toward Indians and they must start respecting them. Entrenching Aboriginal rights should be paramount because that is one way to ensure Canadians treat Aboriginal rights with respect. When the Aboriginal people demand that their rights be respected by the Canadian government, these rights will eventually be recognized by Canada. Boldt mentions a few ideas about traditional cultural practices in this book. Although many of the points that he makes about how cultural practices can help contemporary Aboriginal governance practices, he makes his analysis from the perspective of someone who is concerned about plains Indians.

There are many similarities between Plains Indians and the Lac Brochet Dene and there are also many differences. One of the points that he makes in this book that will help with this thesis is that Indians will survive as Indians only if they stay unique through their culture and languages. This point helps this thesis because I argue for the Dene to govern themselves through the Dene values and language.

### ***Research Objectives***

This thesis has three main objectives. The first objective is to identify the Dene traditional governing values. There are traditional values that exist in Lac Brochet among the Dene people who have lived there together through solving their own problems and developing knowledge for themselves for generations. These values have emerged as a result of how people made their living over the years in their environment. The Dene language, worldviews of the elders, people who live in the community, and the belief in the Great Spirit, shape these values. As a result, these values are embedded within the people of Lac Brochet. The second objective is to identify what the problems are within the current governing system according to the people of Lac Brochet that I interviewed. Many of the people that live in the community link the problems in the community to the decisions made by the politicians. To accurately determine what these issues are, the researcher must ask the people of the community. The third objective is to convey the kind of governing system the people who live in Lac Brochet want for their future. The system that would be considered to resolve community issues deemed important to the community would also have to be chosen by the people if this system is to



successfully mend community problems. This system would have to encompass the theoretical and practical views of the people.

### *Method*

I used the interview method to gather my data in this research and I primarily used the qualitative methodologies in the process. Since Lac Brochet is an Aboriginal community that has strong cultural ties it was very important to me that I obtained support from the elders about this work so I discuss how I got this support in this paper. I mention how I grounded the research in the Dene culture. Furthermore, I discuss how I conducted this research as well. In addition to the ten interviews that were conducted specifically for this thesis, a report about the band governance research of Lac Brochet (see appendix A) is also used to show how the people feel and their governance system.

I employed the interview method because I want the people of Lac Brochet to tell me about the way the Lac Brochet Dene governed themselves successfully in the past, what the Lac Brochet governing issues are today and what they want done to improve the governing system of Lac Brochet. I handled this research interview method respectfully in Lac Brochet by allowing the interviewees to express themselves freely. For example, the elders spoke freely about relevant traditional stories to answer the semi-structured questions I asked them. By traditional stories I mean the stories these interviewees told about how the Dene people of the past handled certain situations. The interviewees shaped the way the questions got answered according to their own terms. I respected the rules of oral traditions by allowing the elders to speak in Dene as they pleased. As a learner, I did what I could

to understand what they were saying. Simpson (2000) states: “Traditional stories then provide us with a lens to see the past and with a context to interpret that experience” (p.180). I agree with Simpson about how traditional stories help us understand the past in a respectful way. Listening to stories of the community governing practices of the past will help the people understand why certain practices were successful and why others were unsuccessful. Furthermore, these stories could help the people locate the origins of the current community governing problems. The information gathered from the stories regarding governing practices will assist the people in choosing current governing practices that will effectively deal with the contemporary community issues.

I was kind and respectful to the elders that I interviewed because we are expected to respect our elders according to the Dene culture. As this is a qualitative methodology that I am using, I use a language used everyday in the interviews and in this thesis (St.Dennis, 1993, p.17). I asked the elders and the community members if I could interview them ahead of time in a friendly way because I wanted them to participate in the research. I told them about my project in a conversational manner and then asked them if they wanted to participate. Having the culture of the community influence how the interviews were handle is an example of community based interviews (St.Dennis, 1993, p.71). I would have the full attention of the interviewees by being kind and respectful. Ann Oakley shares (1981) the same views in the following statement:

If the interviewees don't believe he/she is being kindly and sympathetically treated by the interviewer, then he/she will not consent to be studied and will not come up with the desired information (p. 33).

I abstained from making the interviewees feel intimidated in anyway. I told them that the purpose of the project was to help find ways to improve the whole community so that this community can strongly move into the future and create opportunities for the youth through effective governance practices. I told them that this project has the potential to identify good governing ideas that can be implemented so that our governance system will become stronger. I made the interviewees feel comfortable by placing myself in the same level as them so that they may share with me important information.

The questions of the interviews were open-ended and semi-structured. I asked a few questions and the interviewee spoke freely focusing on answering the questions. I made sure that the interviewees spoke about the Dene traditional governance system, the governance system of today and the kind of governance they want for the future. The interviews were conversational as I situated myself in the interviews with the elders and community members in a friendly manner and not so much as an expert. The interviewees and I spoke about appropriate ways that the governance system can improve the conditions on the reserve. I enjoyed interviewing these people and I know that they enjoyed it as well. The interviews were enjoyable because the topic is very important to our future as a community. The questions were all oriented toward achieving the three research objectives of this thesis. Therefore, all of the interviewees were asked the same questions. Before I started my interviews, I had to get an approval from the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) to ensure that my interviews met the ethical standards of the University of Manitoba. As part of my application to this board I had talked to the Chief and

Council of Lac Brochet to approve my research project. The Chief had signed a letter in June 2005 indicating that I could interview people in the community for my research. On August 16, 2007, the Chief signed a consent form to allow the Band Governance Research Report that was conducted in Lac Brochet in 2004 to be used for this thesis.

Out of respect for the Dene culture, it is important that the interviewer offer something to the person he is interviewing about the Dene traditional knowledge in return for the information. As a way of expressing my appreciation, I offered some tobacco and twenty dollars to each of the interviewees. Offering tobacco is a new practice in Lac Brochet as the Dene who live there did not offer tobacco in return for something they received in the past. Native people of the south showed the practice of offering tobacco to me and I chose to incorporate this teaching into my interviews. However, offering something to someone out of kindness and respect for something given to you is not new to the people of Lac Brochet. Gift-giving builds trust and a positive relationship between both parties and that is why I offered tobacco and a small gift.

After I received an approval from the JFREB, I made a trip into the community of Lac Brochet. I was living in Winnipeg during the time I was conducting my research for this thesis. I arrived during the first week of October and stayed until the end of October. Before I started my interviews, I had told the community members about what I was doing as a graduate student in a ceremony that the people were having. The elders who were participating in the ceremony encouraged me and told me that I could interview them. Ellerby (2001) states:

“Elders are highly qualified individuals, usually with decades of experience often both within and outside of institutional settings. An Elder has earned tremendous respect and appreciation in the communities that he or she has served and should be treated as such” (p.28). The elders of Lac Brochet told me that my work had a potential to help the young people in the future. These elders support young people who are initiating projects that they believe will have positive effects in the community.

The four things that I did to ground the research in the Dene culture are interviewing the elders, interviewing in the Dene language, going into the homes of the interviewees and announcing the project at a traditional ceremony. Denesuline elders are the key to the Denesuline culture, especially the language, so it was necessary that I included them in the project. Denesuline elders are the connection to the indigenous governing systems so involving them in this research is one way I grounded the research in the Dene culture. I involved them by interviewing them and asking them for advice and approval of the project. The elders I spoke to about this project all motivated me to do a good job for the children. The ten interviews that I conducted in the community were all done in the Dene language so that is also the other way this research is grounded in the Dene culture. I welcomed the influence of the Denesuline culture in this research by talking about this research with the indigenous people of this community in their homes. For example, they told me to remember the Great Spirit while I conducted the research, so I prayed and asked for direction while I worked on the research. The last thing I did to ground this research in the Dene culture is by announcing my research project in a traditional ceremony

that was being conducted by the people of Lac Brochet. I told the people at the ceremony what they wanted to know and I did my best to take their suggestions and concerns into consideration.

My goal was to interview at least ten community members for about an hour to two hours each. I wanted to make sure that I had representation from the youth, current political leaders, women and the elders. La Rocque (2000) states,

Aside from the problem of defining 'eldership', it is not only 'elders' who do the teachings in Native homes and communities. Consequently, it is not only 'elders' who have 'traditional' knowledge. Many younger people also have 'traditional' knowledge in terms of their relationships to ecology and in terms of the worldviews, languages, and land-based expertise (p. 65).

I agree with La Rocque about the fact that there are many younger people who possess traditional knowledge; therefore I interviewed young Dene people who live in Lac Brochet. The first interview I did was with the oldest lady in the community. She allowed me to interview her because she wanted to contribute something positive for the children of her community. Aside from her, I interviewed three other elderly women. One of the three female elders I interviewed spoke English, Cree and the Dene languages. Six of the ten people I interviewed are elders. The other four interviewees, consisting of adults and one youth, all spoke English and Dene. I did my best to do all the interviews in Dene but I used the English language occasionally to explain certain concepts and questions. The knowledge that is expressed by these elders and community members is used to help establish a contemporary governing system that can effectively deal with communal issues. I interviewed a mixture of people to find a common ground by bringing together "different perspectives", and

“different views” (Hermes, 1998, p. 156). However, as I am interpreting the information that is shared with me by the elders about traditional Dene knowledge I will be careful that I do not treat concepts as frozen and unable to change.

From February to December 2004, a research project on the governance of the Lac Brochet band was conducted in the community by community members including myself (see appendix A). The research project was initiated on behalf of the band by Victor Tssessaze and Joe Antsanen who were both band councilors in 2004. Linda Dettanikkeaze and I conducted this research and I wrote this final report. The purpose of the research was to bring together the perspectives of the people of the community about the administration of their band so that the band can improve its governance structure to the satisfaction of many people. During the research, 48 people were approached for the personal interviews. Approximately 100 people attended the workshops that we had about the community governance. Through the personal interviewees and the workshops in Lac Brochet, the general information that we got is a strong endorsement of traditional values in governance, criticism of band council system and a desire to see elders involved in the governance system.

When I comprehend the knowledge and views that are shared with me by the elders and the community members who speak from traditional perspectives, I am open-minded and do not look at the traditional knowledge as something that is not able to change over time. La Rocque (2000) makes suggestions about what we should avoid when we interpret traditional knowledge:

We face challenges we have not even thought about in our attempts to re/construct Aboriginal knowledge meaningful in today's realities. We must avoid portraying Aboriginal cultures and knowledge in that fixed

romanticized sense of the treatment. The surest way to freeze any culture is to package it in a formulaic container of traits (p.66).

Therefore, I will interpret the knowledge presented by the interviewees in a way that does not treat the Dene culture as frozen but in a way that it is able to change just like anything else that change around them. I will accept change as inevitable developments within the culture of the Dene. Dene knowledge today does not have to be exactly the same as the way it was years ago. Another author looks at the word “Indian ways” and what that means. Guedon (1994) states, “When Dene people speak about ‘Indian Way’, ‘Dene Way’, ‘the people’s ways’ or ‘new ways’, they focus on specific qualities and traits” (p.61). Therefore, Dene traits of contemporary times will not necessarily be what Dene traits are in a romanticized sense. My interpretation of what “Dene ways” means is based on values that are indigenous. In my view, a Dene person is considered Dene through the indigenous values that this person carries.

I recorded all the interviews with both digital and a tape voice recorder. Conforming to the ethics principles, I got consent from the interviewee before I interviewed them. I transcribed the recorded interviews so that I would incorporate them into this thesis. The interviewees knew very clearly that I was recording their stories. In the middle of my interviews, I was approached by the Chief to explain to him my objectives and motives. Apparently, as I was conducting my fieldwork one of the community political office representatives had developed concerns with my research. I had to be clear about what I was doing so the people did not interpret what I was doing as going against any of the political processes that would have positive outcomes in the community.



To gather the information for this thesis from the research field, I used the interview method and the qualitative methodology. How I approached the interviews and how I respected the community in the process was explained. The community representation and the interpretation of the information provided by the interviewed were also examined. A report of a band governance research that was conducted in the community of Lac Brochet in 2004 is incorporated in the thesis. Attempts were made by me to make the interviewees feel comfortable with the research by explaining it clearly to the community and by the way I was handling it.

## Chapter Two – *Yanezi* (In the Past)

After interviewing the ten people of Lac Brochet, I gathered the information that was given to me by the interviewees and organized it into five main values that governed the Lac Brochet Dene people in the past. *Yanezi* is a Densuline word that means life as it was in the past. When I asked each of the ten interviewees about what was good about the way people governed themselves long ago, their responses centered on these five values. The following are the five values of traditional governance system of the Lac Brochet Dene people: *Elthleodeli* (gathering of people), *Elthkasoradlee* (good relationships), *Halada* (hard work), *Althnethe Bel* (elder involvement), and *Algelie* (drumming). Among them, *Elthleodeli* (community gatherings) was the most important one.

### *Elthleodeli (Gatherings of People)*

Most of the elders and the community members whom I interviewed talked about the value of *Elthelodeli* (Dene gatherings). *Elthelodeli* is an ancient Dene word to describe people coming together and being together for a while. According to these interviewees, the Dene people have always gathered as a community to do things together in the past. The late Archie Enekwinnarre, who was one of the Lac Brochet elders that I interviewed, stated, “When I was young the old people, my grandparents, my parents and my relatives told me that long ago people would gather and they would talk about what was happening around them” (personal communication, October 12, 2005). During these gatherings many people came together and socialized and made decisions that people had to make collectively. The leaders guided the meetings. The discussions were done openly which facilitated

involvement of the people (C. Moise, personal communication, October 17, 2005). At these gatherings, people helped one other, talked respectfully to each other, and told each other their plans. Gatherings were also important in other Aboriginal cultures as stated by George Blondin. According to Blondin (1993), "Almost everyday there was a gathering so young people could listen to story telling and learn how to become good people. It was our culture to do this" (p.203). There are two kinds of gatherings. The first kind is of people from within the community coming together and this second kind is the one that brings people from different communities together. The purpose of the gatherings varied from one issue to another but the primary importance of the gathering had always been communication. At the gatherings, it was important to participate, socialize, make decisions collectively and communicate. The people of Lac Brochet also had gatherings in the past that had the same characteristics as described by Blondin.

Attendance was important at the gatherings; so many people would travel a long distance from their traditional homelands to attend Dene gatherings. The explanation of what attendance means and why attendance was important are explored in this part of the paper. According to the elders of Lac Brochet, an entire community would gather occasionally in the past. Angelique Enekwinnarre says that even though people lived far apart in their traditional homes, it was important for them to gather occasionally (personal communication, October 17, 2005). One occasion that was very important to the people was Christmas celebrations in Brochet. People traveled great distances in the cold weather to participate in the festivities. Around 1940s, people still camped in their traditional homes during the

winter and they gathered for Christmas, Easter and the summer. During these special occasions, everyone that was able attended the gatherings. Catherine Moise says, “Long time ago when there was a community meeting everyone would gather for it. The leaders would guide the people on how to help each other. People would assist others that were in need” (personal communication, October 17, 2005). Political decisions were also made as a community about what the proper protocol of behavior would be among the people. Elders gave advice about the proper protocols. It is evident in the interviews that the people valued gatherings because they kept the community together and strong. Boldt states (1993), “The collective well-being of the band/tribe was placed above individual self-interest. Individuals had their purpose and interest in the community” (p.59). Boldt makes this statement after he observed a tribe in southern Alberta. At the Dene gatherings, people socialized, prayed together and strengthened relationships among themselves through visiting and exchanging information in the Dene language. It was very important for the people to pray and practice their beliefs. Based on what the people of Lac Brochet have told me, attending gatherings was very important to the Dene people as it was to the first nations in southern Alberta.

Long time ago, the people collaborated with each other when they came together to carry out things for their community, which is why the community was strong. People agreed with one another even when they selected someone to represent their community (Moise, personal communication, October 17, 2005). The leader that was selected usually possessed particular qualities. The following comment made by Coutu and Hoffman-Mercredi (1999) talks about the qualities the

leaders were expected to have: “true leadership in Aboriginal cultures comes with age, a quiet voice, and humility” (p.62). A person that was able to take care of his or her self was a good candidate for a leadership position. Archie Enekwinnarre says, “Long ago, people would appoint someone that was healthy, worked hard to make a living and had good things to be a leader” (personal communication, October 12, 2005). The kind of influence that the Dene people had over their leaders is exemplified in Boldt’s (1993) comment: “Traditional Indian governance operated under structures, customs, and values that gave the people effective control over their leaders” (p.130). The people maintained the right to make suggestions to the leader if they felt that the leader was not performing well. People did not like leaders who took too much for themselves and they liked leaders that contributed to the people (Boldt, 1993, p.119). Formal elections for leadership positions were not required in the past because the people undertook tasks together for the entire community. The other interesting point that Elder Archie Enekwinnarre has made is that when the adhesion to treaty 10 was signed by the Dene in Brochet, the Dene had a meeting amongst themselves about this for days (personal communication, October 12, 2005). A meeting that lasts for days about an issue important to a community will give everyone a good opportunity to speak about that issue together. At the meetings, leaders were expected to serve the people (Boldt, 1993, p.120). As a result of having extensive meetings, people made community decisions collectively. It was easy to have productive meetings at that time because people had leaders that served the people.

Long ago people lived in Teepees so every family depended on an open fire for heat, light, and cooking. The Dene also used the fire to pray and ask the Great Spirit for assistance (Archie Enekwinnarre, personal communication, October 12, 2005). They also made decisions together around the fire. According to Coutu & Hoffman-Mercredi (1999):

Decisions were made over the council fire, and all members of the circle had a right to express their opinions. Influence over others was not gained by loud voices, hierarchical status, or wielding authority. Instead, the K' alther's or headman's authority was based on his wisdom, abilities, and knowledge in each particular circumstance. Therefore, in matters of hunting, the most skilled hunter or perhaps the person with the greatest medicine power might attain leadership. In a time of war, a "war chief" was selected (p. 61).

Most of the people of Lac Brochet that I interviewed have said that long ago, people did not have a designated person who was the official spokesperson for the entire community. People came together when they needed to, made necessary decisions together and no one tried to practice permanent authority over the entire band (Boldt, 1993, p.119). The primary importance of Dene gatherings was that during this event the people helped one another. It was very important that the people helped each other long ago because that was how the people achieved community goals.

One woman in the Dene history achieved peace for her people, trained her people and saved her people. The accomplishments that this Dene woman achieved exemplify how women are able to lead the Dene to successful paths. Ray (1996) speaks of this magnificent Dene woman leader:

A remarkable Chipewyan woman named Thanadelthur (Jumping marten) was largely responsible for this turn of events. She had been captured by Cree raiders in 1713 but escaped shortly thereafter. In 1714 she made her way to York Factory and discovered to her surprise that the 'stone house people', a term the Chipewyan used to describe the HBC traders, supplied the Cree with their new weapons (p.83).

In 1717, she brought the HBC and the Dene together and facilitated peace between the Dene and the Cree by bringing the HBC traders to the Dene. Ray (1996) says, "In 1775, she enticed the chief factor at York Factory, James Knight, to send an expedition to her nation by telling of its furs and yellow metal (native copper)" (p.33). HBC assisted Thanadelthur successfully encourage the Dene fighters and the Cree fighters to make peace. The second significant undertaking that this Dene woman leader achieved for the Dene is that she showed the Dene people how to trade with the HBC. After facilitating peace, Thanadethur spent her time helping and showing the Dene people how to be successfully involved in the fur trade industry. She taught her people how to get maximum profits for their fur trading endeavors (Coutu & Hoffman-Mercredi, 1999, p.131). The third admirable thing that this woman did is that she motivated her people to continue on the road of life on this earth. Coutu & Hoffman-Mercredi (1999) state, "Ttha'naltther, through intelligence, ingenuity, courage and determination, saved the people. She would become a heroine to her people" (p.136). A woman who had a beautiful vision and who worked hard to achieve that vision helped her people make peace with a neighboring nation, become educated about the fur trade, and continue living on.

Helping one another was one of the major values amongst the Dene people in the past. People were taught to care for each other, especially those that could not care for themselves. Children were taught to work for their elders. Elder M. Dantouze says, "In the past when I was young, I use to help old ladies with housework. I would help old people that had a hard time taking care of themselves" (personal communication, October 12, 2005). Children would help the elders get

wood, cut wood and bring them into their homes for the wood stove. They would also get water for the old people. Children also helped the elders with house chores. The children were able to do this for their elders because it was part of their culture as there was little influence in the community from the outside world at that time. People had to take care of one another because that is how people survived. An example of how the people cared for one another is that when a hunter came back into their community with meat, he would share his meat with the rest of the community. In the mid eighties, I remember one hunter who came back into Lac Brochet on an airplane from his summer hunting trip sharing his meat with the people. He had brought back a large amount of moose meat. He laid his moose meat out in the open and invited the people to take some home for their families. I was told that he did that because that was a traditional value that he chose to honor. People in the past looked after those that needed help before they took care of themselves. The other deed that the people did to be of service to one another was building community projects for their community together. An example is that when Lac Brochet was first founded in the early seventies, the first families that moved there built a school and a church together voluntarily for the community. It was through the value of *Elthtetzadee* (helping one another) that people established Lac Brochet. The Dene people long time ago, cared for their old, helped each other with food, and built community facilities together.

Historically, the Dene people of Lac Brochet communicated through their own language. They spoke to each other about beneficial knowledge and wisdom at gatherings of family and friends. The Dene people in that past primarily



communicated orally using the Denesuline language that they learned from the old people. Other Dene people that lived in communities near Lac Brochet also spoke the traditional Denesuline language that is spoken by the Lac Brochet Dene. J. Smith (1988) states, "The regional band historically has consisted of about 200 to 400 or more individuals, occupying a vaguely delimited territory, and adjacent to other such groups to which they were tied by links of kinship and affinity" (p.276). The people in this community valued gatherings in the past because it was at gatherings that they communicated about issues that concerned their lives. In the Dene culture of the past, gatherings were very important for communication because information was passed on orally.

Over fifty years ago the Dene people of Lac Brochet would gather after mass on Sundays to eat together and then talk to each other about their goals. People would bring food to these gatherings to share with one another (C. Moise, person communication, Oct 17, 2005). After they ate they would exchange information orally. The atmosphere of the meetings was not competitive as emphasis was placed on enjoying each other's company and sharing of each other's plans. People told each other their aspirations. Usually it was the elders that would make suggestions about what the adults should devise for their families and as a community for all of the children. Adults would talk about the future and they would make plans about what they would be doing with their families (Archie Enekwinnarre, October 12, 2005). People shared information so that everyone knew what everyone was doing. Sharing of each other's plans was important within the Dene community because it allowed the people to understand each other so that there were good relationships in

the community. An example of the kind of plans that the people of Lac Brochet made together is the plan of how the people moved from Brochet to Lac Brochet. The elders suggested that the Dene people move so the adults planned out how they were going to move and then the people followed through with the plan. It was through communication, making plans and having good relationships within the group that the people succeeded in their plan of action.

*Elthkasoradlee (Good Relationships)*

Three of the female elders that I interviewed expressed their views about *Elthkasoradlee* (good relationships) within the Dene community and among the Dene communities. *Elthkasoradlee* is a Dene word that means people having respect for one another and interacting with each other kindly. Good relationships between people were important because it made members of the community cooperate and work together towards a common good. The people that I interviewed talked about the importance of having humility, respect for one another, cooperation, learning from one another and sharing in having good relationships with other people. These are the important virtues that preserved the community spirit in the past. Most of the values that the community members carry are learnt from the family. As a result, the family system was a very important institution amongst the Dene because it instilled values including the value of good relationships in the individuals of the community.

The Dene families were very important long time ago because family members worked in a teamwork fashion to survive and live together. Families were independent and they were self-reliant. According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), "In many Aboriginal societies, the family and extended

family was the self-governing unit. It was responsible for regulating internal social and economic activity, and it provided for the needs of individuals and the security of family members” (p. 129). I agree with the quote because according to the stories told by the elders in the community, families did not get outside help so they had to depend on themselves to do things for their families. Therefore, family members instilled values within their own. The families taught their children the value of being humble from an early age. One of the female elders told me that the kind of humility she was taught when she was young was that she was not allowed to interrupt adults when they were talking and she did not participate in activities designated for the adults (Angelique Enekwinnarre, personal communication, October 17, 2005). Having humility was important because it allowed people to respect one another and cooperate with one another. Leaders who have humility long ago did great things for the Dene. Similar to how RCAP talks about how the family played an important role in self-governance, the family was very important in the Dene society because it helped maintain appropriate behavior. A long time ago there was no central government so the family had the responsibility to meet the needs of the community.

Many of the Dene people of the past were humble people. Individuals did not put themselves high above other people in terms of social status. The people shared their talents with other people and they did not control other people with their talents. Coutu & Hoffman-Mercredi (1999) state, “When someone killed, everyone shared. Long ago people cared about each other” (p.64). It takes humility for people to share their wealth with other people so the Dene people of the past must have had humility because they shared their wealth with each other. An Elder that I interviewed for this

thesis also talked about the importance of having humility. Marie Danttouze states, “When the people love each other, they help one another. They talk to each other; they could apologize to each other if they did something wrong and forgive each other. People could say to each other that they should now love each other and stop doing bad things to each other” (personal communication, October 12, 2005). I think that it takes humility for people to gain the courage to apologize for their wrongdoings and it also takes humility for people to forgive people that hurt them. The Dene people in the past lived together as a strong community as a result of the people having humility.

To the Lac Brochet Dene people of the past, respect meant that people that were related with each other took good care of each other. Respect also meant that children were respectful towards their parents and their elders. The “bands” that the next quote is referring to is the Dene communities that are located near Lac Brochet. J. Smith (1988) states: “These bands consisted of families related to one another through primary ties of descent and affinity, and they have had a relatively high continuity from generation to generation, although families shifted occasionally from one band to another, permanently or temporarily” (p.281). Today, some people that married into Lac Brochet maintain their ties to their families even though their families live in other communities. Families have always remained close with each other because they cared for one another. Respect also meant that young people treated people that were old as significant. The young people demonstrated that they have respect for the old people by not interrupting the activities that the old people did together. Marie Danttouze states, “When we were children, we were good

children. We did not disturb the older people when they were talking to each other. We had respect for the old people” (personal communication, October 12, 2005). Dene children in the past were taught to have respect for their parents and elders. They were brought up to look up to and have respect for the elders.

According to the people that I interviewed, the Dene people had cooperated with their neighboring nations in the past. These nations did things differently because they had their own culture and languages. In Denendeh, there was a confederation of nations before Europeans came as explained by Coutu & Hoffman-Mercredi (1999):

This ancient land’s political structure may have resembled the confederacy of nations, which united the Blackfoot or Iroquois people. These homelands were comprised of people of similar languages who embodied the principles of unity with diversity. Individual freedoms and cultural differences were honored in a confederacy of nations in which no one group exerted power over another nation (p.54).

The Dene people of Lac Brochet have a similar history as they have lived with the Cree people in the same community side by side practicing their own culture and language for many years. During those years, they have demonstrated that they have a history of cooperating with other nations. Cooperation within the Dene community meant that people did not fight each other even if they did not agree with each other as explained by the Elder Marie Danttouze: “I never bothered people in past. I never told people that I have problems with them. I never fought people. I was never angry at people” (October 12, 2005, personal communication). The current elders of Lac Brochet say that they were not angry towards each other within their community in the past compared to the way people are today. Years ago the Dene people cooperated very well with other nations and amongst themselves.

The people of the past taught each other the skills and knowledge that everyone required to survive in the environment that they lived in. Caribou was very important to the Dene in the old days so the people shared with each other information about where the caribou herd was located, how to hunt the caribou, and how you use the parts of the caribou to make their livelihood. In the past, groups of Dene families organized their lives around the caribou and these families did not compete with each other over the accumulation of caribou meat and caribou parts (J. Smith, 1988, p.275). People helped each other about how to continue on with their lives especially during hard times by teaching each other important skills and knowledge.

The people that I interviewed in my fieldwork stressed that it was important for the people that they shared, long ago. Sharing was part of the culture of the Dene. Barnaby, Kursewki, & Cheesie, (1977) states, "Sharing with others is one of our laws. People are expected to share. The ones that have a lot share with the rest of the people. A person will never have to go hungry, for instance, as other people will give what they could spare" (p.120). It was normal for people to share their wealth long ago, as people did not try to accumulate wealth more than their neighbors. People gave some of their food to others and they offered assistance to their neighbors when they needed help.

### *Halada (Hard Work)*

The people of the past knew *Halada* (hard work) as it was through hard work that people made their living and it was through hard work that the people gained

independence. *Halada* is an ancient word to describe people doing something to make a living for themselves. In the old days, the people had to work hard to make their living and every member of the family was expected to contribute to their family. The people did things on their own long time ago and they did not wait for other people to do things for them.

The Dene people in the past worked hard to make a good living. Children helped their parents with work within and around their homes. Children helped with wood hauling and woodcutting. They helped with bringing water into their homes and they also did other chores. Boldt (1993) states, "Traditionally, self-sufficiency in Indian communities came from a fully employed work force. Custom required that every able-bodied member work and contribute to the survival and welfare of the community" (p.44). The old people say that when they were young they got up early in the morning and they did what their parents asked them to do. The older children were expected to help bring food into their homes and other family members did their part to prepare the food. The adults worked tirelessly to do what they can to get food, shelter and clothing for their family. Catherine Moise states, "Long time ago, my dad would make his own fishing nets. He would make threads out of caribou hide and knit it until it turned into a net. He would set the net when it was done. You have to work really hard to do this" (personal communication, Oct 17, 2005). Lac Brochet Dene people in the past made a good living as a family by helping each other to nourish their bodies and keep their bodies protected.

Long ago, the people lived life independently by working hard for themselves and their families. Blondin (1997) describes how the Dene people were able to take care of themselves independently:

Before the traders and the government came to Denendeh, people were poor and worked hard, but there was no disease and no violence; that was after medicine people like Yamoria had clean up. We governed ourselves with Dene laws and we kept our children in line by the elders teaching them each day. People lived long and they were happy (p.211).

The interviewees in Lac Brochet have also told me that the people had to depend on themselves to do things that they needed to get done. Blondin (1997) states, "It was only the good, hard working hunters who lived really well" (p.20). In the old days, the Dene people of Lac Brochet, through hard work and independence, lived life in a way they called, "*Eh chet tey*". "*Eh chet tey*" is a name used by the Dene to describe life in a natural way just like the way animals live naturally in the wilderness. People survived independently by doing what they can in their environment. This is how it was before the Canadian government's involvement in the lives of the Dene (James Tssessaze, personal communication, Oct 18, 2005). Hard work has always been important to the Dene and that is why people were encouraged to work hard so that they could have independence. In the past, the Chief talked to the people to encourage them to work hard. The Chief worked hard to ensure that the people shared food amongst themselves (Veronique St. Pierre, Oct 12, 2005). The Dene community of Lac Brochet was independent as the people helped each other as a community without outside assistance. The Dene people had independence through hard work in the past.

*Althnethe Bel (Elder involvement)*



Denesuline people who were *Althnethe* (elders) have always been very important to the Dene people because they pass the Denesuline language on, mediate and teach the people. *Althnethe Bel* literally means doing things with the inclusion of elders. The Dene language also connects the youth to the *Althethe* which is why it is important that the people speak Dene at the political gatherings. The Dene language that the Dene utilizes to describe who they are contains the important information about history, values and worldviews of the Dene. Coutu & Hoffman-Mercredi (1999) states,

Again, Dene people's willingness to allow others to redefine their territories has important long-term negative impacts on the culture's survival. The above circumstances have interfered with the transmission of cultural knowledge from generation to generation, thus enhancing the process of assimilation (p.52).

Therefore, it is important that the Dene continue using the names for places that the ancestors of the Dene named in the Dene language so that the Dene history and worldviews are protected. People will forget about the Dene history and the purpose of why these places were named what they are named if the non-Dene people rename these places. The Dene language carries the history and identity of the Dene so it is important that the Dene continue to use this language.

The elders guided the young people on the Dene lands, advised political leaders and they spoke up for those that were in need. Nahanni (1977) states, "We have our own Dene Place names for all our camps, for the lakes, the rivers, the mountains – indicating that we know the topography of our land intimately" (p.27). The Dene elders are excellent guides to show people where the traditional lands of the Dene are located and what their names are. The second reason why the elders are

good guides is that they give advice to political leaders to make wise decisions for the people. Elders promote community values and traditional Dene values within the political structures of the community. RCAP (1996) states, "Elders have traditionally held special roles and responsibilities in matters of governance, stemming from their positions as esteemed members of the family and the larger community" (p.126). Traditionally it was mostly the elders that made the decisions for the community. The other reason why elders are very important in the Dene community is because they speak for the well being of every one, especially for those that need help. An elder that I interviewed for this thesis states, "I would like to ask for help because I am an old person and I need help" (Marie Danttouze, personal communication, October 12, 2005). This old person requires help so she would like to get help for herself. I think that giving voice to elders in the political system will guide leaders to consider those that are in need when they are making their decisions. Leaders must learn to respect and listen to the elders so they can learn from them and so they can respond to requests for assistance.

In the old days, the Dene elders helped the people that had to deal with conflicts and other problems. The mediation that is performed by the elders in difficult situations helped the people make informed decisions about what action they would have to take. Boldt (1993) states,

Traditionally, Indian elders exerted a profound political, social, and moral influence in their communities. In a society with an oral tradition, Indian elders played the essential and highly valued function of transmitting the tribal customs and traditions to the younger generation. Frequently, they also played a special role in identifying band/tribal members who displayed the qualities of leadership (p.119).

Elders were given time at community gatherings to speak on issues and through their speeches, they usually passed on the values of the Dene people that they have learned from their elders. Therefore, the values that the Dene elders pass on to young people helps the young people make decisions that will have a positive impacts in the Dene community.

The elders helped families function and they also taught the community members how to have positive relationships with each other by telling stories and giving advice. Blondin (1997) states, “We were educated within the extended family, and our elders taught us how to make a good life and be good leaders for our people. We were taught to listen to each other, love each other, respect each other, and always help others to lead a good life” (p.221). The elders taught values that helped people relate to each other in a positive way. Marie Dantouze talks about why values are important: “I am not a proud person. I am not really interested in gaining material wealth. I would like to earn getting into the sprit world” (personal communication, October 12). The values that this Elder is referring to are values of having humility and believing in the spiritual world. I think that it is important that the elders teach humility because as a result of having humility, people will respectfully interact with each other without trying to take control over people. In the past, it usually was the families that took care of their elders. An Elder, Veronique St.Pierre states, “My mother told me to help the poor and the sick. I have helped many poor people during my lifetime. Elders teach about how to love and respect one another” (personal communication, Oct 12, 2005). The elders taught people how to be humble and how

to help others that are in need such as the old and the sick. Elders also remind the young people about having love for people and treating other people respectfully.

### *Algelié (Drumming)*

Some of the elders were very important in the past because they helped other people pray and show respect by *Algelié* (drumming). *Alegelié* is a cultural term to describe the people singing sacredly to the Great Spirit with the drums made out of caribou hide. Usually the Elder that knew about the drum led the people in prayer by drumming and singing to the Great Spirit. The drums also helped the people understand the meaning of having respect. Furthermore, the Dene people of the past had their own ways to communicate with the higher powers. This Dene ways of praying was usually called “*Inkonzi*”. The definition of *Inkonzi* is, “to know something a little” (Coutu & Hoffman-Mercredi, 1999, p.65). Long ago, the people had their own ways of obtaining help through praying and seeking knowledge and understanding.

Historically, the Denesuline drums also helped the people treat the earth as if the earth was a living being that should be respected. Lamothe (1975) state, “The love of the Dene for the land is in their tone of voice, a touch, the care for plants, the life of the people, and their knowledge that life as a people stems directly from the land. The land is seen as mother because she gives life, because she is the provider, the protector, the comforter” (p.11). Long ago the people did not exploit the land for profit nor take anything out of the ground. They took from the land what they needed to provide for their families. The Dene in the past used the land and they had

knowledge that about living on and using the land. The Dene people had land-based knowledge and skills that they developed by using the land for food, tools, shelter, and clothing. La Rocque, (2000) states, “In so far as Aboriginal world view is tied to the land and its resources, its basis and collection of knowledge is fundamentally tied to the land. This quite literally grounds Aboriginal knowledge” (p. 65). The Dene people used the land to survive and they only took what they needed. It shows that the people did have respect for the land because they did not pollute the land the way the society is polluting the land today.

The people of Lac Brochet had their own unique ways of governing themselves long ago. People valued gathering and meeting as a community because that was how the people strengthened the relationship with each other through sharing and communicating. They usually told each other their plans for what they would be doing in the future. People had to have good relationships with each other in the past because teamwork and cooperation were very important to survive long time ago. People had to work hard in order to take care of themselves. It was the elders that were the main teachers and leaders of the community so they had a lot of influence over the community governance system long ago. Long ago, it was praying and communicating with the Great Spirit in the Dene way that helped the people. However, the way the Dene governed them selves started changing after they had contact with the European nations.

### **Chapter Three - *Problems with the Current System***

The primary issues that the people feel are causing problems with the current governing system are the way the elections for leadership are initiated, the way community general meetings are conducted and jealousy within the community. I had asked my interviewees what they felt were causing problems for the community and they mostly spoke about these three issues. According to the people I interviewed, the problems that are usually associated with the election system in Lac Brochet are that the people play with the system, the elders have little control over it and there are little discussions between the people about the process. The four problems with the community general meetings are that the people seldom use the Dene language in the meetings, people are against each other, meetings are closed before issues are settled and people are negative-minded at the meetings. The problem that jealousy is causing in the community is that it makes people talk negatively about each other. Furthermore, these issues prevent the people from working together as a community to build a good future. Instead these issues make people dispute about matters in the community. The way that they cause problems for the community is analyzed in this part of the paper.

#### *Elections*

Three people that I interviewed spoke strongly about how people play with the election system. The interviewees said that how the people play with the system is that it is not clear why some people get nominated for positions of leadership. An elder that I interviewed states, "Today, people treat the nominations for the positions of the Chief and Council like a game. When it becomes time for nominations, people

start saying that they want to nominate people without explaining why they are doing that. It seems that anyone gets nominated” (Catherine Moise, personal communication, Oct 17, 2005). Today, the other issue with the election system in Lac Brochet is that some people that do not want to be nominated get nominated because there usually is a lack of communication in process. The problem with that is that when someone is elected, after a while people start saying that this person is not fit for the job after the whole process has taken place. People begin saying scornful things about the leaders half way into the term. It would not be like this if people talked thoroughly about every person that is being nominated before the official nominations take place (James Tssessaze, personal communication, Oct 18, 2005). Overall, many people do not have faith in the election system because they feel that the system does not fairly give voice to everyone. A woman of Lac Brochet that I interviewed states, “Based on what I hear, people say that the election system is like a game. They nominate people and vote for people without taking into consideration community issues” (Anonymous, personal communication, Oct 29, 2005). Some people said that the way that the community precedes with the election process is not healthy for the community.

To further examine the reason why some people believe that the people play with the system in Lac Brochet, I looked at the work of Boldt and Memmi. Perhaps, one of the reasons why it seems that people play with the system is because some people manipulate the system because they are co-opted and they want to be part of the Indian ruling class. Boldt (1993) states,

The sociological forces activated by Indian Act designs for an elective system of leadership and the privatization of land, taken in conjunction

with the DIAND's process of Indian leadership co-optation, are not only giving rise to an Indian ruling class, they are also giving rise to a social-economic elite class (p.124).

Suggesting that some people manipulate the system for personal gain may be a valid point. It may be that some people who want to control the community resources for personal gain make it look like the people are playing with the system when it comes time for elections. The reason why some people nominate all kinds of people is because people want to have a say in the way their community is being governed. It is the nature of democracy for people to participate in the systems that governs their community. Power-hungry individuals do what ever it takes for them to gain power even if it means making other people look bad. Memmi speaks about the colonizer (1957):

He never forgets to make a public show of his own virtues, and will argue with vehemence to appear heroic and great. At the same time his privileges arise just as much from his glory as from degrading the colonized. He will persist in degrading them, using the darkest colors to depict them. If need be, he will act to devalue them, annihilate them. But he can never escape from this circle (54).

The people who nominate many people during elections maybe doing so because they want to be part of the governance system hoping that their participation will make the system treat them fairly (Appendix A). I think that people are actively participating in a democratic system when they nominate people in the election process. Elders would help people treat the community leadership election system respectfully if they were involved officially in the election process.

The other reason why it appears that the people are playing with the system is that the whole election process is imposed on the people. The people feel they must participate in the election process even though they do not want to because they are



seduced to believe that they have to be part of the process in order for them to be respected by the community governing powers. The people of Lac Brochet are pressured to participate in the politics of the community because the outside influence on the community is great. Adams (1996a) states,

In Canada, as in much of the world, the state's ideological system is based on capitalism, and the system's goal is to indoctrinate the public with these values. The state's system of beliefs and values is not judged on the basis of whether it is true or false, or good or bad. Instead, an ideology is valued according to its ability to bind different groups of society together in mainstream to serve as an efficient means of uniting the masses for the ultimate good according to the ruling class notion (p.37).

These influences of capitalistic values on the community can also be called the process of colonization. The imposition of new values in the community by outside authorities has its benefits to some people but they also have many negative impacts on the community. Some of the negative impacts include the community having excessive outside influences which causes the people of the community to lose their belief in their ability to do things for themselves. Adams (1996a) states, "If human life entails acting out a uniquely human vocation, then the colonial relationship destroys rather than creates life" (p.103). Colonial relationship also makes the people believe that they are not able to make sound decisions for themselves. If the people do not have faith in their ability to do things for themselves then that will make the people unable to live freely. These people will become dependent on outside authorities to make decisions for them. Therefore, the community relying too much on the outside authorities will damage the community.

During the election process, the elders do not really have the authority to say how the elections are structured and conducted. People in the community do not

respect the knowledge of the elders because they follow the laws of the authorities from the outside agencies. The laws that are brought into the community by these agencies are designed to meet the needs of the southern standards of living. Barnaby, Kursewki, & Cheesie (1977) state, "Laws are made by people from the south that do not make sense to us, but which we have to live by. These laws are to serve the system of the south. They are not laws to protect the Dene way of life" (p.120). The situation of laws serving the system of the south is also true in Lac Brochet. People in the community are split between honoring authorities of the south and following the teachings of the elders. Many times, elders cannot participate in the election process as their views often conflict with laws of the authorities of the south, a situation that results in elders losing control of the elections process.

The election system in the community does not allow the people to fully participate in how the election system is designed and how it is implemented. The community primarily relies on the election process to hold its leaders accountable. Relying only on one mechanism to hold leaders accountable is not sufficient. Boldt (1993) states, "Accountability requires an effective system of checks, balances, and sanctions. Reliance on periodic elections alone is not an adequate instrument to hold incumbent public officials accountable to the people" (p.132). Since other means to hold public officials accountable are not available other than the election system, the people do not get a chance to exercise their right to officially discuss the performance of their leaders. One of the reasons why the people do not exercise their right to have their leaders accountable in between elections is because of the end results of the colonization process of the Lac Brochet people. Memmi (1957) states,

Colonized society is a diseased society in which internal dynamics no longer succeed in creating new structures. Its century - hardened face has become nothing more than a mask under which it slowly smothers and dies. Such a society cannot dissolve the conflicts of generations, for it is unable to be transformed (p.199).

People in the community are unable to be creative and develop new systems based on their own knowledge because they are colonized by the powers of the south. Since the people are not able to develop new ideas for themselves, they are unable to successfully deal with the serious issues in their community. Currently, many young people who live in the community feel that the election system is not fair and it does not help the community deal with the issues. A youth that I interviewed states, "I don't think that the elections are fair here in Lac Brochet" (Kerrie Samuel, personal communication, Oct 23, 2005). The primary reason why the people feel that the election system is not helping the community is because the people do not discuss the system among themselves. People are not on the same page about the system, the community is often divided on how to deal with issues.

One of the issues with the elections system that most of the interviewees see is that the public do not get a chance to communicate with the candidates that are running for office. The community never has question periods with the people that are running. There is no time given to people that are running to tell the people why they are running for the office. A young person that I interviewed states, "The problem I see is that people who are seeking office claim that they can do things for the community without showing the people that they are able to do things for the people" (Kerrie Samuel, personal communication, Oct 23, 2005). Some of the people

that get nominated should have their backgrounds checked by the people who are nominating them. The fact that nominees do not go through a process of having their backgrounds checked usually results in the community risking positions of authority to people that might not do the job properly.

### *General Meetings*

There are usually problems with the community general meetings. The primary problems with the community general meetings are that at the meetings the Dene language is seldom used, people are against each other, meetings are closed before issues are settled and people at the meetings are negative-minded. The whole idea behind general meetings is for the community to talk over issues and then come up with solutions so that everyone will live happily together. However, it seems that the meetings in Lac Brochet cause more problems for the community than doing good for the community. Meetings are not helping the community because people do not understand each other at the meetings.

The problem at the meetings is that people do not speak the same language. Many younger people speak mostly English and many old people speak only Dene and that causes two generations to be unable to understand each other fully. One of the elders that I interviewed says the following about the issue of the language barrier at the meetings:

The problem I see is that when there is a general meeting, people speak predominantly English. It should not be like that. It bothers me but I do not say anything because I am hesitant. There should be Dene translators for people that cannot speak or chose not to speak in Dene (Edward St.Pierre, personal communication, Oct 16, 2005).

Many of the elders cannot understand the people who only speak English at the meetings. The elders cannot fully participate in the discussions if they do not understand people. The young people do not understand the old people's language either. The language and ideas of these two generations sometimes clash and that makes it hard for the community to work together. These two generations must communicate so that they learn to understand each other.

During the general meetings it is very hard for people to agree on things that will benefit the whole community. People have a hard time working together as they mostly compete with each other in the community. Adams (1975b) states, "The restricted environment and lack of intellectual challenge make colonized people very personal and trivial in their concerns: Jealousies and conflicts engulf much of their lives and consume most of their energies" (p.170). People use most of their energies at general meetings arguing with each other rather than devoting their time to making plans that will benefit the community in the long term. Adams (1975b) examines why people can't work together in Aboriginal communities: "Sometimes, when a native person gains social recognition, other natives may attempt to undermine him through gossip or destructive schemes worked out with local white officials" (p.170). People in the community have a hard time respecting people that they know who have authority in the community because they do not want people that they know to exercise power over them. A woman that I interviewed suggests a solution to the problem at general meetings: "Today at general meetings, most of the time people who disagree with issues do not get a chance to talk so I think roundtable discussions will be beneficial" (Anonymous, personal communication, Oct 29, 2005). This

woman sees that not everyone gets a chance to express him or herself because the atmosphere of the current meetings does not welcome everyone's input on matters of the community. It seems that at meetings, only certain people dominate the discussions and that makes it hard for some people to contribute to the meetings. The overall organization of the current community meetings does not accommodate the input of everyone.

The other problem that many people see with the way the current general meetings are organized is that the people do not properly settle an issue before they move to new issues to discuss. People see that the meetings need to be better organized so that all the issues will be properly discussed and settled. However, currently the meetings are poorly managed. James Tssessaze, a person that I interviewed states:

Today at general meetings, we move on to the next issue before we settled the current issue. We rush the meetings. We close the meetings without properly settling the issues. Meetings are only 5 hours long and that is not enough time (personal communication, Oct 18, 2005).

The problem is that there is no one that helps people to follow an agenda. It seems that people talk about all kinds of issues any time throughout each of the meetings. Things would get done if people focused on one issue at a time during the meetings (James Tssessaze, personal communication, Oct 18, 2005). Issues should be resolved one at a time so that the band can work towards dealing with issues and then develop a good future for everyone in the community.

It is extremely exhausting to resolve problems of the community through the community general meetings due to many community members being negative-minded. People at the meetings seem to react negatively to each other's ideas

constantly. Hoffman-Mercredi (1999) presents her views about what is causing people to be negative-minded, "The Indian Act has created numerous autocracies which destine all Aboriginal peoples to a chronic state of political impotency. It is a system of government which centralizes power, promotes nepotism, invites corruption, and lacks accountability" (p.273). Another example of what I mean about people being negative-minded is that at meetings, people react to each other's suggestions in ways that make the person who is making suggestions at meetings feel bad about their comments. Edward St.Pierre, an Elder that I interviewed states, "One of the big problems I see at general meetings is that when someone raises a concern, two or more individuals with opposing views in the meeting team up on that person who spoke up with concerns resulting in that person ending up standing alone" (personal communication, Oct 16, 2005). The Elder is saying that it is hard for some people at meetings to speak up on issues because it turns into conflicts between people at the meetings when they do bring up issues. At the end of the meetings many people leave unhappy because they cannot address their concerns successfully. The other issue is that people generally say negative things about each other. For example, when someone does something good in the community, the people tend to start saying bad things about that person. It is hard to do things for the community because people say atrocious things to people that are attempting to do good things for the people. People seldom say positive, encouraging and nurturing words to each other (Angelique Enekwinnarre, personal communication, Oct 17, 2005). The meetings would be more effective if the people were not so negative-minded.

*Jealousy*

The problem of jealousy in the community causes difficulty for the meetings to achieve positive results for the community. It is usually uneven distribution of money that causes jealousy among the people. An elder that I interviewed states:

I do recognize that money is very important today because we need it to survive. However, money causes sinfulness. For example, when we want to make a decent living and to take care of our home, we want good things. We work hard so that our children will have the things that are needed such as money and material things. This causes people to be jealous of each other. People tend to get jealous of those that attain wealth. I think it is money and jealousy that are causing problems in this community. It is hard to function as a good community today (Angelique Enekwinnarre, personal communication, Oct 17, 2005).

The elder is referring to how people in the community do not invest in their future with their time because they are focusing too much on accumulation of money and material wealth. People get jealous of each other over the jobs and other benefits that the band offers to the citizens of the community. Due to jealousy, people 'talk down' on other people that are attaining socio-economical wealth in the community.

Jealousy is a serious problem. It makes the leaders struggle to motivate the people to help each other maintain positive relationships with each other in the community. An Elder of Northwest Territories identifies the political and financial influences from the south as the root cause of why people do not remember the positive values. Blondin (1997) states:

Political and financial power gained from land claims settlement are positive steps toward a better life, but grassroots values of caring, sharing, respect, and love for each other also have to be part of the work. And these virtues easily get lost when money and power are involved (p.231).



When the virtues that sustained the community for many years are forgotten, people tend to insult each other because some people want to get ahead of the people in their community. People start to compete with each other to gain power to control others and to look better than others. Sometimes the competition in the community can be extreme. Alfred (1999) states, "The hunger for power, money, and status prevents many people from seeing what is best for the community in the long run" (p.28). Alfred, a Mohawk scholar, makes a good point about how some people can do many things that can have a negative influence on the community because they want to make personal gains. As a result of the people talking negatively about each other at the community meetings, leaders cannot develop opportunities that can have a positive effect on the community. James Tssessaze states, "We could build a lot of things for ourselves in the community. However, we have a hard time building something because our leaders are not productive enough" (personal communication, Oct 18, 2005). It is hard for the people to do things for each other in the community when people are competing and fighting over power, money and status in the community. The end result of the competition amongst the people in the community is that people talk unhealthily about one another and that does not create a win-win situation.

Although there is no one in the community that has excessive amounts of money, there are people that live in the community who think of themselves as being 'above' other people. There would be rich people and many poor people as there are in the urban centers if the community were thriving economically. As a result of

colonization in the community of Lac Brochet, some people try to become powerful elites in the community. Puxley (1977) explains how colonialism creates elites:

It is the nature of colonialism to reward those who show a readiness to subsume their own true interest, that is, the development of themselves as autonomous creative human beings, to the requirements of an external purpose. Those who serve give up the discovery of their human potency in exchange for security and the vicarious sharing in the power of the bureaucracy itself, whatever purpose it serves (p.112).

As explained by Puxley, the benefits that colonization gives to some people are security by turning them into elites but the price they pay for it is losing their development as creative human beings. In the long run, there will be negative consequences so the benefits that colonization gives people are not worth much as it appears on the surface. The process of colonization still continues in the community of Lac Brochet because of the governance system that the community upholds. The type of governance system the people practice creates “elites” or a small group of employees that benefit from the process of colonization. People that are part of this group usually have jobs in the administration of the band programs that are funded by the government. Kulchyski (2005) states, “A community can have the strongest administrative structure imaginable, and thereby only sever the band office from the community it serves, feeding a sense of elitism and alienation and perpetuating the cycle of hopelessness and poverty that is too common in Aboriginal communities” (p.147). The way that it works in Lac Brochet is that only a few people have control over the resources of the community and those people live comfortably while many people struggle for basic necessities. Elitism exists in the community and that affects the community negatively.

There is hope for the community even though the community is held back from being a successful and a healthy community by the colonial context, the imposed governance system, the generational language differences, social differences and corrosive jealousy. There is hope because despite all the negativity, there is still a strong basis of traditional values, a strong sense of participation or personal commitment to the community as a whole, to build upon and imagine a different future based on a different political structure.

## Chapter Four – *Yanathe* (The Future System)

The people that I interviewed told me that the kind of governance system they want for their community is one that values *Elthleodeli* (gatherings), *Elthazelthe* (meetings), *Dene Yate* (Dene language), *Althnethe* (elders), *Algelie* (drumming), *Yati* (praying), and *Thlaga Yati* (a community governance law). According to the interviewees, the people want to be involved in the decision-making system to ensure that the leaders are fair and respectful towards the membership of the community.

### *Elthleodeli (Gatherings) and Elthazelthe (Meetings)*

The people that I interviewed want their community to have many gatherings and meetings with their leaders so they can help them make plans for the community, be involved in the decision-making process, speak up on issues, and resolve issues in the community in a healthy way. The gatherings reinforce the unity of the people of the community. *Elthazelthe* is a word that the Dene people use currently to describe meetings and it literally means “people sitting together”. The meetings foster communication that strengthens the community.

It is a good idea for the people to talk together about how to make use of the resources that they possess so that they could use them to develop and strengthen their Dene community. To achieve this as a community it will take many meetings to strategize, prioritize, and organize. Boldt (1993) states, “In short, if Indians want to live and survive as Indians, careful planning and a collective will are required to achieve such a good. All social-system resources must be involved, and Indians must have the social-political space to work out their cultural destiny (p.181). When there

are no meetings, people of the community are left in the dark about community affairs. One of the elders spoke about why meetings are important:

At meetings, people should talk about how the leaders will help the community. The meetings should be about how to develop things for the community. The leaders should say that they are doing things that will give the people a good mind. If that happens, people will start respecting the leaders (Catherine Moise, personal communication, October 17, 2005).

One Lac Brochet elder who is no longer here with us today made an excellent suggestion about how the people of Lac Brochet can work together before his passing. The late Thomas Dettannikkeaze was a good Elder who said many good words for the people at community meetings when he was alive. Angelique Enekwinnarre states, "The late Thomas Dettannikkeaze told the people to gather as a community in the band hall and talk about community issues. He said, have a cup go around as people are talking so that good words will go in. Turn the cup upside down when someone is talking negative so that bad words will not go in" (personal communication, Oct 17, 2005). This Elder acknowledged the fact that some people do talk negatively at the meetings, which hinders the meetings from achieving a purpose. His suggestion to turn the cup upside down when someone is talking negatively is a strategy to disallow someone to ruin a productive meeting. The late elder also said that if the people do not have good meetings, in the future there would be lots of problems particularly with violence in the community (Angelique Enekwinnarre, personal communication, Oct 17, 2005). Another strategy to deal with people who talk negatively at meetings was presented by Pascal Denechezhe, who was a councillor when I interviewed him. He states, "Some people talk good at

meetings and some people talk very negatively. Meetings would probably go better if there were rules in place for meetings” (Pascal Denechezhe, personal communication, Oct 24, 2005). It is clear that the people need to have community meetings where leaders are involved and people are working together.

It is a significant matter in the community when it comes to selecting leaders. An Elder had stated that everyone in the community should gather and talk thoroughly about selecting a leader for their community. Catherine Moise states, “When the community wants to select a community Chief, everyone should gather and talk about this. There should be discussions about who should be the Chief” (Personal communication, October 17, 2005). The location of where the discussion of the leader selection was a concern to one community member that I interviewed. This interviewee felt that there were many distractions in the way the community currently selects the leaders. James Tsessaze states, “Leader selection should be done in the bush away from the community where it is quiet. There are too many distractions to have thorough discussions about who would be a good leader in the community” (personal communication, Oct 18, 2005). James Tsessaze felt that the people would select a good leader if the discussions about leadership selection were done out on the land.

The interviewees stated that they want a governance system based on their culture, good values, their people’s knowledge, and peace in the community. In order for a new system to work in the community, it has to be planned and designed by the people of the community. Kulchyski (2005) states:

Much is taking place to prepare communities for self-government on the understanding that, somehow, they are not yet ready for it. This

derives from an ethnocentric position that assumes all governments must follow the dominant western form. However, if we reject that logic, we come to the conclusion that no one is better situated to understand and consult the people of Aboriginal communities than Aboriginal peoples themselves and, further, that the mode of consultation must be appropriate to the community and culture, not to the Canadian state (p.16).

Many scholars say that Aboriginal people will have to design their own consultation process when restructuring their own governing systems. The power relationships within the process should be based on indigenous philosophies. Powers flow from respect for the natural order in Indigenous philosophies (Alfred, 1999, p.60). Along with grounding the process of reforming the governance system of the community in indigenous philosophies, it is also important that the people who are designing the system possess technical expertise. Furthermore, the people should also be aware of the different options that they have when it comes to the kind of governance systems that they could have for their community (RCAP, 1996, p.332). A good example of traditional philosophy is the value of “honesty” that the interviewees talked about. Wastesicoot (2004) explains what honesty is in her thesis: “The teaching of honesty as explained by the Elders is that a person must always speak the truth” (p.98). The interviewees want to see their leaders being honest when they perform as leaders in office. When leaders are honest, the people will respect the leaders. Elder Marie Danttouze states, “People that can help themselves do not really need help from the leaders. The needy ones like the old people should be the first priority” (personal communication, October 12, 2005). Elder Danttouze also goes on to say that if the leaders respect indigenous philosophies then they will be equal with the people. Good leaders should also give a chance to everyone to make money for themselves

(Marie Danttouze, personal communication, October 12, 2005). Another interviewee talked about the importance of allowing the people to have a say on the performance of the leaders. James Tssessaze states, “We put the leaders there so we should have a say on their performance. We could give the leaders directions on what to work on in the community” (personal communications, Oct 18, 2005). It is important to many people how the leaders of their community perform and they want to hold them accountable. Many of my interviewees believe that the elders are the teachers of indigenous philosophies; therefore it would be good if the elders were involved in the political process.

The interviewees said that leaders could help the community by keeping track of the agenda for the people so that the meetings will go smoothly in an orderly fashion. One band councillor said that people at community meetings should follow an agenda and the meetings should not end until issues are settled appropriately (Pascal Denechezhe, personal communication, Oct 24, 2005). One young person that I spoke to about community governance said that the leaders have to talk to the people in a way that will help people help each other and not ‘look down’ on each other. (Kerrie Samuel, personal communication, October 23, 2005). The people that I interviewed mentioned that they want leaders to be in the community helping the people so that the people can live together happily. The other issue that I wanted to address in the interviews was about how leaders can effectively control the jealousy among the people. I asked one Elder how the leaders could control jealousy in the community and she said that it takes honest leaders to control jealousy in the community. The other way to control the problem within the governance system is



that people need to help themselves before they become leaders. Leaders should deal with their personal issues so that when someone attacks them they do not fire back uncontrollably. Praying is also very important because when people pray problems get dealt with in a good way (Angelique Enekwinnar, personal communication, Oct 17, 2005). There are many ways that leaders could be involved in good things that happen in the community so that the leaders develop a strong governance system for the people.

At meetings, it would be good if the Chief talked on behalf of the elders because many times the interests of elders are overlooked in the midst of competing interests at community meetings. The leaders should make sure that they allow the elders to talk first at community meetings. Many elders feel that the leaders need to set up the meeting so that the elders feel comfortable to express their concerns and needs (Veronique St. Pierre, personal communication, Oct 12, 2005). The elders want the future generations to live similar to the way people lived in the past. They want the next generations to uphold values that the people had in the past. One of the elders said that the leaders of the past were the peacemakers. Veronique St.Pierre states, "It should be the same as it was in the past. Long ago, the leaders talked about big issues in a good way to achieve peace" (personal communication, Oct 12, 2005). Values of having respect and keeping the peace in the community are old values and those are the values that the elders want the next generations to carry on. If the leaders are involved in the community, these values will be incorporated in the governing system so that they will be here in the future.

The people that I interviewed said that they like it when they are given an opportunity to request for what they require from their leaders for their well-being. People said that they feel comfortable when they have a voice in the developments that affect their community. As Puxley (1997) expresses it, "Quite simply, political control, giving men the freedom to determine their relationships and the work they will choose to do together, is implicit in the process of human development. The ability to reflect on one's circumstances is useless if the political capacity to redirect the course of development in one's community is absent" (p.112). The interviewees said that the people want to benefit from the community governance structures and they do not want these structures to affect them in unfavorable ways. An Elder in the community said that she would like to see the Chief helping people that are sick, unemployed, victimized, old, depressed and disabled. The people that cannot speak for themselves or help themselves require support from the community governing system (Marie Dantouze, personal communication, October 12, 2005). The interviewees said that they wanted the leader of the community to talk to people so that the community functions satisfactorily. Overall the interviewees felt that they want to be able to ask for what they need within the governing structures of the community.

The interviewees feel that they should be involved in and have a voice in the decision-making process of their community. The interviewees are concerned about the community governance so it would help them if they were continually given an opportunity to express their concerns and have a dialogue with the leaders about how they feel the decisions ought to be made. Alfred (1999) states, "The indigenous

tradition sees government as the collective power of the individual members of the nation; there is no separation between society and state. Leadership is exercised by persuading individuals to pool their self-power in the interest of the collective good” (p.25). It is beneficial for the community overall when people gather in a good way where they have the opportunity to communicate and clarify with each other information that they need to share with each other. Puxley (1977) states, “Consciousness-raising is implicit in true development, which is a process of conscious action and reflection” (p.104). It strengthens the community when the people feel that their views and concerns are addressed. People feel that they should be involved in the course of action that will be taken about significant issues in the community (Barnaby, Kursewki, & Cheesie, 1977, p.125). People in the community have a tendency to be involved in community politics so it would be good to involve the people officially in the community governance system.

I spoke to the interviewees about how they wanted to be involved in community meetings and they said that they wanted to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of themselves. Many people including the elders that I interviewed believe that people must speak up on issues if they want leaders to respect their interests (Angelique Enekwinnarre, personal communication, Oct 17, 2005). Kerrie Samuel, a young person that I interviewed states, “To me, a good community meeting is where every single person of the community has their say about issues that matter to them. In a good meeting, everyone is given a chance to explain their opinion and their views are respected” (personal communication, Oct 23, 2005). When people are meeting, I think that it is also important that measures are put in place to ensure that people

exchange information with each other respectfully at the meetings. Many people also support the idea of giving voice to the youth within the governing structures. It is important that the youth are involved in how decisions get made today so that chances of the youth supporting the results of those decisions are increased. The youth will support the governing structures that take into consideration the voices of the youth (Alfred, 1999, p.130). The governance system has to take the initiative to include the youth in the process. Alfred (1999) states, "As the 1996 report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada emphasized, it is essential to begin respecting and empowering young people by involving them in decisions affecting their future" (p.130). The elders also feel that they have the right to speak about how their community is governed. One Elder told me that he wanted people to listen to him when he speaks at meetings. He said that he would like it if his views were taken into consideration (Edward St.Pierre, personal communication, Oct 16, 2005). Everyone in the community wants to be respected when it comes to governing the community. The interviews that I conducted suggest that the youth, adults and elders feel that their views should be considered in how decisions are made in the community.

Politically, it would be powerful if the people made decisions for themselves at assemblies rather than giving their powers to the Chief and Council to make decisions for them. Kulchyski (2005) states,

The attention to leadership that seems so prevalent in the scholarly literature is, in my view, one of the ethnocentric biases that structures too much of the discussion: citizen participation, including citizen's ability to influence the course of events between elections, would be a far better arena of attention (p.256).

People get frustrated with the leaders because sometimes many people do not agree with the performance of the leaders. The people therefore should make decisions for themselves at community assemblies. One of the interviewees said that he would like to see that every member of the community meet every month to talk about issues and find solutions together. This interviewee had said that the people should meet at least three times a year for the community to talk (James Tsessaze, personal communication, Oct 18, 2005). Many of the interviewees feel that continuous meetings are required to work out the problems in the community and strengthen the community. Pascal Denechezhe, a band councillor said, "The role of the Chief and Council is political and it is about decision-making. The community meetings give people updates on the operations of the band" (personal communication, Oct 24, 2005). This person wanted the decision-making power for the community to reside with the Chief and Council. Pascal Denechezhe does feel that when there are important issues, the meetings can be extended for a few days. A young person that I interviewed felt that it was important that meetings strive to build consensus among the people (Kerrie Samuel, personal communication, Oct 23, 2005). It was clear to me that everyone that I spoke to valued community meetings because meetings are healthy for the community.

The people need a method that is more effective to resolve community issues as a community other than the band council system that they currently exercise. The kind of meetings that would help Lac Brochet would involve traditional ways of dealing with issues that are similar to other indigenous governing systems. Cassidy & Bish (1989) state,

For the Six Nations of Ontario, the Mohawks of Kahawake, and the Northwest Coast natives such as the Gitksan and Wetsuwet'en for example, the idea of band council government is an imposed one. These peoples argue that traditional Indian political institutions such as clans and the potlatch or feast are a more legitimate basis for Indian government (p.18).

The people that I interviewed did not say that they had clan systems like other tribes. However, they were organized in families and everyone in the family had jobs to do. The families came together through feasts, sharing, singing and dance. Elder Veronique St.Pierre said, "People like community feasts because it helps people enjoy one another. It facilitates peace-making. Feast is good. Gossip is bad" (personal communication, Oct 12, 2005). What is expected of each person in the community is expressed at gatherings when the meetings are set up in a way that it honors and appreciates the values and dreams of the people.

#### *Dene Yate (Dene Language)*

One of the most important ways of ensuring the indigenous values are incorporated in the governing system is by using the *Dene Yate* (Dene language) within the governing system. *Dene Yate* means the Denesuline language. To make the governing system more indigenous in Lac Brochet, the people would have to make an effort to have their language used and respected by the governing system of the community. Boldt (1993) states, "It would seem that when a people are strongly enough committed to retaining their culture and language they can do so with or without benefit of sovereignty" (p.136). The people have to be motivated and encouraged to value their cultural governing practices. A person who studied aboriginal cultural politics concluded that communities that are still governed by

traditions and values “all evidence a high degree of communicative competence and an ethics of speech that vastly surpasses that which passes as political speech in southern public forms” (Kulchyski, 2005, p.256). The community must see and believe that their traditions will help strengthen their lives and their community. Alfred (1999) states, “Promotion of traditional perspective on power, justice, and relationships is essential to the survival of indigenous peoples” (p.141). The elders believe that the youth will benefit from speaking and understanding the Dene language (Marie Danttouze, personal communication, October 12, 2005). There are challenges in implementing the use of the Dene language in the political arena so some people feel that they need help from outside organizations to help them use their language within the political arena. A band councillor states, “We can preserve the Dene language if we work on it. We would have to get other organizations such as KTC and MKIO involved. They can help us get trained to do this” (Pascal Denechezhe, personal communication, Oct 24, 2005). Training is not necessarily what the people need from the outside agencies to incorporate the Dene language into the system because the language training comes from the elders who live within the community. The help that the people could use from the outside agencies is support and resources that will assist the people document their language and have it used in the political arena of the community. The use of the Dene language will help the decision-makers remain true to the community and uphold the interests of everyone in the community. Memmi (1957) states, “After having been rejected for so long by the colonizer, the day has come when it is the colonized who must refuse the colonizer” (p.128). One of the ways the people can refuse the colonizer is to not use their

language and begin using the language of the colonized within the political arena. Through the indigenous language, the cultural governance practices will be incorporated within the current political system. By practicing the indigenous governing values, the indigenous people will survive and become strong to prevent being further exploited by the colonial governance system.

#### *Involvement of Althenthe (Elders)*

A good way to indigenize a governance system is to involve the elders in the governance system and the institutions of the community governance system. Elders who have their cultural language and cultural wisdom can be utilized to improve the system. Coutu & Hoffman-Mercredi (1999) states,

Listening carefully to the wisdom of Elders and joining a consensus-building process of united Aboriginal peoples is the only reasonable course of action. The strength and consensus of the circle has served Aboriginal peoples well since time immemorial. Though the expert guidance of professionals in these times of economic complexity and rapid technical advancement is essential, the rights and traditions of Aboriginal people must be honored and preserved (p.262).

The cultural teachings that the elders share here in Lac Brochet are usually about taking the resource in the amount that you need and sharing your wealth. Kulchyski (2005) states,

In capitalism, accumulation reached a qualitatively new dimension with the dominance of abstract wealth in the form of capital. Among gatherers and hunters, particularly nomadic bands, accumulation of goods was not a material possibility. One could only accumulate what one could carry and there was a fairly clear limit to this" (p.36).

The way that the elders can help indigenize the governance system is by involving them in the band council, having them teach cultural knowledge to the leaders and allowing them to help monitor the elections.



Many of my interviewees think that it would be honorable if the community had an Elder's council that the band council respected and worked with. RCAP (1996) states, "Elders are teachers and the keepers of a nation's language, culture, tradition and laws; they are the trusted repositories of learning on history, medicine and spiritual matters" (p.126). My research subjects clearly indicate a desire for a governance system that respects elders and accommodates their knowledge and wisdom. Forming an Elder's council is one way that the band council can keep the elders involved. Cassidy & Bish (1989) state, "Indian peoples in general place a much larger emphasis on the wisdom of elders as a practical guide for governance than other Canadians do" (p.80). Some of the elders believe that current leaders are too young and they need the elders to help them make good decisions for the community (Catherine Moise, personal communication, October 17, 2005). One elder said that she would like to see the community leaders paying more attention to the elders of the community (Veronique St. Pierre, personal communication, Oct 12, 2005,). If the community governance system were based on indigenous values, it would involve the elders in the governance structures.

Efforts have to be made to enlighten the leaders to take the initiation to build on the cultural values and the traditions of the people. Alfred (1999) states, "We must reorient our societies to provide leaders with a basis for conduct rooted in indigenous culture, to restore - bring back to life - traditional political cultures by abandoning the structures imposed on us, and exorcizing the attitudes, beliefs, and values that perpetuate our colonization" (p.47). The leaders must start listening to the elders and they must take into consideration their indigenous views when they are

leading the people. For a system to be indigenous the leaders must learn from the elders and they must allow the elders to educate them. Battiste & Henderson (2000) state, "The task of adequate Indigenous education is to enhance students' awareness of their human capacities and of the dignities of indigenous knowledge and heritage" (p.92). When the leaders are open-minded the elders could teach the leaders how to be grounded in indigenous knowledge. The indigenous knowledge of Lac Brochet Dene is about upholding values rather than accumulating material wealth. Kulchyski (2005) states, "Rather than leaving a substantial material contribution in the form of monuments to what we today might recognize as culture, gatherers and hunters left the most ephemeral but arguably most important of monuments: a set of values socially embedded in a way and a quality of life" (p.43). It is a choice that leaders have to make in order for them to learn from the elders. The elders are willing to teach those that are willing to learn from them.

The leaders have to see that the elders are able to guide them in the right path so the community will be healthy and strong. Kulchyski (2005) states,

Community leaders and elders have a clear, lived sense of the dimensions of the problem, and in this demonstrate a far-sightedness, nuanced vision of the intricate layers and sedimentations of cultural imposition, an alternative ordering of the temporality of justice (p.214).

The kind of knowledge that the elders can give to the leaders is that they can motivate the leaders to speak up for the community and those that are silenced. The elders can help the leaders be bold in demanding what is needed in the community (Catherine Moise, personal communication, October 17, 2005). The old people in the

community have to be involved in how the community is governed so that the people of Lac Brochet can work together and overcome the many challenges they face.

According to some of my interviewees, many people would like the elders to have an impact on how the leadership system operates in the community. James Tssessaze states, “Those that are elders today, by the way they tell stories and the way they talk to us so we can do good things, could talk for us and to us. This way, we could take care of ourselves here in our community. The elders could help us especially when the time comes to select community leaders” (personal communication, Oct 18, 2005). Some of the young people of today also would like the elders to have some control over community affairs, including the selection of leaders for the community. Kerrie Samuel states, “In the past, elders were really respected because they had more knowledge. Today, it would be good to involve the elders like we did long ago. We should ask the elders about how to run the elections. They should run the elections” (personal communication, Oct 23, 2005). Most elders are humble and honest people so having them participate in the monitoring of the election process will be taking steps towards ensuring that the election is done in a fair and honest way. Having indigenous elders involved on the band council, allowing them to educate and guide the leaders and having them monitor the election, is indigenizing the governance system.

#### *Algelié (Drumming) and Yati (Praying)*

The interviewees would like community gatherings that uphold indigenous values such as praying, sharing, singing spiritual songs, traditional teachings, humility

and loving one another. *Yati* is a Dene word that means praying to god. Edward St. Pierre states, "Prayer is the most important thing. When we are having a hard time, we pray" (personal communication, October 16, 2005). Many people, especially the elders, believe that prayers will help the community make it through the hard times in life. The elders also believe that when the people pray from their hearts together for good leaders, the Great Spirit will help them get good leaders. The other thing that my interviewees said was that people sharing at community gatherings would help the community become strong and healthy. Wastesicoot (2004) states, "Sharing was common and was a way of life and it was central in the lives of Aboriginal People" (p.88). The concept of sharing means the community feeding people, giving gifts and sharing good words with people at community gatherings. It will help the community because sharing brings people together with good feelings.

Singing spiritual songs at gatherings is also very important to the people. Blondin (1997) states, "When you are afraid, sometimes you sing to calm yourself. Prayers put you in a good frame of mind. You can sing out your gratitude to God or ask for blessings" (p.60). Some of the interviewees believe that they communicate with the Great Spirit through singing and the Great Spirit blesses them when they sing to the Great Spirit. Alfred (1999) states, "Rediscovering the power of the traditional teachings and applying them to contemporary problems is crucially important to the survival of indigenous people" (p.30). An example of how this can be done is by listening to the elders telling stories at gatherings. One Elder that I interviewed talked about how it was important to him that the leaders know the history of the people of

Lac Brochet (Edward St.Pierre, personal communication, Oct, 16, 2005). A good way to learn about the history of Lac Brochet is through the elders.

Two of the values that the people that I interviewed wanted incorporated in the governance system are humility and love for people. Humility is an important teaching that people can learn through praying and singing spiritual songs together at gatherings. An example of how you would learn this is by listening to the elders talking to the people. Angelique Enekwinnarre states, “I have never talked against people that are older than me. I never went around the community to criticize anyone. This is because I was raised to be very humble” (personal communication, Oct 17, 2005). This is an important teaching the people need to learn as a community and they can do this through gatherings that involve traditional stories, praying and singing spiritual songs. Wastesicoot (2004) states, “Humility is about being modest and being down to earth and not placing yourself higher and above others. When a person has humility, they do not allow pride to get in their way” (p.96). One of the ways the people can bring back the value of having humility in the governance system is to involve praying and singing traditional songs at community governance gatherings. The final important value that the elders emphasized is love. An Elder that I interviewed said that she would like to see people living together peacefully (Veronique St.Pierre, personal communication, Oct 12, 2005). According to the elders I interviewed, the people need to have love for others for them to live together peacefully. I think that it is through praying and singing to the Great Spirit that the people of Lac Brochet will learn to love each other so that they may live together peacefully.

*Thlaga Yati (Community Governance Law)*

The interviewees said that a solid *Thlaga Yati* (community governance law) that is designed by and respected by the whole community is required in the community for things to go well. *Thlaga Yati* is a word that the Dene people use to describe an agreement that everyone makes together. A good governance law designed by the whole community would take a great deal of patience, commitment and dedication. In this part of the paper, we will examine the issues around the community making plans for their governance system, designing a leadership selection process, and the community taking time to discuss issues thoroughly. The community would have to plan extremely well to design a good system that will satisfactorily meet the needs of everyone in the community.

The indigenous people making a plan for the future together and involving everyone of their community are excellent steps towards achieving the dream of establishing a good indigenous governance system of Lac Brochet. Planning of this magnitude will require everyone be involved and be actively participating in the planning process. The end result of the people meaningfully exchanging information about community governance issues will be that the people will develop a community-developed decision-making system. It is also very important that the people record what they conclude because documentation is very important today. Therefore, the people should write down on paper their own way of governing themselves.

It is important for the people that the indigenous culture of the people of Lac Brochet is included in the planning for the future of the community if all the voices of

everyone of the community are going to be taken into consideration. The indigenous philosophies will have to be implemented in the planning if the indigenous people of Lac Brochet are going to be actively involved in the community planning. Modern times will also have to be taken into consideration when we are going to initiate traditional governance practices in today's society. Puxley (1977) speaks about Dene culture:

Let me simply say that cultures are in men, not in museums. It is what people do together. The preservation of culture implies, necessarily, recognition of the way the Dene define their culture, and Dene culture is alive today to the extent that the Dene announce their own identity. For this reason, the united Dene struggle for recognition of their rights is every bit as much a cultural act as making a skin boat or holding a drum dance. Dene culture will exist as long as there are people who define themselves as Dene, and Dene culture will be what they do together (p.111).

I think that if the planners listen to the indigenous people carefully and they consider the insights of the indigenous people, the planners will be enlightened to devise a plan that is unique and will have a positive impact on the indigenous community. L. Smith (2002) states, "Indigenous peoples offer genuine alternatives to the current dominant form of development. Indigenous peoples have philosophies which connect humans to the environment and to each other and which generate principles for living a life which is sustainable, respectful and possible" (p.105). The indigenous people will actively participate in development meetings offering valuable knowledge that can be innovative when they are taken seriously.

At the meetings it is also important to allow the indigenous people to speak up (Catherine Moise, personal communication, Oct 17, 2007). The indigenous people will start sharing great ideas when they are supported and respected at community

meetings. They have many views that can help leaders exercise power in a way that will strengthen and support the indigenous community. Alfred (1999) states:

In other words, the traditional indigenous view of power and justice has nothing to do with competition, or status vis-à-vis others: it focuses on whether or not power is used in a way that contributes to the creation and maintenance of balance and peaceful coexistence in a web of relationships (p.49).

People will come up with excellent ideas that will work in the today's world when the people are given a chance to genuinely express themselves about how they feel things should be operating in their community. RCAP (1996) states, "The challenge will be to restore Aboriginal government leadership traditions in a way that builds on the respect for leadership and knowledge of modern circumstances" (p.340). It will be a challenge to bring in traditional views in the planning to build a governance system that will work in today's world. However, this can be accomplished if the people are patient and consider the indigenous views in the process.

Indigenous people have to be participating in every step of the development of the planning to achieve an indigenous system. Boldt (1993) states,

If the goal of Indian is government of, by, and for the collectivity, then the first step in their quest for self government should not be to take over the existing colonial political and bureaucratic instructional structures, but to engage their people in planning and developing political and administrative structures and norms consistent with traditional philosophies and principles i.e., structures that will empower the people and that facilitate their full participation in band/tribal decision making and problem solving (p.141).

The people will enjoy using their voices and their unique ways of expressing themselves when they are given a chance. Everyone gathered at a meeting would have to take everyone's views into consideration, especially the indigenous views, for the meetings to achieve consensus amongst the people of the entire community.



Boldt (1993) states, "But the most important benefit that could come from a participatory constitution-making process is the empowerment of lower-class Indians" (p.159). A consensus-building decision-making system will be very powerful and that is what the community requires to be healthy and strong. Coutu & Hoffman-Mercredi (1999) state, "Clearly Aboriginal leadership must abandon European concepts of power and return to the consensus of the circle-a place where real accountability exists" (p.274). It would take continuous sharing of personal views for indigenous people to be taken seriously so that the community will achieve consensus at the political level. Cassidy & Bish (1989) state,

For consensus methods to work, members must share such common values as cooperation, commitment to other members, and tolerance of differing ideas. The time must be taken to provide for a thorough discussion, and opposing opinions must be stated. All members must agree with the decision and be prepared to follow up as it is implemented (p.78).

The people in Lac Brochet currently have a political system that has some elements of consensus as described by Cassidy & Bish. However, it is not complete consensus-building because the people do not successfully achieve a decision that satisfies the majority of the community. This is in large measure because they do not take the time to discuss issues. Everyone must be given a chance to present their opinion about how an issue should be settled in the community.

The interviews that I have done in the community suggest that the people want to achieve a decision-making system that will help their community. Boldt (1993) states, "A participatory process of constitutional development is important for Indian people because their constitutions will determine the character of the future

Indian nations” (p.157). The people would have to work together to develop a system that will help them achieve their goals. Boldt (1993) states:

A shift to such a traditional participatory form of democracy, in which the people would bring together ideas, knowledge, experience, and information for the purpose of collectively arriving at the best decision would yield a sense of efficacy, empowerment, belonging, contributing, and mutual nurturing, which is now desperately lacking in Indian communities (p.159).

Many of the issues will be settled to the satisfaction of many people in the community when the community strives to settle community issues through traditional participatory form of democracy. The people will feel that they have a voice when the community honors a system that the community developed itself.

After all the planning and the discussions by all the people of the community about how they want their community to be governed, it would be beneficial for them to document their information. Kulchyski (2005) states,

The project of Aboriginal self-government in many southern jurisdictions involves, as a crucial component, rewriting these sections of the Indian Act to give band councils more powers and to allow them to adopt forms more appropriate to the specific cultures and traditions of each First Nation (p.132).

Documentation of their views and knowledge will help the indigenous people of Lac Brochet protect and live their culture as they please. The governance system that the people will devise through their documentation of their knowledge would be different from the current governance system that is practiced today if the people based the new system on indigenous values. Alfred (1999) states, “Traditional indigenous nationhood stands in sharp contrast to the dominant understanding of the state: there is no absolute authority, no coercive enforcement of decisions, no hierarchy, and no separate ruling entity” (p.56). A person that I interviewed in the community said that

a few people to write the new governance system for the people would be sufficient (James Tsessaze, personal communication, Oct 18, 2005). Another person said that whatever the community comes up with as the new governance system for the people, it requires fifty plus one percent of the community's support for it to be official (Pascal Denechezhe, personal communication, Oct 24, 2005). This band councillor said that the people can have new system written down in six weeks after having many workshops about this (Pascal Denechezhe, personal communication, Oct 24, 2005). It will take more than a mere few people involved for the governance system to be effective. The people must strive to allow the entire community to have a say in the new system and achieving that will take a lot of time. RCAP states: "First, to put in place a fully legitimate government, Aboriginal peoples must have the freedom, time, encouragement and resources to design their own political institutions, through inclusive processes that involve consensus building at the grassroots level" (RCAP, 1996, p.165). After the people compile information about how the people want to be governed, it would be excellent for them to document their findings. The people writing their governance system the way they want is a wise step toward self-government.

The interviewees felt that many questions had to be answered about why people run for leadership and why people nominate the people that they do. They also wanted to know if the people that are running for leadership are sincere about helping the people. One of the interviewees had said to me that he would like to see more time given to the nomination process. He would like the people to carefully nominate people for leadership by clearly explaining to everyone why they are

nominating whoever it is that they are nominating. He feels that it would be good if people gathered about nominating people to ensure that people that are nominated are potential leaders that will do great things for the whole community. James Tsessaze says that the nomination meetings should continue until many of the people are happy with the people that are nominated (personal communication, Oct 18, 2005).

Carefully nominating people will screen out people that will not do well for the whole community and empower those people that have great ideas for the entire community. One of the elders that I interviewed said that she did not agree with people campaigning for leadership positions. She said that the people recognize the people that are leaders so they do not have to tell people that they are leaders (Catherine Moise, personal communication, October 17, 2005). People would feel comfortable with the nomination process if the community took the time to do this carefully.

A very important element in determining the best people to be the official leaders of the community is the part where the people that want to take part in determining the leaders take time to discuss this respectfully with the community. The interviewees want the community to take time to deal with important issues carefully so that the issues are settled in a way that has positive effects on the whole community. Boldt (1993) states, "The process of building legitimate indigenous social systems based on traditional philosophies and principles could begin immediately through voluntary organization" (p.203). The community will naturally employ traditional values by being committed to developing their community so that the future generations will benefit from the results. Kulchyski (2005) states, "What Wolfe called a kin ordered mode I would prefer to designate as a gathering and

hunting mode of production, characterized by nomadic and semi-nomadic bands where the primary producer had both access to the means of production and ownership of the products of her or his labour” (p.41). The people need to relearn how to work together the way they had to work together in the past when they had to live together as a hunting and gathering society. Boldt (1993) states, “It is doubtful that leadership accountability in Indian communities can be achieved without revitalizing traditional philosophies, principles, structures, and norms of leadership responsibilities, duties, and services” (p.132). It will take more than the majority rule type of governance structure to strengthen the community. It would be worth it to achieve consensus because it will empower the official leaders of the community to achieve the goals of the entire community. James Tsessaze states:

In future meetings the people should take their time talking about issues. For example, if the people are talking about an issue and they have not agreed on it or settled it even though they have talked about it for 5 hours, they could take a break and continue the meeting the next day and talk about it again till they settle it before moving on to the next issue. The meetings could take 3 days, four days or even more than that. The meetings should not end until all the things that need to be talked about are settled (Personal communication, Oct 18, 2005).

James went on to say that it would be beneficial to the community if a willing Chief chaired meetings to have issues discussed and settled in a good way. A good leader would mean someone that gives everyone a chance to express his or her concerns. It is also important for the meeting to be controlled by good leaders so that they are conducted well.

It would not do the community any good if it surrenders all of its power to a group of individuals who can do whatever they want on behalf the community. The

community should always have control over everything that happens to it. Kulchyski (2005) states,

Forcing people to surrender their right to participate in politics by reducing that right to the merest gesture, the written mark, the vote, is deployed as a tool of totalizing power, which everyone defines itself as democratic and defines democracy by this hollow shell: the vote that establishes representative government (p.17).

For the community to heal itself and become healthy and vibrant it needs to be true to itself. It has to be self-defining, self-determining and self-governing. Colonial power structures take away power from people so it is important that the community empower traditional values of power and restructure its governing structure in a way that it has respect for everyone in the community. Alfred (1999) states, “Good indigenous leadership ensures that government is rooted in tradition, is consistent in restoring the necessary harmony between social and political cultures in Native societies” (p.23). It is a good idea for the indigenous people to do whatever they can to stand up for the people. It would do them good to do whatever they can to have an impact on how the people are governed in the community by doing several things. First, the indigenous people should start questioning the people that call themselves official leaders. Second, the indigenous people should face the current leaders and demand that only they can determine how decisions are made about them. A few people should not be given all the power to make decisions for everyone. Third, the people should demand for time for them to explain how they feel as individuals, families, and a community about issues. Forth, people should not allow themselves to be forced to follow a decision that is made by one person or a few people (Barnaby, Kursewki, & Cheesie, 1977, p.120). It would take numerous gatherings and meetings

for the individuals to talk for themselves as individuals and as a collective. The community requires leaders that are able to empower everyone in the community, especially those who have indigenous knowledge.

## **Chapter Five - Conclusion**

A better governance system is needed in the community of Lac Brochet to deal with the problems that are hindering the community from building a solid foundation for the children to be successful in the future. It is important that the community effectively deal with jealousy, the colonial mentality and the lack of respect that exists among the people. These problems make the people fight amongst themselves and it keeps them from working together to build a healthy and vibrant community for their children. A healthy and vibrant community is one that supports and helps people love and help their families and their fellow community members. A good governance system that is strong enough to provide opportunities for people to achieve a community where people love and help one another is needed. Literature on self governance has been reviewed for this thesis. To achieve the research objectives of this thesis, I interviewed ten community members to determine what the Dene traditional values are, what problems the people see with the current system and the kind of system they want for the future. I have presented my analysis of the observations that I have made on the community governance system. I have looked at the implications being an insider has on this research.

In this part of the thesis, I make a comment about my objectives and present my reflections on the future of the governance system of Lac Brochet. I will look at why the people need to seek new ways, how people can learn through ceremonies, how people have to make personal choices and the importance of focusing on the youth. In my reflections, I talk about ways the people can incorporate Dene values into a governance system because I feel that it will take Dene traditional values for



the governance system to benefit everyone. I conclude that the people of Lac Brochet will strengthen their governance system by basing it on indigenous governing values.

The following are the three objectives for this thesis: to determine the traditional governing values, to pinpoint the problems with the current governing system and to get an idea of the governance system the people want for their community. Through the research method five traditional governing values that exist among the Dene people who live in Lac Brochet were identified. These values are based on how people survived over the years in their environment through a hunting and gathering society. This research determined that the problems with the current governing system are the way elections are conducted, the way meetings are conducted and jealousy that affects the governing system negatively. The people that were interviewed connected the issues of the community to political decisions made in the community. Based on this research, the system that would work to resolve community issues requires it to be chosen by the people who live in the community. It was stressed throughout the interviews that it was very important that the voices of the Dene elders are respected within governing structures of the future. The people that I interviewed also wanted to govern their community in the future through numerous community gatherings that are based on cultural values.

The people in Lac Brochet must learn to seek an alternative governance system because the current INAC-designed Chief and Council system does not satisfy the people of the community. The current system does not serve all the members because it only empowers a few people. A system that empowers everyone in the community would be a more satisfying system. One of the main problems with the

current system is that it is not adequately influenced by everyone, especially the indigenous people. Alfred (1999) states,

The structural integration and professionalization of Native politics within a bureaucratic framework controlled, financially and politically, by the state is the main reason for the persistence of the colonial mentality. In the Native context, all local governments, regional bodies, and national representative organizations are chartered and funded by the state. In Canada, for example, band councils, and the Assembly of First Nations are all creatures of the federal government (p.70).

It is mostly the Canadian government that controls the current governance system through a few community members. As a result, only a few enjoy a limited amount of power that is delegated to the Chief and Council by the Canadian government. The people can be involved in the governance system by having access to the information. The gap between the Aboriginal people and the Aboriginal governments will be closed through information sharing and education about the administrative practice of the government (RCAP, 1996, p. 340). It is respectful indigenous gatherings that will help the people communicate well with each other. The people will start seeking alternative ways when they learn more about the negative effects colonial conditioning has on their community. Puxley (1977) states, "The first task for the Dene, and one that takes a great deal of time and effort, is to identify and discard colonial conditioning, those elements of their identity prescribed by the colonial relationship" (p.115). The community has to work hard to identify how they are conditioned and then they have to learn how their indigenous values can help their community. Battiste & Henderson (2000) state, "There are two different points at issue here. The first is the right of Indigenous peoples to exercise and transmit their own knowledge and heritage as they see fit. The second is the benefit the western

world can derive from this knowledge and heritage” (p.92). These two authors say that when indigenous people start sharing information, they will not only help themselves; they will also help other people.

When the community gathers sufficient information, they will be equipped to devise alternative methods to deal with issues in the community. Currently, there are no formal mechanisms in place to facilitate conversations and negotiations between Aboriginal governments and the federal government like there is between the federal government and the provincial government (Green, 2003, p.4). Therefore, the community must organize as a nation and speak on its own behalf with other nations. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) defines Aboriginal Nation in the following words: “there are three elements in this definition: collective sense of identity; size as a measure of capacity; and territorial predominance” (p.178). The people of Lac Brochet are part of a large group of people that consist of a few thousand who share similar language and culture and they live in a territory that is dominated by them so the people of Lac Brochet can be part of a Dene Nation that is recognized by Canada. However, before they are recognized as an Aboriginal Nation, they must make plans for their future and design a governance system that they will control.

One of the effective ways that the people can be motivated to embrace indigenous values is by allowing themselves to learn from the elders and traditional teachers. One of the primary reasons the people of Lac Brochet do not have respect for indigenous values is because the government authority outlawed and degraded the indigenous values in the past.

The people of Lac Brochet were conditioned to devalue their own values. Green (1995) states, "Denigration of culture, politics, spirituality and capacity for moral and intellectual engagement constructs the other in such a way as to legitimize the colonizer's action" (p.87). The assault on the Dene culture has had negative effects on the self-esteem and self-confidence of the people. The people have to relearn how to respect themselves and their culture.

One of the most powerful ways that people can relearn how to respect themselves and their people as indigenous people with valuable knowledge is by practicing traditional ceremonies. At the traditional ceremonies, people will learn positive values about their culture and people. These positive values will help them learn to care about themselves and then they will do great things to improve the conditions they are in.

The other negative effect colonization has on the people is that the people cannot unite as one. Coutu & Hoffman-Mercredi (1999) state, "A major flaw in Dene society remains its inability to unite under one leadership" (p.278). There are many negative impacts that the community has as a result of the community being divided. The ceremonies can help the people overcome the barriers that are keeping them from uniting by praying and believing in the help that the Great Spirit provides to the people. I believe that the people will come up with ideas that can strengthen them by incorporating teachings learnt from the ceremonies into the governing system. L. Smith (2002) states, "One of the strategies which indigenous peoples have employed effectively to bind people together politically is a strategy which asks that people to

imagine a future, that they rise above present day situations which are generally depressing, dream and set a new vision” (p.152).

I think that the ceremonies help people employ strategies to help one another to rise above the struggles that the people have to endure. It is through something powerful that the people will come together and dream of a better future for their children. I think that the ceremonies will bring the Dene together and it will motivate them to do something good for their people. Erasmus (1977) states, “The Dene nation, we as Dene people, will survive as long as we are collectively struggling and acting to define the world in our own terms. Only we can de-colonize ourselves” (p.181). The people in Lac Brochet have to continue struggling for a better tomorrow. It takes a lot of strength to continue the struggle and it is through the Dene culture and ceremonies that the people will stand up for them selves even though it is hard.

Individuals have to make their own personal choice to embrace indigenous values because you cannot force someone to truly embrace values. I think that by providing information to the people you will motivate them to learn more about indigenous values. The people have to make individual choices to better their lives because if they do not they will remain colonized. Anthropologist Dara Culhane (1989) in her book on Aboriginal title in British Colombia states, “My inquiry begins and ends with the basic claim that all human beings are fundamentally equal and worthy of respect, and the simple assertion that Canadian law should reflect these principles, both in theory and in practice” (p.18). When people are allowed to make their own decisions after being properly informed about things, they will make solid

decisions. People have to be respected and they deserve just treatment by their governments. Boldt (1993) states, “Indians are entitled to justice not as a bribe for compliant behavior, but because, as human beings, they have an inherent and inalienable right to receive justice” (p.11). The people will develop wonderful things for themselves and their community if they are allowed to make their own choices. A community making its own choice is a step towards a path to self-determination. RCAP (1996) recognizes that the Aboriginal people have to reform the way they are governed for them to achieve self-government (p.172). The people have to make the choice to stand up for their future because that is the only way they will decolonize. Erasmus (1977) states, “We recognize that we do have a choice. We can remain colonized, or we can struggle for the recognition of our national rights” (p.179). People cannot be forced to help themselves because they have to choose to make things better for themselves. People made their own choices about how to live in their territories in the past before they were colonized. Jennings (1976) states, “Whether hunters or farmers, all Indian bands or other organized community groups lived in territories marked by specific natural boundaries such as mountains or streams” (p.76). Within their own territories, Aboriginal people made their own choices about how to live. The indigenous people have to remember their rights and they have to make their personal choices to embrace their indigenous values and stand up for their future generations.

It is very important for the community to invest in their youth because it will be the youth that will implement what we teach today when they become leaders in the future. The other reason why the community should focus on the youth is because

young people are more open to learning than adults are. Therefore, the community should aim at transmitting cultural knowledge and indigenous values to the youth so they will have a positive impact on their community. Edward St. Pierre, an Elder that I interviewed states, “I really think that getting an education is very important. For a long time I have been feeling that it would have been good for me today if I was educated” (personal communication, October, 16, 2005).

The elders of the community feel that it is very important for young people to get educated. Many people also feel that the youth of Lac Brochet should learn about their people, culture, indigenous values, traditions and language through the education system. The community members have to help their youth to be who they are and look within themselves to get strength to overcome challenges in life. Boldt (1993) states, “If Indians are to live and survive as Indians, then Indian parents, leaders, and elders must double and redouble their efforts to teach their children their indigenous languages and cultures through informal and formal interaction and role modeling in the home and in the community” (p.188). The people have a great opportunity to pass on their culture and their indigenous values to their children through the education system. A person that I interviewed said that one of the ways the youth can learn their culture is by being out on the land (James Tssessaze, personal communication, Oct 18, 2005).

The people have to be involved in the education system so that they can help shape the future of their community through the youth. The people have to help the school make the education system reflect the unique culture of the Dene. Kakfwi & Overvold (1977) state, “It is my belief that the Dene are unique, different from the

people in other parts of Canada; that education in the North should reflect this uniqueness; that our own uniqueness must be built on the traditional values of the Dene along with the ideas and views we now have from our experience as a colonized people” (p.145).

To effectively decolonize, the people of Lac Brochet will need to take a stand and be involved in how their children are educated in their community. The people need to take part in the curriculum development and how it is implemented in the school. It is also very important that the Dene School integrate the Dene perspective into the curriculum.

The other important process in decolonizing the people through the education system is by the people being involved in the administration of the education system. The people should get involved in the school planning as a community so that the school system will be organized around the needs of the students rather than the needs of politicians and the elite groups. Kakfwi & Overvold (1977) state, “The school year is set up to suit the needs of the teachers and other civil servants; the summer is the best time to go for holidays, to go south for further education. There is really nothing in this set-up to reflect the needs of the Dene” (p.144). The only way the school will really strengthen the Dene language, the Dene culture and the Dene identity is by the Dene people being fully involved in how the school is set up and operated. If the people do not get involved in the education system, their way of life will not be taught to their children in the school.

The leadership involvement is crucial in the promotion and advancement of the Dene culture within the education system. The leadership have to stand up for the



rights of the Dene people. They have to make sure that the education system meets all the needs of the youth. The leadership has to be aware of all the needs of the community and the youth in order for them properly help the community. Crate (2005) states,

The leadership at all levels have not addressed the personal and the educational issues facing the students, or the social issues arising from the community which impact on the students and their personal and educational well being. In addressing these issues, the leadership must base their actions from a healthy sense of pride, self-esteem, and self-sufficiency, knowing that the answers lie with them and the community in general (p.148).

The education system must do more for the youth and the community of Lac Brochet because the high drop out rate suggests that there is something missing in the education system. The other issue is that many students who go through the education system become distant from their language and culture, suggesting that they are not being trained to value their Native heritage and identity. It would take good leadership to make the school be successful in building the self-esteem and self-confidence of the young people. The Dene youth of Lac Brochet have to value their families, their ancestors and themselves for them to achieve the self-esteem and self-confidence that are required to be successful in life. Therefore, the school ought to be designed and operated based on the Dene needs.

Indigenizing the governance system will give voice to the Dene elders, youth, women and the men in Lac Brochet. This process will give self-esteem to the people. When the Dene people have self-esteem, they will have confidence to achieve anything. They will build a community where the Dene people have control over their own affairs based on their indigenous and cultural values. The books that I read

for the thesis say that the Aboriginal people must design their own systems so that they will achieve self-government. Some of the books, such as *Peace, Power and Righteousness*, say that only a system that is based on indigenous values will empower the indigenous people. The book *Like the Sound of a Drum: Aboriginal Cultural Politics in Denendeh and Nunavut* talks about how the northern communities come up with good systems for self-government when they use their culture.

All the materials that I read alluded to the idea that Aboriginal people will achieve self-determination and self-government by relying on themselves and their cultures. The activities that I would recommend to prepare for self-government are that the people should learn from the elders and combine that knowledge with the tools that the people gain through the education system. It is also very important that the community teaches the youth about their culture and their identity so that they will be well informed to make decisions that will benefit the community in the future. The research question that would be interesting in the future is about how the education system can prepare the youth to design an indigenous governance system.

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### **List of Interview Subjects**

Angelique Enekwinarre, personal communication, October 17, 2005.

Anonymous, personal communication, October 28, 2005.

Archie Enekwinarre, personal communication, October 12, 2005.

Catherine Moise, personal communication, October 17, 2005.

Edward St. Pierre, personal communication, October 16, 2005.

Florence Tssessaze, personal communication, December 1, 2006

James Tssessaze, personal communication, October 19, 2005.

Kerrie Samuel, personal communication, October 23, 2005.

Mary Danttouze, personal communication, October 12, 2005.

Pascal Denechezhe, personal communication, October 24, 2005.

Racheal Danttouze, personal communication, August 14, 2006.

Veronique St. Pierre, personal communication, October 12, 2005.

## Appendix A

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# **February to December 2004 Band Governance Research Project Report**

**For Northlands Denesuline First Nation  
Report written by Glenn Tssessaze**

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## **Purpose**

In 2004, the Northlands Denesuline First Nation conducted a research in the community about what the people felt about implementing a community governance constitution based on the Dene culture in the community. It consisted of two community surveys, individual interviews and two workshops. The end result of this research is for the community to use this report to build a healthy governance system. Victor Tssessaze and Joe Antsanen were Band Councilors that initiated this project at the political level. Glenn Tssessaze and Linda Dettannikkeaze were the researchers conducting interviews and organizing community workshops for the research.

## **The First NLB Governance Research Survey on February 19 to 20, 2004**

The first survey was two-sided pages. Linda Dettannikkeaze and I (Glenn) formulated the questions. After reviewing the questions, the Chief and Council made a few changes to some of the questions. We printed 50 copies and 18 of them were completed. Nine people filled them out themselves. I filled out nine questionnaires with eleven people that I interviewed (Seven individual interviewees and two paired on the other two). **A total of 20 people participated.**

The people thought that the surveys were too long. Some people were concerned about what this information was going to be used for after they are collected. Some people refused to participate in the survey. I went from door to door and approached people to motivate them to participate.

Each questionnaire had 33 questions. 18 of which had to be answered in writing. There were 10 male participants and 10 female participants. 2 people were between the ages of 16 to 24. 3 were between the ages of 25 to 30. 7 were between ages of 31 to 41. 3 were between the ages of 42 to 59. 5 were 60 and up.

Most of the people interviewed have lived in Lac Brochet 10 years or more. Everyone interviewed are Dene from Lac Brochet who live there or are strongly connected to the people and the community. Five of the people interviewed spoke only Dene. One spoke only English. 12 are Dene/English bi-lingual speakers. Two of them could speak Cree, Dene, and English.

Most of them identify them selves as Roman Catholics. One of them said they were not. Some of them said they believed in the Native American Church. All 20 strongly agree that it is important to preserve and protect the Denesuline culture and language.

Most of the interviewees said that at least 50% of their total diet consists of traditional foods (mostly Caribou). Out of the people interviewed, 2 identified themselves youth, 1 as a student, 10 as staff members, 1 as an entrepreneur, 5 as Elders, and one as a community volunteer.

Most of the interviewees feel that the issues in their community are related to social (especially abuse) and economic (lack of employment opportunities) issues. A few said that there is a housing issue and unfair distribution of community resources among the members.

**Question: What kind of changes would you like to see happen in your community?**

***Respondents' answers:***

- More employment and education opportunities.
- Mental health issues to be addressed more.
- People practicing fairness and equality more often in the community.
- Chief and Council to work with the youth.
- The people that are in positions of power or authority such as leaders should have respect, be fair and honest. They should “walk the talk”. They should be involved in community activities. They should be involved in the creation of a network atmosphere so that there is team effort in establishing preventative programs.
- More activities for the youth such as a youth drop in centre, education, training, and cultural teachings.
- More research needs to be done in the community.



- Changes in the current community leadership system. A new one should be made. Have a community gathering and start off fresh. Pay all band bills and have a voucher system for the welfare recipients. Have community members look at the band financial statements and make a plan for the future.
- More employment opportunities for school graduates.
- More networking, teamwork, and communication in the community.
- New band office, band store and a hotel.
- An alcohol and drug free community.
- More healing workshops and more houses built.
- Community economic development.
- Community healing.
- Exercising of traditional ways.
- Helping each other unconditionally.

**Question: How do you want to see your community in 10 or 20 years?**

**Answers:**

- A quite community with operating band businesses such as a pool hall, a gas station, a fishing lodge, and forestry companies.
- An all season road to be available.
- The community continuing to practice traditional ways, culture and language.
- Community with businesses, education, sports, and traditional knowledge.
- A healthy vibrant community. Growth and less unemployment.
- A community that shares with each other and gets along with nature.
- A better community governance system and better financial management.
- People or persons being accepted for who they are.
- Better band office.
- Using both the mainstream and traditional techniques to meet the community needs.
- Listening to Elders.
- Healthy families.
- Everybody to be happy together.
- A community being self-reliant economically and socially.
- People not forgetting about the poor, giving a little and helping one another.

**Question: What is the role of the Chief and Council system to you?**

**Answers:**

- The Chief and Council are supposed to be loving, honest, and caring. They should work on community issues and talk for the people.
- The Chief and Council's role is to oversee all matters of the community. Being responsible to the people. They are to work fairly and respectfully and be the main role models for the community.
- They are to provide guidance towards self-government and create new jobs.
- They are there to do good things for the people.
- Elders should help the Chief and Council.

- They are the visionaries for the community.
- They should work closer with the youth so the youth can get involved.
- Make changes to fit the needs of the community.
- To make sure everything is going as it should.
- Maintain the community.
- They are the “spokes persons” for the community to deal with issues at the political level.
- They are the ones to create things for us and have all their staff to work in the band office.
- To communicate with the people about the conditions of the band.

**Questions: Do you think and/or feel that the Chief and Council system needs to change?**

**Number of people who said Yes: 17**

***Comments made:***

- There should be at least a minimum of 2 or 3 council members at home all the time.
- Elders should be involved with the Chief and Council.
- Spirituality should be incorporated into the Leadership system.
- We should not vote for the leaders, we should have a different leader selection system.

**Number of people who said No: 3**

***Comments made:***

- Because learning takes time after you change.
- Keep the Chief and Council system for at least 4 to 6 more years.
- Have longer term for Chief and Council.
- Decisions that Chief and Council make should benefit a larger clusters of members.

**Question: What is community governance to you?**

***Answers the people gave:***

- Dealing with all kinds of funds.
- You should keep the good leaders for about 10 years.
- When leaders go out of town, they should make copies of the agenda and minutes of the meetings they attended and hand them out to the members when they get back.
- Chief and Council should stay and live in the community.
- They should make laws for the community with help from youth and Elders.
- It is a structure established for the people by the people that allow day to day operations.
- The leaders should ask the advice from the people.
- The leaders should tell the people what they go out for and when they get back they should tell the people what they gathered and did out there for the people.

- They should report to the people in public and post up on a public wall all their records.
- We need to be educated on this topic (community governance).
- It means laws and procedures to abide by.
- The people should have more power rather than giving all the powers to the chief and council.
- Governance in my opinion is leadership (Chief and Council) carrying out duties and responsibilities according to the laws it has created. Their roles are to advocate and negotiate on behalf of its people at the political level to improve and change the conditions on the reserve.
- Leadership.
- Band meetings, drumming, and Elder involvement.
- It means to govern ourselves about everything.
- It is very important because it is for the people and the voice of the people.
- To keep the community in order.
- Spirituality, Elders, and traditions.
- Candidates' words, the way they live and what they have done should be the factors considered when selecting leaders.
- People should not be allowed to play with it because it is very important and it needs to be done right.

**Question: What does community constitution mean to you?**

*Answers people gave:*

- Indian Act.
- The government makes it and we follow it.
- You shouldn't lose your job for speaking out.
- We follow it as best we can.
- It is planned for 20 years ahead.
- It can not be changed.
- Community law.
- Outline structure of governance suited for the people.
- Be relevant to our location, etc.
- Taking care of your own self and no other.
- Our constitution is in Brochet.
- Treaty rights.
- It is what people live off such as fish, water, and land.
- It is important.
- People need to get educated about it.
- It needs to be known. Educate about it. Inform about it.
- I don't know about it, I don't know what it is.
- It is by-laws that are created by the Chief and Council in following through with the community's recommendations, demands, in accordance with the Indian Act.
- Rules and regulations which people are to abide by.
- Community by-law to be respected.

- You have to keep your word.
- If you break it, you will get hurt.
- No chances given.
- It is a guideline or protocol made by the community to be followed by the community.
- Chief and Council must follow it.
- It is something big.
- It is traditional, old ways, helping each other, non monetary and it is the Elders knowledge.
- Good nomination and election system that people respect.
- One leader is good.

**Question: What should be in the community constitution?**

*Answers that the people gave:*

- People could do it themselves.
- By-laws regulating community activities (gambling, stray dogs, curfew, ski-doo at night and other things).
- Incorporate traditional policies and natural laws with some modern aspects.
- It should have examples for people to understand.
- A good Chief.
- Chief and Council reporting about their travels including minutes.
- Leaders asking the people what to do and say on their behalf.
- Consequences that replaces the leaders for incompetence with competent leaders.
- Educating the people about by-laws, informing the people, sharing of information.
- Get rid of by-laws that are outdated.
- A strong law respected by all community members.
- Not getting help from the band for breaking community laws.
- Everything from hiring employees, election procedures, band membership, etc.
- Spirituality, old ways, Elders, helping one another.
- Helping the poor, leaders staying home, band office should be busy.
- Dene language and Elders.
- Band meetings in Dene.

**Question: Do you think that and/or feel that it is a good idea to have a governance system consisting of equality/sharing powers rather than where a Chief has more power than the individual councilors?**

*Number of people that said yes: 10*

*Reasons given:*

- Sharing powers would be more powerful when making decisions on big issues (like money, ect.)

*Number of people who said no: 9*

*Reasons given:*

- Majority rules (quorums) and one is needed to keep control.
- The Chief is the leader. Councilors have to listen to him or her.
- One Chief should have the final say.
- One has to be the leader.
- When the Chief makes the decision, and if two councilors do not agree then things will not work.

*Abstentions:* 1

**Question: Prior to the establishment of Lac Brochet, how did the community leaders work together?**

*Answers people gave:*

- When the Elders said something, the leaders and the people listened.
- People worked together when there was no welfare.
- People still did not listen to our legends about the land back then.
- People volunteered and made decisions together.
- The leadership discussed matters to its fullest extent, everyone had a say, before a decision was reached. They had knowledge and wisdom which is limited today. Leadership needs improvement today.
- There was teamwork and communication.
- Peter Anstane (Noel's dad) and Donald Tssessaze (the father of late J.B and Alfred T.) were the councilors during the beginnings of Lac Brochet. People did what they said. There was no alcohol then. They upheld the treaty rights, "As long as the sun shines and the river flows the treaty would last".
- They met every week and had feasts after church usually it was the elderly men who had the meetings.
- Pat Hyslop was good. He talked for the people. He spoke English, Cree and Dene. He told the people not to take money offered by the government and told us not to build an all-weather road.
- Back then people survived even though they were very poor.

**Question: Do you think the traditional system of decision making worked better than the modern one?**

*Answers people gave:*

- Yes because people were happy.
- Definitely. Today you see too much competition and betrayal. The peoples' voices are not being considered much anymore.
- We need to change the old system, we need a new system.
- In the traditional system, when the leaders spoke the words were remembered and the people followed and money was not an issue.
- No.
- Definitely.
- There was a 50/50 balance.

- There was an Elder's council and the Chief and Council would follow. People respected the leaders.
- Yes, it was because it was built around consensus and understanding.
- People worked together. There was lots of praying.
- Yes, in the past it was for the kids and it was not to make anyone a boss. It was for people who could work for the people. Pat did really well. He spoke well and white people gave him money when he needed it.

**Question: Do you think the traditional system could still be used?**

*Answers:*

- Yes, through by-laws and by keeping this a dry reserve.
- Yes, but probably some changes would have to be made with it to fit in today's world.
- It maybe too hard. There has to be no money and no band office. If we pray and ask god for help maybe it would be possible.
- Yes, because a lot of teenagers are getting involved with alcohol and drugs and not participating in the traditional cultural ways.
- Yes, but we need more education on this.
- What is traditional system?
- Yes, but it needs to be taught to those who do not know it.
- Yes, but it would be very hard because people would have to respect. If there were Elders involved then things would probably be better.
- Yes, I believe so but ask the Elders and not the young people.
- It is possible if people agree with each other.
- Yes, help one another.

**Question: How can the community members and leaders assist one another in building the future?**

*Answers:*

- There would have to be a good system in place. When people get together, the majority would have to rule. The leaders should not make big decisions until the majority approves. There should also be votes on money.
- Problem solving by leaders by consulting with youth, Elders, and the people.
- By putting aside petty differences and think for our future generations. If future generations are sincerely considered then there would be less self-gain.
- Listen and learn with respect.
- We would have to ask the Great Spirit for help. There needs to be communication and sharing of information, negotiation and truth.
- Through teamwork and workshops.
- Working together and communicating on what is happening.
- Working with the youth and workshops at the school by Chief and Councilors.
- Communication.

- Chief and Councilors working with Elders and talking to people. People would have to give advice to the leaders. Elders have to be part of it. Elders have to talk to youth.
- By listening to one another and believing that something can be done.
- Stop criticizing and putting each other down and build around respect and understanding.
- Chief and Council should sit with the Elders. They should meet with them. Elders could help the leaders by speaking and praying for them.
- Through negotiation and communicating.

**Question: List and explain all the traditional teachings and values that you would like to see in the community governance system and the community constitution?**

*Answers people gave:*

- Respect for Elders, each other and leaders. Band meetings should be in Dene.
- Traditional gatherings, teachings and respect. Having the people hold power. If leaders or spokespersons are unable to uphold their position then they should be removed by the people. The people should make leaders work for their position.
- Respecting tree families.
- People have to agree with the Elders council. Using the Dene language at general meetings. Leaders reporting the minutes of meetings in Ottawa and other places to the people in Dene so the Elders can understand.
- Speak Dene and work like a Dene.
- Mediation by council of Elders.
- Drum dancing, hand games, fishing and hunting.
- Drums. Having community collection of things (clothes, beds, furniture, money, food) and give to the poor or low income earners. Helping one another. Having a Pot luck system. Share even if it is non financial.
- Cultural teachings and values. Speaking Dene in the community including all offices.
- Equality.
- Spiritual teachings by Elders.
- Establishing an Elders committee.
- We have to think about life after death too.

**Question: How should the community governance system be structured so that all the voices of the families and groups of the community are heard in the community governance council (known as chief and council)?**

*Answers given:*

- Putting Elders on boards. Acknowledging that Elders are smart even though they do not speak English. Nominees should talk to the people in formal public settings before the elections. People should talk to the Elders. We have to speak.
- Using APTN.

- Having respectable heads of family groups represent their families and families can bring forth their concerns through these heads. Then these heads, people and Elders can meet together to discuss the future.
- Revamping everything. Gathering everybody and stop everything in the community. During that time people should gather to rebuild everything together slowly.
- Education. People do not know about these things. Present a modal to them.
- Establishing a committee of volunteers who will design and implement the new system. These volunteers should be people who are committed and who can serve for a long term period. They can be the voice for the people.
- Through sharing circles, workshops, and healing initiatives.
- Helping even though it is not financial.
- Listening to everything and not favoring anyone.
- A consultation procedure needs to take place first and not just one time. Have a meeting with the band employees and chief and council. Get their feed back. Meet with Elders and get their feedback then meet with the whole community and get their feedback as well.
- They should communicate with each other.
- Community gatherings.
- I would agree with a clan system.

**Question: Do you think that youth that are 16 years of age should be allowed to vote for community leaders?**

***Number of People who said yes: 8***

*Reasons given:*

- Because the band belongs to the community. The youth are our future.
- Because they are community members too.

***Number of People who said no: 10***

*Reasons given:*

- Because they are inexperienced and they are not always thinking of all aspects needed to make a rational decision.
- As a family youth should be heard also. Only when they get married, youth should vote.
- Not happy with election system.
- Kids do not have a mind of their own. They are still learning.
- They are too young for election.
- Too young and they do not have a mind.
- Because they may not know what they are voting for.
- That is not the legal age to vote. Leave it at age 18.
- Don't have an election system. Use a consensus system.
- Don't have the voting system. Use another traditional system.

***Abstentions: 2***



**Questions: Do you think 18 years of age should remain the voting age?**

*Number of people who said yes: 10*

Reasons:

- This enables youth to live and learn. When they reach a mature age, then they will realize their next level of life.
- Some people have lots of kids and it will open doors for nepotism which will have negative results.
- When you are 18 you are an adult and you can think ahead.
- Because that is the legal age.

*Number of people who said no: 3*

Reasons:

- I believe that voting rights should be for people who do not drink or do drugs.

**Abstentions: 7**

Comment made by people:

- Maybe make the voting age 19 because maybe then they will have a mind.
- I don't like the voting system.

**Question: What do you think of the community having a youth and Elder council representative in the political governing system/constitution?**

*Answers given:*

- Elders should be the first priority. Elders are the advisors. There should be at least four official Elders who advise the leaders. Make sure the Elders you pick as official Elders are honest people.
- When those councils are established, people will have a say in the governance system.
- This is good. This enables every one to be represented and respected. This will prepare the youth for a more complicated matters as they mature.
- Great idea.
- Yes, these individuals can speak to their age groups and be the voice of their age group in the community grand council.
- Good because the youth have ideas and they can be represented by youth leaders. These youth leaders can communicate with the community council. We also need the Elders views represented as well.
- It should work.
- It will be good only if these council members are committed long term.
- There needs to be a strong teamwork.
- You have to be careful which Elders you pick. Some Elders don't watch what they say. I think the good Elders are Catherine M, Ann Oten, Angelique Enek, Cecile Caseyon, Celine A, Louie Namb, Etc.
- We need all the views.

- It is important to listen to everyone.
- Elders are needed. Even though they do not speak English, they know what they are doing.

**Question: What do you think of the community having a women's representative in the political governing system/constitution?**

*Answers:*

- Yes, women are smarter.
- This would be good if the women in council are respectable and hold traditional knowledge.
- Great.
- This could be the same for youth and Elders council.
- Women rep or not it does not matter. I look for who can do the job. I would consider skills and positive background and their ability to do the job.
- It is good to have the same number of women and men represented in the council.
- Yes, people like Lena Sha' Oullie and Lizette D. are good.
- Women have a strong voice.
- A lot of people like that idea.

**Question: How do you want and/or see your community to be governed by your community?**

- When we see something wrong, we have to fix it. Never giving up.
- By having the community involved in organizing their policies they will have the responsibility to uphold them as well. It will enable disputes to be handled thoroughly.
- Being together.
- Talking over things in meetings and gatherings.
- Through communication, teamwork and networking.
- By people working close together and having more general meetings.
- By enforcing strong policies. More communication through regular meetings and workshops.
- The band workers have to be good. They have to be nice. They have to listen to leaders. They have to be in the office during office hours.
- I would like to see equality.
- It is good for people to talk good with each other. They have to work together to make changes.
- We have to do it ourselves.

**Question: What ideas and/or concerns do you think and/or feel should be addressed?**

*Answers:*

- We need to address the Chief and Council issue first.
- We should work together. Right now there is nothing in the band office. Leadership has to be around more. We need to build businesses. We need to know

where the North of 60 land claims negotiations is at. We need to know what they have been doing and where they are going. If we are giving up our land then we need good services for it in return. We want to know where our money is being spent. We need to train our people.

- Happiness. Traveling on traditional lands. Building and maintaining a really good youth center. Training people to have their diver's licenses. There should be a job resource centre. More money for school and training. The youth to leave drugs, hair spray and alcohol alone. Having a pool hall, community activities, recreational activities and cultural education (meat cutting, traveling, etc.) in the community. Parents need to talk to their kids about family problems. School stress in math and science need to be addressed. We need a sports trainer and someone who can teach us how to eat healthy. We need to eat more traditional food. Kids should be trained in Winnipeg for hockey like Jordan Tootoo.
- Honesty and respect needs to be highlighted in all areas of public work. Honesty builds respect and respect builds a future.
- Stop corruption of stealing and start helping the youth.
- Gather people together to talk about and make consensus about what should happen with the current situation. Invite KTC, MKO, Grand chiefs and the media.
- Talking about the future.
- Treating all members equal.
- We need more education in the community. We need young people to prepare for self-government. We need to start small businesses like stores, restaurant, hotel and gas station.
- It is hard to deal with the drug issue but it has to be dealt with.
- We need more housing, especially for single parents and widows.
- Ethical issues: improper by-laws, firing people on hearsay and gossip.
- Jealousy in the community has to be addressed. No more alcohol and drugs. More jobs, pool hall, youth centre. We should build something with the tobacco tax money. There should be something for the Elders like an Elders home.
- In the past people shared food with each other, money was never an issue.
- There should be an Elders apartment block where they can live close together and have their independence with security and supervision. As a Nation and a community, we need to take care of our Elders better if we want to have them around longer.
- We need justice in our community. We need to intervene as a community and together stop family violence. Family violence includes verbal, mental and emotionally abusing. We need to stop family members from harassing each other. Violence affects the whole community so it is everyone's business.

**Northlands Denesuline First Nation Governance Research  
2nd Survey April 29, 2004 Report**

The questionnaire was put together by Glenn Tssessaze and Linda Dett-Patterson. The surveys were printed April 29, 2004 and the survey was conducted by Glenn from May 5 to May 9, 2004. Thirty copies were printed. 28 were filled out of which one was not returned. The other two have not been completed. Therefore, **27 people participated.**

The purpose of the survey was to get an idea of how the people of Lac Brochet feel about their band (band governance). The following is a list of questions (they are written the same way they were asked) and the responses to those questions.

There were five questions and an area for comments on the surveys. One person seemed to have misunderstood the survey and the high school students that were surveyed seemed that they did not really think of the questions.

### **Age groups that participated**

Two people were under 18 years old, 1 between 19 and 25, 10 between 26 and 36, 9 between 37 and 55 and 5 were 56 and up.

### **Question # 1: How many times should there be general band meetings?**

**Answers:** 14 said once a month, 8 said every two months, 3 said four times a year, 1 said 3 times week and 1 did not give an answer

### **Question #2: How many times should the Chief and Council have a council meeting?**

**Answers:** 6 said once of week, 13 said every two weeks, 4 said once a month and 4 did not respond to this question, they only commented.

#### ***People made the following comments about this question.***

\*Elders should sit in on their meetings, Chief and Council should report to the people about what they are doing.

\*People have the right to know what the Chief and Council talk about in their meetings.

\*People should be allowed to sit in on the Chief and Council meetings.

\*Chief and Council should meet every Fridays to make agreement about issues.

### **Question #3: How long should the elected Chief and Council be in the office?**

**Responds:** 2 people said one year, 14 people said two years, 3 people said three years, 4 said four years, and 1 said five years

\*2 did not respond

\*1 said every month

### **Question # 4: Do you think it is a good idea to have a feast and a formal inauguration after each election?** 22 said yes and 5 did not respond.

\*At the inauguration, people should talk to the newly elected leaders. Giving them advice and encourage them.

**Question # 5: Which one of these suggested names do you like for your community governance leaders?**

<i>Suggested names</i>	<i>Number of the respondents that liked it</i>
Denesuline Community Executive Officers:	3
Northlands Denesuline Executive Officers:	6
Community Governance Representatives:	3
Chief and Council:	12
No response:	3

\*One person suggested a name in the Denesuline language

**General comments that people have made about the Band**

- The Chief and Council (C&C) should be in the office most of the time.
- C&C should complete tasks for the community and the members.
- The majority of the community members should exercise their right to make some or all members of the C&C to resign for showing no interest in working for the people.
- We need more communication. The band and the people should not practice favoritism and nepotism.
- The C&C should have their titles clear so that the people will respect them.
- C&C system needs improvement.
- The leaders need to be qualified so they are able to carry out their responsibilities and roles.
- Leaders should have formal education and political experience background.
- Leaders should be positive role models and should live a drug and alcohol free lifestyles. They should be physically healthy. They should participate and be active at community events/gatherings/ and visit families in their homes.
- The leaders should practice team building skills and effectively work with each other for the benefit of the whole community.
- The C&C should travel less and have more weekly council meetings.
- The Leaders should reside in the community.
- Nominees for office should be a resident of the community because the C&C or leaders need to know what is happening in the community.
- The band should not pay employees who are gone.
- The band should start out fresh. New beginnings, new staff...etc.
- We need more educated people in the office.
- Punctuality should be enforced in the office.
- The band should go by the band by-laws by the core.
- Strictly enforce the band rules.
- Measures should be taken when people abide by the band by-laws and when they do not abide by them.
- Young people with education should be given a chance to work in the band office.
- C&C should hire people with higher education so they could do the writing and organizing for them.

- When the C&C, the Land claims negotiators and other important representatives travel for business, they should take an exceptional and educated youth with them.
- The band should create jobs that require excellent writing skills.
- Request to have the Calm-Air rather than Perimeter, maybe both.
- People should have the right to petition to fire current leaders who are not performing well.
- The people should take the elections and nomination more seriously.
- Currently, you don't know who to talk to about concerns you have about the band. It seems no one is there.
- Leaders should stay in Lac Brochet and have more meetings.
- There should be a committee in place that reviews the decisions C&C makes.
- All elected leaders should be in Lac Brochet most of the time.
- The people want to know what the leaders are doing. They should inform the people through the radio, news letters, etc. If you are changing anything, do it very slowly step-by-step.
- The community members do not know what is going on. They do not know why the leaders are gone all the time.
- If this remote community is to have a future, then the leaders need to shape up and start looking at the future.
- The leaders need to concentrate more on the community economic and social issues.
- When people get nominated, they should explain to the people how they feel about their nomination.
- People should explain really well why they are nominating the people they are nominating.
- All candidates running for office should answer questions in public before elections. Speech should be made mandatory for candidates.
- There should be elections every year because we do not know who are going to be committed leaders.
- Elected leaders should be involved in all community activities. They should participate in all healing gatherings like sharing circles, ceremonies, and workshops.
- Leaders should listen.
- Everyone should work together, band staff, leaders, community...etc.

### **Researcher's comments**

The people that participated in the survey were very good. They did not have a problem with this survey. A few people needed more information about the purpose and the overall nature of the NLB community governance research project. The two youth who participated in this survey may have been influenced by the atmosphere of the school since they filled them out there. I feel that they did not express how they really feel about their band. Many people want to see change in their community but they are not sure how to make that change. They want to see leaders who can make that change.

## **Individual meeting with a Band Member**

### ***Male in his 40's***

This band member is from the band and he has lived with the community almost all of his life. He has worked on projects in the community in the past, he served as a councilor and he has a completed post-secondary education. He suggested that the band should look at other first nation's constitution to give us ideas for our own. He talked about how the students from the community need help from the community. He knows what it is like to be a student and it is hard he says. He stressed the importance of praying. He says that some people in the community do not watch what they say. He says that some traditional ceremonial leaders gave him good advice. He gives community members, especially leaders, good advice when they have a hard time. When you look at the weather it is not always sunny and sometimes it rains, that is how we are too. Sometimes we have our bad days. When we are down, all we have to do is wait because things will work out again just like the sun shinning again.

## **Band Governance Workshop March 6, 2004 @ the Lac Brochet Band hall**

This meeting was open to the community and it started at 7:00pm. Victor Tssessaze spoke to the people and he translated for U of M-Native Studies Head and Professor Dr. Peter Kulchyski who did the presentation.

Peter Kulcyski talked about the possibility that:

- Northlands Denesuline self-governance Act can override the Indian Act,
- custom government within the Indian Act,
- Then he also talked about and encourages the people of Lac Brochet to develop their own government system. He said that the new government is an inherent right.

- a) He told us to examine different existing modals that have been created already.
- b) He told us to draft modals, discuss them, compare them to the Indian Act and get support from the people.
- c) He said that having a constitutional ratification means having people vote for the constitutional modal/system they like.
- d) After the people accepted it through ratification, the new constitution/system can be implemented.

### **The people who spoke at the workshop:**

***Archie Enekwinnarre***

He asked to establish a committee of five Elders to work on establishing this new system. This 5 Elders can work with the band staff and leaders in that band office. They can have salaries and travel funds. He says they can be like senators and give advice and guidance to the leaders. They can also correct them if they need to. They can have some power to fire them too. The Elders can travel and bring back information to the people through workshops for community. He stresses that the Elders carry lots of knowledge.

He says the Chief and Council have to be trained about this new system. He requests for training on the new governance system for his people. He wants training in every field that effect his community so that his people are aware and knowledgeable about issues that are very important.

He says that he wants Education for his people. He wants training in the following fields: trapping, water systems, and geology.

He asks to have the outstanding grievances in Brochet and the Berrenlands band to be addressed.

He suggests a band custom election where 4 stays and 4 go every second year.

He also reminded us that alcohol and drugs are still a problem in the community.

***Catherine Moise***

She said that in the old days the government did not think about us even though we had nothing. Today, the government gives us things but it causes many problems for us. We have to help each other. We have to help ourselves; Whiteman can not do it for us. T.V. is making our kids not respect Elders.

She said talk for your self. Talk for your great, great, great grand children. She said that young people have emotional problems. Help the youth. She wants the people to talk in meetings.

***Marie Denechezhe***

She wants licenses for hunting. She wants the issues of hunting licenses to buy bullets and for hunting to be addressed. She also thinks that building only three houses is not enough. She wants more houses built and more houses to be renovated.

Dr. Kulchysli told her that the band would have to take the government to court to stop them from making them buy licenses to hunt. He said that the government has a



housing formula that applies all over. Therefore, you have to make your own constitution which gives you priority to who gets houses and how many be built.

*Veronique St.Pierre*

Elders are not going to be around that long. Don't be shy. It is hard being old. Listen to Elders. This is for your future. Listen to your parents.

*Baptist Dettenikkeaze*

He said that if you want to do something put a feather down and send a cup around. Put the cup up side down if the people are talking negative. Send a paper around a council table and write things on it and that will be the law.

He says that if we are going to be doing things then we can not be fighting each other. Elders' wisdom can build things. Do it he says.

*Augustine Tssessaze Jr.*

He says that the Election code should be done by Elders. There should be a youth's, women's, and elder's men's council. There should be general assemblies. Each council has a portfolio and under each portfolio should be director or supervisor. All these directors and supervisors should make presentations about their department at meetings. Every meeting should have an agenda. There should be a meeting every bi-weekly and resolutions made.

*Linda Dettenikkeaze*

She said that the people will decide about how many leaders they want for their community. There could be Elders and Youth representatives in the council. There could also be an open book policy in the band office that will show who all got helped and how much. All the councilors do not have to go out all at once.

**General comments Researchers made**

- There is a need to have strong simple policy guidelines for the community. Indian Affairs is too complicated.
- We need to work on financial and staff management.
- The meetings can be in Dene and there could also be a women's representative.
- Before policies, there should be a constitution. Policies goals can go under the Constitution and the policies can go under the policy goals.
- Instead of a Chief and Council, there should be a council of chiefs where there is no head chief.
- Use the clan modal.
- Present modals to the people and consult with the Elders.

- Constitution is the law of laws. It says who makes laws and how they make laws. It can include what the rights of the citizens are. Laws are the most important decisions made by the governing body.
- Policies are the procedures for implementation of the laws made.
- The core of the policies are how the administration works, staffing, and financial accounting. The question is within the administration, who makes the decisions and who reports to whom?
- Staffing: who gets hired, how, benefits and how/why do they get fired?
- In the council of chiefs, the chairperson could rotate every meeting.
- We should do away with the Chief and Council system because it is too patriarchal and colonial.
- Rather than having a Chief and Council have something like “Executive Committee of the Community of Governance” or something like that. The members can be known as the Executive Committee Officers (ECO). They can be elected. There will be no one boss higher than the other members. Each ECO can have an equal power and voice. Each ECO can be elected by their groups only. ei. Tssessazes voting only for the Tssessaze’s ECO and so on. Each ECO will represent a big family or similar groups of the community.

## **Band Governance Workshop September 25&26, 2004 @ the Lac Brochet Band hall**

Topic was on

- Presentation of draft
- Discussion
- Next Steps

There were only a few people who showed up. Peter did most of the talking. Augustine Jr. and I did some talking too.

### **Next Steps**

- Peter and I will do workshops in Lac Brochet from January 12 to the 14<sup>th</sup>. We want to **meet with the council on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2005** to discuss the project. We never meet with the council about this and it is important that we do. After we meet with the council, we will present our report and draft constitution to the people at the band hall. We will have a meeting with the people again and have discussion about the drafts on the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup>.
- It is very important that the people participate in the workshops. The more people participate the faster we can get it done. We need the council to meet with us and help us motivate the people to attend and participate in the workshops.

## Appendix B

### Consent Form

#### Master's of Arts in Native Studies Thesis Project

This research is about the traditional governance system of the Dene people of Lac Brochet. Interviews will be conducted with people of Lac Brochet who have appropriate expertise/experience with Dene cultural knowledge on governance. Questions that will be asked will be about how the Dene governed themselves long ago, how the Dene govern themselves today and how the Dene would like to govern themselves in the future.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

As a participant in this investigation, I understand the following process will be followed:

1. I understand that I need not answer every question or give information that I do not wish to.
2. I can review the thesis draft before it is submitted.
3. I understand that the approximate length of time of this interview is two hours.
4. I agree to allow the researcher to record this interview with a voice recording device. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
5. I am free to withdraw from participating in the interview phase of this study at any time and I agree that the researcher has a similar right to terminate the interview process at any time.
6. I agree to allow my name to be published in the project. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
7. All identifying notes, recording and photos and any other materials will remain with the researcher until the thesis is successfully defended and then will be stored in a Dene repository for the use of the future Dene researchers. (or destroyed)

The researcher agrees to maintain confidentiality where required as per question 4 above. This information will not be used for any purpose, other than for this project as it is presently conceived, unless the participant agrees.

I understand the purpose of this project, my role and my rights in the interview process, the fact that I will be named in the work unless I agree otherwise and that I will receive a copy of the end results.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Student/Researcher: Glenn Tssessaze      Ph.  
Thesis Advisor: Peter Kulchyski      Ph.

The research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474 7122.

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Participant's signature

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Date

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Researcher and /or Delegate's Signature

---

Date

## Appendix C

### Consent Form

#### Master's of Arts in Native Studies Thesis Project

This research is about the traditional governance system of the Dene people of Lac Brochet. Information on appropriate expertise/experience with Dene cultural knowledge on governance will be used from the Band Governance Research Project 2004 for this thesis. Information that will be used is about how the Dene governed themselves long ago, how the Dene govern themselves today and how the Dene would like to govern themselves in the future.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask.

As a participant in this investigation, I understand the following process will be followed:

- I agree to allow the Band Governance Research Project 2004 to be used for Glenn Tsessaze's thesis titled: Eh chet tey (A way of life):Re-indigenizing the governance of Lac Brochet.
- All identifying notes, recording and photos and any other materials will remain with the researcher until the thesis is successfully defended and then will be stored in a Dene repository for the use of the future Dene researchers. (or destroyed)

This information will not be used for any purpose, other than for this project as it is presently conceived, unless the participant agrees.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Student/Researcher: Glenn Tsessaze                      Ph. :  
Thesis Advisor: Peter Kulchyski                      Ph. :

The research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474 7122.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Northlands First Nations Chief's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date