

Exploring the Work of First Nations Directors of Education in Manitoba

By

Nora Murdock

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Faculty of Education

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Abstract

Education for First Nations must be understood within the historical context which saw their cultural, linguistic, and traditional knowledge undermined and devalued (*Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, 2015). The conditions that exist for First Nations today are a result of First Nations people having been disadvantaged in a multitude of ways by colonization and nowhere more so than in the First Nations education system, because the structure of formal schooling has as its foundation colonial institutions (Battiste, 2013). It is for these reasons that I use a postcolonial theoretical framework to guide this study. As the education leaders in First Nations communities, I examine the nature of the work of First Nations Directors of Education working or who worked recently in First Nations band-operated on-reserve school systems in Manitoba, Canada. This qualitative research study explores selected aspects of their experiences, perspectives, preparation, and training. Through the eyes, voices, and stories of the participants, this study seeks to understand the milieu that is First Nations on-reserve education. The results of the study identify what can be done to bring about transformational change for First Nations students.

The study found that the role of the First Nations Director of Education is multi-faceted and complex. The roles and responsibilities that the participants identified were categorized using Cuban's (1988) typology of core roles: managerial, political, and instructional. Their work is influenced by many factors including underfunding, lack of resources, high teacher turnover, and the on-going impacts of the residential schools and colonialism. The study identifies the need for specific training and provides recommendations for practice and future research.

Keywords: First Nations, education leadership, postcolonial

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to the participants who were involved in this study. I appreciate the openness and your willingness to share your stories and for giving time from your busy lives to contribute to this study. Thank you for all your contributions to First Nations education and for the commitment and dedication you have to our First Nations children.

Thank you to Fisher River Cree Nation, the Ph.D. Studies for Aboriginal Scholars (PSAS) for their support for my studies. Thank you to my cohort colleagues for their support and encouragement. Special thanks to the original “7” group: Margaret, April, Shirley, Sherry, Heather, and the late Kandy Sinclair. Your support and friendship meant a lot to me.

I extend thank you and sincere appreciation to my advisors, Dr. Jon Young, Dr. Kiera Ladner, and Dr. Carolyn Crippen.

Special thanks to my two children, Dustin and Reanne, for their patience and understanding. Thank you for who you are and for all your love and support. Thank you for your encouragement. I love both of you with all my heart.

This thesis is dedicated to my late husband, Ted Murdock, who always said I could and had to do this.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
List of Tables	7
Chapter One.....	8
Background to the Study	8
Introduction	8
Personal Standpoint.....	11
Education and Schooling.....	14
Purpose of the Study and Research Questions.....	17
Limitations.....	18
Definitions of Terms.....	20
The Context of First Nations Schooling.....	21
Challenges in First Nations Education.....	23
Significance of the Study.....	25
Organization of the Report	26
Conclusion.....	27
Chapter Two: Literature Review	31
Introduction	31
Assimilation or Special Status	32
Systemic Devaluation of First Nations Identity and Knowledge	35
Marginalization	39
Postcolonial Theory.....	41
The Debate and Critique About the “Post” in Postcolonial and the Theory.....	47
Leadership for First Nations Education.....	50
Learning From the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)	54
Learning From the McKinsey Report	56
First Nations Education Leadership Strategy (FNELS).....	59
Conclusion.....	60
Chapter Three: Methodology	62
Introduction	62
Qualitative Research Design	65

Theoretical Framework.....	66
Selection of Participants	67
The Interviews—Data Collection	71
Data Analysis.....	74
Coding	75
The Position of the Researcher	77
Indigenous Research	81
Conclusion.....	83
Chapter Four	86
Findings (1): The Role of the First Nations Director of Education	86
Introduction	86
Participants’ Profiles	87
The Role of the First Nations Director of Education.....	92
Theme 1: Relationships and Community	97
Theme 2: Local System of Education—Reality of Politics	110
The Role of the Director of Education—Commentary and Reflections.....	122
Bringing It All Together Through Story	132
Conclusion.....	135
Chapter Five	138
Findings (2): The Knowledge and Skill Required—Preparation for the Role	138
Introduction	138
Background in Education	139
Prior Positions of Participants.....	159
Knowledge and Skills Set and Preparation for the Role—Commentary and Reflections.....	160
Bringing It All Together Through Story	162
Conclusion.....	164
Chapter Six	166
Findings (3): Leadership for First Nations Education	166
Introduction	166
Theme 1—Curriculum in First Nations Schools	167
Theme 2—Language Integral to First Nations	170
Theme 3—First Nations Relationship to the Land and the Environment.....	173

Theme 4—Residential Schools Live On.....	176
Leadership for First Nations Education—Commentary and Reflections	178
Bringing it all Together through Story.....	184
Conclusion.....	192
Chapter Seven.....	193
Implications and Conclusions.....	193
Introduction	193
Study Summary	194
Conclusions of the Study and Implications for Future Research	204
Research Question # 1	204
Implications for Further Research Related to Question 1	206
Research Question # 2	207
Implications for Further Research Related to Question 2	208
Research Question # 3	209
Implications for Further Research Related to Question 3	210
Research Question # 4	210
Implications for Further Research Related to Question 4	211
Recommendations for Practice.....	212
Concluding Comments.....	213
References	218
APPENDIX A: The Evolution of the Role of the Director of Education	231
APPENDIX B - Summary of OLF, McKinsey Study and FNELS.....	237
APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol.....	240
APPENDIX D - Letters to Participate and Informed Consent	242

List of Tables

Table 1: Participant Profiles.....	91
Table 2: Role of the Director of Education.....	95
Table 3: Career Paths.....	159

Chapter One

Background to the Study

Introduction

Over the past few decades, there have been multiple studies completed and initiatives undertaken with the aim of reforming, transforming, or improving First Nations¹ education in Canada. Some of the more recent include the *Report of Canada's Auditor General* (2011), *Reforming First Nations Education: From Crisis to Hope* (2011), *Nurturing the Learning Spirit of First Nations Learners* (2012), and the summary report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth and Reconciling the Future* (2015). Within these reports, there is agreement that First Nations in Canada collectively and individually are victims of a major educational deficit. This means that there are fewer First Nations completing high school (Mendelson, 2006; Statistics Canada, 2011) and, in terms of many indicators of school success, First Nations students continue to be systematically behind mainstream Canadian students (Carr-Stewart, 2006; Paquette and Fallon, 2010). The plethora of reviews, studies and reports have a common theme that indicates that the historic deficits for First Nations students are rooted in complex historical, social, and cultural factors.

In Manitoba, 15,600 students are educated in band-operated² schools (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada/Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2012). Given this population and the province of Manitoba ranking high among the provinces with a rapidly increasing First Nations population (Statistics Canada, 2011), First Nations students

¹ The term First Nation is used frequently in this paper to refer the people who are members of a band or the reserve. The term has replaced the term Indian, although Indian is still used occasionally. In Manitoba there are five linguistic groups: Dakota, Dene, Cree, Ojibway and Ojibway-Cree (Island Lake Dialect).

² In Manitoba, the majority of schools in First Nations communities are band-operated, meaning that the First Nations manages all aspects of education. The term is sometimes used interchangeably with local-control or First Nations-control.

need to achieve success in school. The graduation rates for high school must improve so that they can have the option of attending postsecondary institutions and attaining productive careers. First Nations people need to be successful in starting their own businesses, strengthen their employability skills, and become the entrepreneurs, the artists, the business leaders, and the bankers of Canada's future (Assembly of First Nations, 2005). Towards this end, attention needs to be given to improving the quality of on-reserve³ education and increasing the capacity and efficiency of the people, systems, and structures that are charged with the task of designing and delivering education in the band-operated schools.

The beginning of band-operated schools for Manitoba First Nations and other First Nations in Canada was sparked by the exchange of these policy documents: the *White Paper* of 1969 released by the Liberal government, under Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, entitled the *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy* (1969); and the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) 1972 policy statement, *Indian Control of Indian Education* (ICIE). The intent of the *White Paper* was to abolish the Indian Act and with it the special status of First Nations people in Canada. The Canadian federal government proposed to transfer administrative authority over education to the provincial governments (Battiste & Barman, 1995; Miller, 1996). In formally rejecting such a move, the NIB (now known as the Assembly of First Nations) outlined a new way forward for the education of First Nations children. The ICIE proposed local control of their own education systems and the development and implementation of a curriculum that would allow for First Nations children to learn their

³ This study is about schools on the reserves in Manitoba. A reserve is the land that is set aside by the federal government of Canada under the *Indian Act* and treaty agreements where First Nations live. In this thesis, on-reserve education refers to education that is administered by the First Nation on which the school exists. There are schools on reserves which are administered by provincial school divisions.

language and maintain their cultural identity. Also, as a reaction to the *White Paper*, First Nations in Manitoba collectively wrote a position paper entitled *Wahbung—Our Tomorrows* (Indian Tribes of Manitoba, 1971) in which recommendations were made concerning education and other areas that impact their lives. The signatories to the position paper were the Chiefs of Manitoba at the time. The document continues to maintain relevance for today.

Manitoba First Nations were united in their beliefs when they stated within *Wahbung* that education has been “notably narrow in its concept and rigid in its approach” (Indian Tribes of Manitoba, 1971, p. 117). Key messages in the document specified that education needed to be redefined for First Nations children, be geared to preparing students for total living, and include relevant culture and language programming. First Nations wanted an education that “extends far beyond the boundaries of what is conventionally considered schooling” (p. 116). Prior to 1971, First Nations students attended day schools, residential schools, or industrial/vocational schools that were managed by the federal government or missionary organizations. Since the early 1970s, the majority of First Nation communities in Manitoba manage their own schools. Currently in Manitoba, there are 57 band-operated schools in 46 First Nations communities. The transition period to local control of education in the 1970s was an exciting time; it was a time of great hope and hype, as it was seen as a historic moment when First Nations people could once again be in a position where they could decide as to the best way to educate their children, who would educate their children, and what kind of knowledge their children would acquire. Decades later, First Nations in Manitoba continue to seek education that is relevant and prepares students for total living.

Personal Standpoint

I am a Swampy Cree woman, a life-long learner, and an educator. I grew up in northern Manitoba with parents that valued learning and formal education. Both parents did not attend school beyond Grade 8 but still conveyed through action and words the importance of learning and formal education. We were raised on the land as my father was a trapper, hunter, fisherman, and outdoorsman. I come from a large family of five brothers and four sisters. We were taught to respect the earth, all things and all people. I attended high school out of my community because there was no high school there at the time. I went to university immediately after high school and went on to teach in First Nations communities. I went to several years of graduate school and have worked for over 30 years in First Nations education. I have worked as a teacher and have been in educational administration as a vice-principal, a principal, and a Director of Education for on-reserve schools for most of my working career. I was recently a Director of Education for a First Nations community for over 10 years. I currently work for Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre⁴ (MFNERC) as the Director of System Development, which involves working with all the First Nations in Manitoba with band-operated schools.

I view the “First Nations Education World” through a lens that places at center stage the effects of a colonial history and with a conviction that we need to be cognizant of and responsive to this if we are going to transform First Nations education. Exploring the nature of the work of First Nations Directors of Education is the focus of this dissertation, but on a deeper level I wanted to explore, through their eyes, voices and stories what needs to be done

⁴ MFNERC is a First Nations led education services delivery organization which was established in 1998 to provide supports to band-operated schools. Currently, MFNERC provides services to 54 band-operated schools in Manitoba in such areas as literacy, numeracy, technology, language, science, educational administration and early learning.

to bring about the fundamental change that I always felt was needed. It is because of this personal stance that I chose postcolonial theory as a framework on which to guide this study. I feel that postcolonial theory allows me to question and search for meaning in the milieu that is First Nations on-reserve education, a milieu which is complex, fraught with nuances that are remnants of a chaotic educational history. Battiste (2000) states that Indigenous⁵ thinkers use the term “postcolonial” to describe not what exists in reality but rather that the term denotes “an aspirational practice, goal, or idea” and the hope to create a new form of society (p. xix).

I was involved in the transition from a federally operated First Nations school on the reserve to band-operated in 1985. The first year of local control by the First Nation was relatively smooth and almost inconsequential as not much changed at the school level. The school had been under the jurisdiction of the federal government since it opened in 1973. The teachers who were working there prior to local control in 1985 were federal government employees. The transition was barely noticeable and the first principal for the now band-operated school was a non-First Nations person. I recall thinking: how could this be local control, when the person who was leading the school and making the decisions was not familiar with the cultural background of the students and not from the community? I became the vice-principal shortly after and principal of the school 1 year later. The principal at the time left mid-way through the year and I had the weekend to decide if I wanted to take up the Chief and Council’s offer to assume the principal position. I agreed after talking to my father who advised me to “go for it.” At the time I did not have an administration background aside from 6 months as a vice-principal nor did I have any courses related to education administration. It was only after being appointed to the position of principal that I began to

⁵ Indigenous means “native to the area” and usually refers to people in the international context and is used by the United Nations. Indigenous is an inclusive term as it identifies peoples in similar circumstances without respect to national boundaries or local conventions.

attend professional development and take courses on educational administration. In retrospect, the availability of First Nations educators with an educational administration background was limited. This was evident as very few First Nations educators attended the professional development sessions and administration courses I attended.

The experience of being a principal in the band-operated school was isolating, as there was a limited system of support for the schools at the time. I recall calling the provincial Native Education Branch (now known as the Aboriginal Education Directorate) and being told that they could not provide any resources or assistance as the reserve school was federal jurisdiction. There was some support from the education department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada⁶ (INAC), but it was very limited as they had recently begun to downsize their education department as more schools they had previously administered were transferring to band-operated. I worked with a non-First Nations mentor initially, and the courses and professional development taught me to maintain the status quo and not to make too many changes. However, through the earlier years of my career, in the back of my mind and constantly just below the surface of the practical work was the knowledge that there was something amiss. As I gained more experience and the longer I worked in First Nations education administration, the sense of discomfiture grew. I knew that for the most part, that the students who attended the reserve schools were not engaged in the experience of school as much as they could be.

Eventually, my work in educational administration with First Nations led to a conscious acknowledgement and an awareness of the historical experiences of First Nations

⁶ The government department that administers the affairs of Aboriginal people is now known as Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). INAC is one of the federal government departments responsible for meeting the Government of Canada's obligations and commitments to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, and for fulfilling the federal government's constitutional responsibilities.

people and the impacts that these have had on the children who attend the schools on reserves. This awareness began to have an effect on the decisions I made, the programs that I chose to implement, and the approaches that I used in my daily work. I often speak to my education colleagues of changing things at the foundation level, that if we want true transformation of First Nations education then we have to completely change our approaches, our ways of thinking, planning, programming, leading, and strategizing. This constant soul-searching and questioning was unwavering in my daily work for the many years I worked as an educator and administrator in First Nations communities. I hoped that others who work in this environment would be doing the same thing and not just robotically implementing mainstream programs and curricula and perpetuating the status quo. The curiosity and my “need to know” mentality led me to choose to do this research and write this thesis. In this thesis, I hope to demonstrate how we need to challenge the status quo of how First Nation education is delivered, to change the school experience of First Nations children, and to focus on understanding educational leadership in First Nations schools. It was this from this standpoint and considering that not enough research has been done focusing on leadership of band-operated schools that led me to do this research and to write this thesis.

Education and Schooling

In this paper, I distinguish between the terms: *education* and *schooling*. It is important in this context to make this distinction, although the terms as they are used in the literature could blur this distinction. Hamilton and Zufiaurre (2014) state that education and schooling are often used interchangeably and when people use the term *education system* they are usually referring to the system of schooling. They argue that schooling is not just a formalized version of education (p. 7). While there is a conceptual differentiation between schooling and

education, the term education is used frequently to refer to the mainstream system of formal schooling. Hamilton (2015) states that education is as old as the humans have existed, but schooling is uniquely human and arises from human activity (p. 378). Osborne (2008) traces the origins of schooling in Canada and differentiates between the purpose of schooling (compulsory public schooling) and the purpose of education. He states the purpose of schooling in Canada was to address societal problems such as industrialization, secularization, nationalism, and democratization. He asserts:

It was in schools, following officially approved curricula and using prescribed textbooks that the young would be taught the skills and values required by the new social forms that were emerging. It was in schools that they would learn industrial work habits. It was in schools that they would learn the basic tenets of religion or, if not, their secular equivalent. It was in schools that they would imbibe patriotism. It was in schools that they would learn to define themselves as national citizens' and acquire the knowledge, skills, and values to make government by the people a reality. (pp. 26-27)

The purpose of education on the other hand is much broader and more abstract than learning from textbooks and school teachers. Osborne (2008) states:

The purpose of education is not to conform us to some existing version of identity or culture, but to enable us to step outside of it, to view it with fresh eyes, and thus to enrich our experience and enlarge our range of choice. Education introduces us to worlds we might otherwise never encounter; thereby reshaping our vision of the world we think we know. (p. 32)

Education is viewed as life-long and embedded in the culture, language, worldviews, and teachings of the people. Schooling is temporary and a place where you go to learn things that are prescribed. I received my education from my father and mother who taught me the Cree language, values, and ways of living and being that they demonstrated through example and everyday life-experiences. I received my schooling from attending the day school in my Northern Manitoba community, the residential high school, and the university I attended.

Prior to contact First Nations in Canada had a system of education before formal schooling was introduced to them. They had a way of transferring knowledge and skills across generations that allowed them to survive and function in society. The knowledge and skills that were transferred addressed “the total being, the whole community, in the context of a viable living culture” (Kirkness, 1999, p. 14). The goal that First Nations people in Manitoba identified in *Wahbung* has remained elusive because this kind of education has become “too easily obstructed by the organizational and institutional imperatives of school (Osborne, 2008, p. 35). First Nations in Manitoba struggle to regain control over their lives politically, socially, and culturally, and it is critical for them to achieve success in school and a way to do this is to transform formal schooling to one that is more educative and one that respects their culture, knowledges, languages, and identity.

Coulter, Fenstermacher, and Wiens (2009) in exploring the question of what makes an educated person found that it did not necessarily mean a person who has years of formal schooling. They assert that there is a difference between being educated and being schooled, and they conclude that educated people are not necessarily well-schooled and well-schooled people are not necessarily well educated. An educated person is characterized by particular traits, including someone who is curious about the world and who can think critically. They

further concluded that an educated person attempts to make “a difference in the lives of others: they use their knowledge and their understandings in their engagement with other citizens, listen respectfully and thoughtfully, and act with honesty and diplomacy” (p. 11). Osborne (2008) asks the question: “To what extent, if at all, does our schooling, especially as it is organized today, contribute to our education?” His answer to this question is that schooling does not support education, but rather it is a form of compulsory miseducation (p. 23). For the First Nations students attending the band-operated schools on reserve in Manitoba it is time to reorganize schooling so that it contributes to the education of First Nations in a meaningful way. This distinction between education and schooling is relevant in this thesis because a central assertion is: First Nations need to experience formal schooling as educative in that it recognizes and acknowledges their identity, culture, language, worldviews, and knowledges.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The position of Director of Education in First Nations communities with band-operated schools is a key role. There is a dearth of research related to the nature of their work and very little attention has been given to identifying the knowledge and skills required to do their work effectively. The purpose of this qualitative research study is to investigate the work of First Nations Directors of Education working or who have recently worked in the on-reserve education systems in the province of Manitoba. The Directors of Education are tasked with the responsibility to provide leadership to the band-operated schools, often with limited resources, little opportunity for networking, and little training to help them cope in their environments. From a practical standpoint, the purpose of this research is to explore the nature of the work, and the tasks, activities, and challenges involved in the work of a Director

of Education working in the on-reserve school system. Achieving this purpose would help to provide a better understanding of First Nations on-reserve education through an analysis of the perceptions of 12 Manitoba First Nations Directors of Education. From a philosophical perspective, the purpose of this research is to seek to understand the on-reserve system of schooling and determine an alternate approach that will lead to transformation of First Nations education and more success for First Nations students.

The first question that was answered in this study is: *what is the role of the Director of Education in a First Nations school system?* Secondly, the study identified *what specific knowledge and skills are required to effectively perform their duties?* In order to gain some knowledge in how better to prepare school leaders the third question was, *how are they prepared for their role?* Lastly, *what is effective and appropriate leadership for First Nations education that will reflect a First Nations leadership paradigm that will potentially bring about long sought after transformation of First Nations education?*

Limitations

This study has some limitations that need to be recognized. This study is a qualitative research study and is interpretative in nature, so my views and perspective will influence how the data is understood. I am a member of the group being studied, so this may influence the interpretation of the data. The study incorporates a postcolonial theoretical framework as a lens through which to view and interpret the data. As mentioned earlier in this paper, postcolonial theory provides opportunity to ask questions, address them, and look for answers and solutions. Through exploring the domination of knowledge and suppression of Indigenous knowledge perhaps First Nations can move away from being marginalized and moving into a space that is no longer on the edge and where they can be recognized in their own right. This

may be a limitation in some ways because the data indicated that many of the participants did not consciously associate the difficulties and challenges of working on the reserve to colonization. Some of the participants were not fully aware of how the history of First Nations education continues to impact the education system in the present day.

The study is also limited because Directors of Education work in a specific context that is unique and cannot easily be compared to other education administrators because of the uniqueness of the environment in which they work. There are, for example, no regulations in regards to the qualifications of the persons who fill the positions, and high turnover has resulted in the instability of the position in many communities. The study includes participants who had many years of experience as well as participants who are new to the position. The study did not specifically look at how the views and experiences of these two groups compare. The participants who had many years of experience highlighted how the role of the Director of Education has changed over the years.

There were several of the participants that were fluent in their language and frequently used terminology and phrases in Ojibway or Cree. There were at least three of the participants who would have preferred to speak and be interviewed in their language. However, since I am a Cree speaker and able to understand the Ojibway language, I was able to understand the interpretation of the concepts that do not necessarily have a literal translation into English. It is important to note that the situations in which the participants work are very diverse not only in terms of the specific cultural/linguistic background but also in terms of the political and social landscape of the particular First Nation in which they work.

The sample size is relatively small and may not be generalizable beyond the specific participants. The participants are all First Nations and their background, life experiences, and

perspectives are diverse. Because of the dynamic nature of First Nations education and the many challenges involved, the participants were, on occasion, hesitant to be candid about their experiences. Part of my task of being a researcher was to put the participants at ease and engage them in a conversation with trust and candor.

Definitions of Terms

The context of First Nations on-reserve education is unique and may not be familiar to some readers. I have defined some of the terms in the footnotes and other terms are included here to provide clarity. Many of the terms do not have clear, widely accepted definitions and are interpreted in various ways in the literature. The definitions stated reflect how they are used in this study.

The term *Aboriginal* is sometimes used in this paper and is a collective inclusive term for all of the original peoples of Canada and their descendants. The Constitution Act of 1982 specifies that the Aboriginal People in Canada consist of three groups: Indians, Inuit, and Métis.

The term *Indian* is still used frequently partly because the Indian Act of 1876 is applicable law which defines Indians in Canada as those who are not Inuit or Metis. Three categories apply to Indians in Canada: Status Indians, Non-Status Indians and Treaty Indians. The term is used by some of the participants in this study as it was acceptable and more widely used prior to the wide-spread use of the term First Nations.

The term *local-control* was used at a time of transition when individual First Nation began to take back responsibility and authority for the on-reserve schools after ICIE was published and conditionally accepted by the federal government (Miller, 1996). Even with the adoption of the ICIE and subsequent move to local-control, federal government policies

continued to strongly influence First Nations on-reserve education. According to the review of education entitled *Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of our Future* (Assembly of First Nations, 1988), the authors found that on-reserve First Nations education remained under the firm control of the federal government (p. 13) and the federal government had failed to implement the policy that they had accepted in the ICIE. The federal government still views local-control as First Nations administration of federal education programs and prescribed policies. While local control is widely used, the term *band-operated* is more suitable to describe the on-reserve schools that the bands administer. It is for this reason, I choose to use band-operated when referring to the school system that exists on the reserve.

The term *residential schools* refers to an extensive school system set up by the Canadian government and administered by churches that had the nominal objective of educating Aboriginal children but also the more damaging and equally explicit objectives of indoctrinating them into Euro-Canadian and Christian ways of living and assimilating them into mainstream Canadian society. The residential school system operated from the 1880s into the closing decades of the 20th century. The residential schools were about domination and the repression of cultures and languages and replacing them with the settler culture and languages and to force Indigenous peoples to transform into Euro-Canadian ways of being, thinking, and acting (*Honouring the Truth and Reconciling the Future*, 2015; Chrisjohn, Young, & Maruan, 1997; Paquette & Fallon, 2010).

The Context of First Nations Schooling

The local band government (i.e., the Chief and Council) has the ultimate responsibility for delivery of education on reserve within the constraints imposed by the federal government. It is the federal government department of INAC who decides on the structure of governance of

education and retains the authority for the delivery of all programs. The Chief and Council sign all financial agreements and take the lead in negotiating agreements with INAC for education funding. Most on-reserve schools are independent in the sense that Chief and Council receive the funding directly from the federal government, as they are not affiliated with another body (such as a tribal council or school division). In most communities in Manitoba, the Chief and Council devolve the entire work related to on-reserve education to a school board or education authority (with either appointed or elected members). The school board hires a Director of Education to manage the system on the reserve. The Director of Education in First Nations communities is responsible for the school or schools on the reserve, postsecondary education, transportation, budgets, operations and maintenance, and other on and off reserve education programming. The principal of the band-operated school is under the direct supervision of the Director of Education. The education governance structure is inconsistent among First Nations in Manitoba, and in some cases there is no school board and the Director of Education is under the supervision of the Chief and Council. In some communities the band councilor with the education portfolio acts as a Director of Education. In the majority of the First Nations the band council members are assigned certain portfolios to administer or oversee as part of their work in areas such as housing, social services, child and family services, health, and education. Those with the education portfolio sometimes sit as ex officio members of the school board and if there is no school board would work closely with the Director of Education on education matters. There are also some communities who have a director/principal position where one person is responsible for the tasks associated with each role. This occurs because some communities do not have enough funds to pay both salaries or the school is too small to warrant two positions.

Challenges in First Nations Education

The main issues that confront First Nations education currently include underfunding, lack of a governance structure, lack of an education legislative base and lack of the necessary infrastructure to support an effective operation. These challenges are identified in numerous government reports or reports by First Nations organizations such as the AFN. These factors have contributed to high turnover of staff which continues to negatively impact First Nations schools. There tends to be a revolving door of teachers, principals, and the Directors of Education in many communities that leads to limited progress in initiating changes and sustainable reform. The devolution process of transfer of control to First Nations occurred without the provision of adequate funding and the necessary supports that would ensure a smooth transition (Agbo, 2002; Carr-Stewart, 2006) and the disparities in funding have continued to escalate. By far, the funding formulas that are currently used by INAC have been the cause of the greatest concern.

The funding formulas that are currently used are usually non-negotiable and are determined often arbitrarily by the federal government. INAC has the responsibility for and provides the funds to support elementary and secondary education for First Nations students living on or off the reserve. The funding allocation is based on the Band Operated Funding Formula (BOFF) which includes a base amount for each student and adjustments for school and community size, geographic location, and other factors. The funding that is allocated for education is transferred according to the agreement and the Chief and Council allocate an amount to the school board or education authority. Most of the funding is determined on a year-to-year basis although there are several bands in Manitoba who are on block funding agreements based on a 5 year term.

The First Nations Education Council (FNEC) (2009) in the province of Quebec has developed a funding framework that can be used in all regions. The report emphasizes the need for new formulas. The report states:

The buying power of an old federal formula first used in 1988, and last updated in 1996 is greatly reduced. The formula has never been amended to account for educational innovations. Since 1996, First Nations funding increases have been capped at 2%, an amount that falls short of the rising cost of living and the growing student population. (p. 7)

The 2% cap was placed on the education funding for First Nations elementary and secondary education in 1996 because Canada was facing a serious deficit (Drummond and Rosenbluth 2013, p. 5). This was intended to be a temporary measure until the national deficit was decreased, but it has continued to this day and has compounded due to inflation and the burgeoning First Nations population. For several years, there have been many recommendations to amend the funding formulas, including a review that was conducted by a working group made up of members from across Canada. The report entitled *A Study of Educational Cost Drivers to First Nations Education* was published in 2006, but there has been no follow-up from the recommendations. Funding for First Nations education is complex and a point of debate and conflict, in part at least, because of outdated funding formulas which do not meet their needs as identified in both the FNEC report (2009) and *A Study of Educational Cost Drivers to First Nations Education* report (2006). Both of these reports and the experiences of those who work in First Nations on-reserve education attest to the dire need of a more workable funding formula. Equity in educational funding is needed if the quality of education is going to improve (Carr-Stewart, Marshall, & Steeves, 2011; Auditor General of

Canada, 2011). *The Standing Senate Committee Report on Aboriginal Peoples* (2011) states that “there has been a 2% cap on annual increases in AANDC’s⁷ education funding, including capital expenditures” (p. 11). The 2011 *Status Report of the Auditor General of Canada* states: “the federal government has often developed programs to support First Nations communities without establishing a legislative or regulatory framework for them” (p. 1).

In the recent announcement of the federal budget for 2016, there was a significant amount committed to First Nations education, which was long awaited. The federal government has committed to lifting the 2% funding cap and increasing the amounts provided to elementary and secondary First Nations education, language and culture programming, special education, literacy, numeracy, and supporting system transformation. This increase in funding is an opportunity for First Nations to access additional resources for enhancing the schooling experience for First Nations students.

Significance of the Study

While the challenges listed above remain paramount in inhibiting the progress of First Nations education in Manitoba, there is more of a fundamental change needed for on-reserve schooling. The reports are rife with recommendations on how to improve education on the reserves. Some of these recommendations have been implemented, but they have not resulted in significant improvement of the indicators of schools success such as students staying in school, being engaged, achieving academic success, and higher graduation rates. It is important that attention is given to an improved way of educating if First Nations are going to have a chance of developing effective schools and if there is going to be a realization of

⁷ INAC was formerly known as Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. The name was recently changed with the election of the new Liberal government in 2015.

aspirations and fulfillment of the goals that First Nations have long had for education of their children. There is increasing pressure on First Nations communities to improve their schools in their communities, and more demands are being placed on educational leaders to solve the myriad problems that exist in the on-reserve schools that are band-operated. There are increased demands for accountability and increased pressure for band-operated schools to focus their attention on increasing the academic achievement of the students. The tendency by the federal government, the public, and the media has been to blame the victim, as the criticism has been directed towards political leaders for not ensuring that the on-reserve schools provide a better education for their people and for not taking responsibility to better the conditions on reserve and to improve the lives of their members in more constructive ways. However, the problems and challenges related to First Nations education are complex. It will take some time and rethinking of how we “do” education for First Nations. This study is significant because it provides some insight about leadership in the First Nations communities in which the participants work. The results of this study provide timely and important data that can help address the challenges and issues associated with the on-reserve systems of schooling. The results of the research identify potential solutions that can lead to education transformation. The data collected and the information resulting from the analysis provide potential solutions and recommendations that can be implemented so that the on on-reserve schools do not continue to fail students.

Organization of the Report

This dissertation consists of seven chapters. Chapter one provides the background relevant for this study, my personal standpoint, and the purpose and nature of the study. The significance of the study and the relevant terminology are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter Two provides the literature review and the theoretical framework for the study. In Chapter Three, I present the methodology of the research study, the study design, and how the data was collected and analyzed. Chapters Four, Five, and Six provide the findings for the study in relation to the research questions. The format for each of the findings chapters includes an introduction to the theme, discussion on the themes, and a participant story related to the findings. The quotes from the participants that are used are referenced according to their pseudonym, the number of the interview, and the line numbers from the interview transcripts. For example, a quote from Marla's second interview lines 123 to 126 would be referenced as (Marla2. 1.123-126). Finally, Chapter Seven concludes the dissertation and presents the discussion of the findings, implications, and recommendations for practice and future research.

Conclusion

As has been discussed in this chapter, the focus of this research is on the band-operated schools situated on the First Nations reserves in Manitoba. It is important and necessary to understand the experiences of First Nations Directors of Education, to articulate the challenges and identify possible solutions, and to provide direction to help in building an education system that will serve the needs of First Nations people in Manitoba. The population of the students attending band-operated schools on reserves in Manitoba is significant, so it is important that changes occur so that their destiny is better for them as well as the Canadian public. While it is understood that the factors that impact the situation of First Nations people are complex and their circumstances fraught with myriad problems, they, nevertheless, "have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories

and aspirations” to be appropriately reflected in education (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007, Article 15:1).

Band-operated schools on the reserves exist in an environment where there is great potential to have schools that reflect the community vision and a site on which to build upon the traditional knowledge of the elders and revive the language, values, culture, and worldviews that were lost through colonization. Deloria (1999) suggests that even after years of influence by the dominant society there is always a substantial fragment of the old ways left (p. 139). Although, the point is not always to bring the “old ways” back but to recognize that the students who attend the schools have a unique identity and culture and that these need to be central in their educational experience. The school experience of the students must respect their cultural identity. Postcolonial theory provides the framework of how and why schooling has evolved to where it is today for our on-reserve children and how and why we need to get back to a way of educating that sustained First Nations people for generations. Battiste (2013) posits that the schooling that exists, and what we continue to perpetuate, is based on a foreign system of educating:

Eurocentric education forces Indigenous peoples to live according to imposed Eurocentric scripts. We are not living our own worldviews or visions. We live most of our life in someone else’s dream world. We exist in the contrived institutional and conscious realms of a failed colonization; a state of existence that is often confused with the idea of civilization or modernity. We resist imitation of these colonial scripts, but we are partially complicit in maintaining them even as we seek to change them. Thus we live in contradictions and irony. Although we resist these manifestations of who we should be, we are forced to live life with a mistaken and imposed identity that

is better suited to the imagination of other. Our educational and professional experiences make us feel disconnected from our worldviews, our languages and our teachings. Our enormous creative and spiritual potential is not being used sensibly; the imposed identity unbalances our capabilities and needs. (p. 16)

In 2016, teachers working in First Nations education are still trained in the same way that they have been for decades, the provincial mainstream curriculum is still used and the structures for delivering education remain the same for the most part. The discussion so far has focused on the gaps and deficiencies in First Nations education, and it is not my intention to paint an entirely dire picture of First Nations education in Manitoba. As this study shows, there are many Directors of Education currently working in the First Nations communities who are experienced, committed, and well-qualified to be educational leaders. A number of the First Nations schools are achieving success in educational outcomes for students, increasing graduation rates, reducing drop-out rates, and offering innovative programs for students. The concern is that, overall, First Nations schools can be doing much better, and there needs to be a paradigm shift in how education is approached. It is my hope that this study will illustrate the collective challenges facing First Nations education in Manitoba and contribute information towards improvement for the band-operated schools.

Currently, there are plans underway on the development of an education system for First Nations in Manitoba and to establish a First Nations school division for band-operated schools. It is imperative that the underlying basis for this system is cultural relevance, social justice, and a quality education that recognizes the historical struggles that have undermined their right to self-determination (as stated in the treaties) and their unique identity as First Nations peoples. The First Nations school system that is developed needs to have the capacity

to deliver the quality and standards of education that are equal to or exceed what provincial schools offer. First Nations education in Manitoba is at a crossroads, and, in moving forward, there is a need to collectively decide what is best and to reflect deeply on the foundational issues that face Manitoba First Nations and Indigenous people in other parts of the world.

In Manitoba, there are more First Nations who have joined or are exploring the option to join provincial school divisions to administer the schools on the reserve, essentially giving up local control. There are some First Nations who have entered into partnerships with provincial school divisions where they continue to have a voice in the governance of their First Nation school. With the current federal government prepared to invest new funding into First Nations education and proposing changes through legislation, there is pressure for education reform and transformation of First Nations education in Manitoba. This study is timely as First Nations need to know what a postcolonial system of education might look like and what constitutes effective educational leadership for First Nations. The study is not only involved with exploring First Nations education at the foundational level but is also concerned with practical solutions on how to address challenges and better equip those who are tasked with administering and managing the systems that currently exists. I am directly involved in the development of the system for band-operated schools, including the establishment of the First Nations school division for 10 to 12 schools where First Nations communities have agreed to aggregate with the hopes that this system will result in improved educational outcomes for their children. This study will contribute to this work. It is also concerned with identifying training that can be provided to ensure that they have the knowledge to be able to change the system so that the needs of First Nations students are better served.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter the effects of colonialism are pervasive in First Nations on-reserve education. It affects parenting, because the parents who attended residential schools lost their ability to parent (*Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future, Summary report of Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, 2015, p. 186). Many grandparents and parents learned to be distrustful of schools because of their experience in residential schools. Colonialism affects educators who attend mainstream institutions that train from the vantage point of the settler society. Its effects can be seen in the provincial curriculum that is taught in band-operated schools where students cannot identify with what they see in the content. Youngblood Henderson (2002) refers to this as the tight grip of Western knowledge in First Nations schools and describes it as “cognitive imprisonment” and claims that Eurocentric-based education institutions force Indigenous peoples to live according to Eurocentric scripts that deny them living out their worldviews and visions (p. 16). Smith (1999) points out that, even if the colonizers have left, the institutions, legacies, and influence of colonialism remain (p. 98). The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP) states that the destiny of a people is intricately tied to how their children are educated and is the route through which culture is transmitted (RCAP, 1996). For decades, the formal schooling system for on-reserve education in band-operated schools has perpetuated the colonizing influence and has undermined the ability of First Nations to maintain their cultural identity and to transmit their culture and languages to the next generations.

Postcolonial theory, as I describe and define and as I use it to conceptualize my research, allows me to examine the effects of Western/Eurocentric domination of knowledge. It provides me with a pathway to articulate and explore practices and approaches to leadership in First Nations schools. It allows me to think about implementing and creating alternate theoretical and practical strategies of resistance to this dominance that Indigenous scholars such as Linda Smith and Marie Battiste have written about and that I have thought about for so long. There is much we can learn from the mainstream literature related to best pedagogical practices and effective educational leadership, but the core argument in this paper is to analyze these critically and introspectively. The schools in First Nations reserves were inherited from colonialism and engaging in postcolonial dialogue can “effect liberating social change by giving voice to the experiences, perspectives and visions of those whose lives have been disadvantaged and in many respects destroyed by colonization” (Long, 2011, p. xxvi). Looking at First Nations education from a critical perspective is to look beyond the surface and move towards initiating change at a foundational level. A central theme in this research is how transforming First Nations schooling can lead to better outcomes for First Nations students, and it is about changing how we educate so that we are not complicit in perpetuating wrongs.

Assimilation or Special Status

Central to contemporary First Nations–federal government relations is a dilemma that plays out quite often and this is the question of assimilation or special status as it relates to First Nations education. In 2014, the Conservative Party federal government, under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, introduced the First Nations Control of First Nations Education Act (FNCFNEA), known as Bill C-33. The messages in Bill C-33 were clear. The opposing views

of the *White Paper* and the ICIE, from decades ago, were still being played out in the contents of the FNCFNEA. The federal government agenda promotes the assimilation of First Nations education into the provincial systems and following the provincial curricula and standards. First Nations maintain that their language, culture, and worldviews must form the basis for the education of their children. The terminology in Bill C-33 indicated the government would have the power to determine the operation of schools and control by First Nations was strictly administrative in nature. First Nations across the country rejected the bill, and it was subsequently withdrawn. The position nationally was that the way the FNCFNEA was introduced was disrespectful to First Nations and paternalistic in the unilateral way it was drafted. There was the general consensus nationally that Bill C-33 was not co-developed with First Nations and the drafting process lacked the transparency requirements outlined by First Nations through their talks at the Assembly of First Nations.

Many First Nations educators were outraged at the tone of the language in the bill, which sent the message that First Nations were not capable of managing and administering their own systems. While First Nations are not opposed to standards for education and accountability, the majority are of the belief that First Nations must maintain jurisdiction and control of education and that assimilation into the public school system is not the best solution. I agree that maintaining control of First Nations schools on the reserves by First Nation is an opportunity to ensure that special status and to respect the uniqueness of our languages and cultures. The United Nations (2014) *Teaching and Learning for Sustainability Project* points out the connection between education and Indigenous ways of knowing:

Indigenous people have a broad knowledge of how to live sustainably. However, formal education systems have disrupted the practical everyday life aspects of Indigenous

knowledge and ways of learning, replacing them with abstract knowledge and academic ways of learning. Today, there is a grave risk that much Indigenous knowledge is being lost, and along with it, valuable knowledge about ways of living sustainably.

(“Introduction”)

It is unfortunate that our system of schooling today for First Nations in Manitoba remains less than the mainstream systems on many levels. There is pressure from First Nations people themselves, and from the public, the provincial school divisions, and the federal and provincial governments, to acknowledge that assimilating and mainstreaming First Nation education is the best option. There are some who are inclined towards the notion that mainstreaming of services for Aboriginal people would be better for them; there is a sentiment that specific programs and services designed for Aboriginal people often means downgraded and of lesser quality and standards. McConaghy (2000) considers this question:

There are times when cultural relevance may lead to more effective services and there are times when it may deny Indigenous people access to those quality services which are available to other Australians. There are times when mainstreaming may lead to disrespect for Indigenous sensitivities, and other times when it may lead to a more just result. Our challenge concerns the pragmatics of everyday life: to determine when a consideration of cultural difference and special needs and interests is significant, and when it is not; when it will lead to greater justice or greater inequity. We need also to determine when mainstreaming is a force for social justice and when it is a force for neo-imperialism. (p. 15)

The questions are always there, whether it is 1969 or 2016: Should First Nations students be assimilated into mainstream provincial schools or continue to attend the schools that are band-operated? What is better for them? In an ideal situation, First Nations students would benefit from a school that is managed and administered by First Nations people, but only if the school has the resources to implement effective programs that enhance their cultural identity and at the same time prepares them to be able to function in the broader society. I believe that assimilation into the public education system of formal schooling for First Nations will continue to undermine their identity and will put their special status in jeopardy. I believe that First Nations need to maintain control of their schools; the government needs to ensure that there are adequate resources and funding, and First Nations need to ensure that these schools are sites where transmission of their cultures, values, languages, knowledges occurs. The struggle for local control was hard fought and giving up jurisdiction and control of their schools is a step backwards.

Systemic Devaluation of First Nations Identity and Knowledge

Postcolonialism, as a broad theory offers a discourse of resistance to question what has been accepted as truth, to be critical and counter the dominance of knowledge and power. It provides opportunity to challenge and undercut the hegemony and cultural domination that are taken for granted and accepted (Gandhi, 1998, p. 63). Andreotti (2011) refers to the politics of knowledge production and how education systems can continue to perpetuate historical marginalization. Postcolonial theory affirms that Western domination remains pervasive, that colonialism has affected not only the colonized nations but the whole world, and that the residue and effects of colonization continue to impact contemporary societies (Burney, 2012, p. 173). Alfred (2009) suggests that Native people too often continue to live in

a world of ideas that are imposed on them by others (p. 94). In First Nations education, these ideas continue to be transmitted in our educational institutions and what and how we teach in schools. There is not enough questioning of these institutions and how the long process of colonization has impacted our way of thinking and how we have been turned into tools of our own oppression (p. 94). It can also be understood as challenging the “colonial mentalities” which Alfred describes as:

The intellectual dimension in the group of emotional and psychological pathologies associated with internalized oppression. Just as harmful to the society as self-hate and hostility are to individuals, the colonial mentality can be thought of as a mental state that blocks recognition of the existence or viability of traditional perspectives. It prevents people from seeing beyond conditions created by the white society to serve its own interests. The colonial mentality is recognizable in the gradual assumption of values, goals, and perspective that make up the status quo. (p. 94)

Meyer (2001) discusses Indigenous Hawaiian epistemology and states that it is important for Indigenous peoples to realize that they have their own epistemology. She defines epistemology as the philosophy of knowledge and her thesis is that we base our understanding of our epistemology on mainstream philosophy and that we do not take the time to define and articulate our epistemology as Indigenous peoples. She suggests that if we do not define our epistemology it will be defined for us. First Nations epistemology is being lost in the current system of schooling. The transformation that is called for is to begin to deeply examine and articulate our epistemology so that it will not continue to fade into the melting pot of assimilation that is exemplified in the our current institutional structures of schooling. The students and community members in First Nations on-reserve schools are from

a common cultural and language background and common histories. The schools should reflect these and be places where the identity of the cultural background of the community, as well as its place in broader Aboriginal/Indigenous identity, is celebrated and honored.

Turner (2006) discusses the need for a critical Indigenous philosophy and how Indigenous scholars need to “take up, deconstruct, and continue to resist colonialism and its effects on indigenous peoples” (p. 96). He further states that it is important that we have a clearer understanding and articulation of traditional knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing stating that if we assert that we have distinct ways of knowing the world then “we have to be clear about what these forms of knowing are, and more importantly, what role they ought to play in asserting and protecting the rights, sovereignty, and nationhood of our communities” (p. 98). Smith (1999) suggests that resistance to dominant epistemologies is necessary for survival for Indigenous peoples, stating that if Indigenous people continue to acquiesce (give in): “we will lose ourselves entirely and implicitly agree with all that has been said about us. To resist is to retrench in the margins, retrieve what we were and remake ourselves” (p. 4).

Tully (2000) defines internal colonization as the “relation between the establishment and development of western societies and the pre-existence and continuing resistance of Indigenous societies on the same territory” (p. 96). He talks about the techniques the Canadian federal government continues to use as a ways and means for guiding their conduct, directly and indirectly, and to perpetuate the subordination of the native people of Canada. He describes the processes of internal colonization that came about as a result of the struggles of Indigenous peoples to resist colonization by the settler societies. He states that when the Europeans invaded North and South America they encountered sovereign nations of

Indigenous people who had complex forms of social and political organization and territorial jurisdictions that were older, more populous, and more diverse than Europe (p. 38). The processes of internal colonization include: reducing the population of Indigenous peoples (through disease, wars, and destruction of their societies); usurping existing forms of governments and replacing them with their own or setting up other systems governed by departments of the dominant society (e.g., band councils); appropriating their land (in Canada, relegating them to reserves); and treaty-making (as a response to resistance). All of these have contributed to some extent to how many native people in Canada have been reduced to living in over-crowded reserves, inter-generational welfare dependency, substandard housing, diet, education and health facilities, high levels of unemployment, substance abuse, and incarceration, all of which undermine their well-being and self-esteem (p. 39). Tully argues that while it is impossible to “overthrow” the colonial power that has internally colonized indigenous people, there are ways to exercise freedom and resist the domination, that is, to maneuver within the system. This can be done through finding ways to keep “indigenous ways of being alive and well for next generations, to adapt these ways and stories to the present strategic situation, to comply with and participate in the dominant institutions while refusing to surrender” (p. 42), and to struggle against the structures and attempt to transform them from within (p. 50). This can be done by re-creating a formal schooling system to replace and challenge the existing one.

Youngblood Henderson (2000) states the academic curricula in higher institutions present overwhelmingly “the world” from a Eurocentric perspective which ignores Aboriginal worldviews, knowledge, and thought. As a result Aboriginal people become alien in their own eyes, as they are not able to recognize themselves or see images of themselves in the curricula

that are presented. This phenomenon is even more damaging in the elementary and secondary schools where young children who are not able to relate experientially to the curricula soon come to realize that their heritage, identity, and thought are not represented in the content. Rigney (1999) relates the status of Indigenous Australians whose social systems, culture, institutions, attitudes, and behaviours underwent suppression and subordination by British colonists. Rigney argues that, if Indigenous researchers continue to use the same epistemologies, we continue to perpetuate, reproduce, and reaffirm the cultural assumptions of the dominant group (p. 114). He asserts that there is need and a rationale for liberation epistemologies and Indigenous peoples need to be subjects of their own research and not the objects of research. He uses the analogy of the feminist movement, in that the cause for feminism was greatly advanced when feminists themselves contested mainstream knowledge and understanding of the oppression of women.

The dominance of Eurocentric perspective in the curricula which ignores Aboriginal worldviews, knowledge, and thought and a rationale for liberation epistemologies are the central insights that postcolonial theory provides in the context of education, where the hearts, minds, experiences, and heritage of First Nations people are not represented for the most part in the curricula and in the entire experience of formal schooling. It is not as simplistic as not being able to relate to the urban image of a curb or an elevator, but a far more subtle and pervasive undermining of themselves as First Nations people.

Marginalization

Marginalization and marginality are common terms used in reference to First Nations people in Canada. What does this mean? As the term might suggest, does it mean being on the edge? Not part of the mainstream? Who determined that I or anyone else is marginalized? The

term is used often in the literature, in the media, and in general conversation among scholars, but is rarely defined. In one of my graduate program seminars, I asked everyone to define what the term marginalization meant, and the responses were all different and everyone had a different understanding of it. Of course, there is a literal meaning of marginalization: “out on the fringe, out of the mainstream, away from the center” or according to Merriam-Webster “to put or keep (someone) in a powerless or unimportant position within a society or group.” The way the term is used in the literature in reference to First Nations people suggests more than the literal meaning and as mentioned is rarely fully defined. RCAP (1996) refers to “policies of marginalization” in the section on treaties; Foster and Goddard (2002) refer to “discursive marginalization” (p. 15); and Lightening (1997) refers to the “construction of marginalization” (p. 10).

Each time I hear the term I wonder: As a First Nations person, why am I marginalized? The term makes me cringe because it is not how I want to be categorized, described or a place to which I want to be relegated. Education for First Nations people has led to the destruction of First Nations identities and culture (Battiste, 2000). Is this the reason why we are marginalized; because someone else took over the center with their knowledge systems, their philosophies and ways of being, and ousted us and relegated us to be in the periphery, perpetually? Historically, the formal schooling system for First Nations contributed to First Nations people being on the periphery, and this continues to this day. It is time now to reverse this trend so that we do not continue to perpetuate marginalization. Through the formal schooling system in their communities, First Nations can “adjust” the pattern of marginalization by refusing to place on the periphery the teaching of their languages and have their values, cultures, knowledges, and world views form the basis of how they are schooled.

Postcolonial Theory

Is there a set of material forces that can be identified as postcolonial? Should postcolonialism be spoken of as a number of conditions, some interrelated, other wholly divergent? Or rather is postcoloniality a strategy for analytic purposes? What does postcoloniality imply: beyond colonialism? Within colonialism but different from? Does the emphasis lie with the post- or the colonial? (Goss, 1996, p. 239)

What kind of education could take into account of the complexity, multiplicity, complicity, and inequality inherent in the politics of knowledge production? What kind of education could support us to undo (at a deep psychic level, beyond surface cognition) the legacy of knowledges that make us blindly complicit in perpetuating wrongs? What kind of education could enable the emergence of ethical relationships between those who have historically marginalized and those who have been marginalized, beyond guilt, anger, salvationism, triumphalism, paternalism, and self-interest? (Andreotti, 2011, p. 264)

Consider that for more than a century, Indigenous students have been part of a forced assimilation plan—their heritage and knowledge rejected and suppressed, and ignored by the education system. Imagine the consequence of a powerful ideology that positions one group as superior and gives away First Nations peoples' land and resources and invites churches and other administrative agents to inhabit their homeland, while negating their very existences and finally removing them from the Canadian landscape to lands no one wants. . . . This context is important to postcolonial education. (Battiste, 2013, p 23)

I chose to use postcolonial theory for this thesis although it was clear from the onset that the theory is complex and contested, with many interpretations in a variety of disciplines and fields. These quotations from Goss (1996), Andreotti (2011), and Battiste (2013) raise the primary question and considerations about postcolonialism in this thesis. Goss (1996) asks some pointed questions that are important to reflect on when using the theory in the context of First Nations education. Choosing to use the postcolonial theory was somewhat of a risk, partly because of the complexity and expansive interpretations of the term itself, across a wide range of disciplines, and because it cannot be captured into one single definition. I had not expected to encounter the “mishmash” (Goss, 1996) of perspectives in the postcolonialism literature. I was surprised about how widespread global colonization was and is, and how it has affected diverse peoples in many countries besides Canada. I was able to relate to other colonized people as I read about their struggles since and after their independence.

Reading about colonialism in other countries caused a connection to resurface that I had experienced many years before. I had lived and worked in Nigeria, West Africa, for two years in the early 1980s. The Nigerian government had introduced universal primary education at the time which involved teaching high school students the basics of teaching English to primary students. At the teacher’s college/high school where I worked, I taught teenage students English as a second language, English literature, and English language teaching methods. At the time, I had not realized that the country was in a state of postcolonial reconstruction, as they had recently achieved independence from colonial rule. The school system still reflected the curriculum and programs that had been inherited under the British. Many of the few textbooks that I had to support my teaching were from Britain. The work involved travelling to small villages to observe the students practice their English

language teaching skills. I was able to relate to the tribal populations, who had been colonized by the British. The literature on postcolonialism resonated personally with me in the sense that I was able to relate to the condition of other Indigenous peoples who were struggling with the similar issues in education. Many Indigenous peoples have similar struggles as Canada's First Nations, where they are trying to reassert themselves in society and seeking to find their place in their world after colonial rule.

Goss (1996) states: "postcolonialism is at best a mishmash of deeply confusing elements drawn from literary, criticism, history and philosophy" (p. 244). The term has been used to describe a state of being, to signify a period of time after independence, a point at which colonial discourses no longer exist, a subjective state of being, and a type of literature (p. 245). Goss further explains that to refer to a state of being as postcolonial is paradoxical because those who describe themselves as postcolonial are confined to people in Western academic institutions and are those who have all the benefits of a "colonial consumptive culture" (p. 245). Another point that she makes is that it has an inaccessible linguistic form and is the domain of an intellectual elite. She states that it is deeply worrying to refer to Australia as postcolonial because the term can be used by the colonizers to affirm the strategy of dispossession has completely succeeded. She states that "while Aboriginal peoples' physical presence may still remain, as signs of Australia they have been removed from the national psyche" (p. 246). She concludes that while the term can play a significant role in reference to Australia, it should be "tempered with a degree of historicisation" (p. 246), so that its status of academic elitism is not reinforced.

Loomba (2005) states that postcolonial studies has emerged as both a meeting point and battleground for a variety of disciplines and theories, so it is difficult to come to a

consensus regarding the content, scope, and relevance of postcolonial studies (p.3). It is difficult to pinpoint a clear understanding of the concept of postcolonialism, and it is unlikely that it will be narrowed down to a single acceptable definition. A literal definition would mean that it is a state, a condition, or a period of time after colonialism which has affected and continues to affect Indigenous peoples, including First Nations people in Canada, in adverse ways. However, the literal definition is problematic to most scholars who write about postcolonialism. McClintock (1994) cautions against the use of the word as a monolithic term “organized around a binary axis of time rather than power” and the implication of the pastness of colonialism (p. 294). Loomba (2005) suggests that it is helpful to think of postcolonialism, not just as coming literally after colonialism and signifying its demise, but to think of it as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism (p. 16).

Kohn and McBride (2011) suggest that postcolonialism is a broad term which encompasses the critique of colonialism, the ongoing struggles with the legacies of colonialism, and the emergence of the world it created (p. 8). Gandhi (1998) cites Homi Bhabba, a leading scholar in postcolonial studies, who writes that memory is the necessary and hazardous bridge between colonialism and cultural identity and “is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection” but “a painful re-remembering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present” (Bhabba, 1994, p. 63). To think from a postcolonial perspective or to write about postcolonialism is not to be anti-colonialism, or to be motivated by a desire for revenge, or to marginalize the west, but to “facilitate a democratic colloquium between the antagonistic inheritors of the colonial aftermath” (Loomba, 1998, p. x). Gandhi (1998) states that “postcolonial theory has a compelling

political obligation to assist the subjects of postcoloniality to live with the gaps and fissures of their condition, and thereby learn to proceed with self-understanding” (p. 8).

According to Gandhi’s philosophy (1998) as applied to the context of First Nations, it is the privilege of the West and the Western Academy that has determined that First Nations, their knowledge, languages, cultural traditions and thought are off center (i.e. marginalized). Morton (2010) states:

Marginality is one of the privileged metaphors of postcolonial studies. It is from the margins of colonial subordination and oppression on the grounds of race, class, gender or religion that postcolonial writers and theorists claim political and moral authority to contest or oppose the claims a dominant imperial European culture. (Morton, 2010, p.162)

In much of the literature, the concept of the “other” is prevalent and is another label that is used to refer to First Nations and minority groups which encompasses the domination of European thought and philosophy.

Edward Said, a noted scholar of postcolonial studies, has written extensively about colonialism, postcolonialism, and imperialism and points out the relationship between the West and the East. In his book *Orientalism*, he describes this relationship about the perceived superiority of the West and the hierarchical and power imbalanced nature of the relationship with the “other.” The Orient represents the other in relationship with the West, and Said attempted to deconstruct the images and representations that were used by European scholars to depict the other as inferior. Said’s writings suggest that it is through education that we can expose the unequal power relationship between the West and the “other.” The other is

represented as anyone who is non-European, and does not fit the stereotype of white, male, Christian, and English. Elaborating on this, Marcus (2011) states:

Said delineates a discursive formation which he calls “orientalism, “ a discourse which he shows to be the vehicle for representations of identity which are seriously deformed. Said proposes that in a broad and popular sense, texts discussing and describing the characteristics of the orient and its inhabitants utilize imagery which ensures that the world of the orient is always constructed as ‘other’ to ‘the West.’ In other words, “the orient” and “the West” are constructed in ways that mean that when speaking about the orient, one is also speaking about the identity and characteristics of the West. (p. 3)

Said’s interpretation of postcolonialism would affirm that the attitude of superiority of the West did not end with colonialism and the residue continues to impact those who have been colonized and we need to maintain “a commitment to the dismantling of systems of domination, which are collectively maintained therefore must be collectively fought” (Said, 1985, p.107).

There were many questions that reverberated in my thoughts as I read the literature on postcolonialism, and I acknowledge the “denseness” of some of the literature and the abstract theories of some well-known postcolonial authors (some of which I have chosen not to use or expand upon). I am aware of the many cautions of the use of the term in its varied definitions and interpretations. As a First Nations researcher, utilizing the postcolonial framework allows me to give voice to a “marginalized” group, and as a member of the “other” to provide a perspective that is cognizant of the long history of colonial consequences related to First

Nations. Ultimately it is about how we continue to negatively impact the psyche of First Nations children in our schools in the way they think, learn, and understand our world.

The Debate and Critique About the “Post” in Postcolonial and the Theory

Postcolonialism implies after colonialism, and therein lies the debate in much of the literature on the term. Loomba (2005) states that the prefix “post” is contestable because it is clear in many of the regions of colonial rule that the inequities have not been erased and may never be. She suggests that it would be difficult to identify a particular time in history which can be termed postcolonial (p. 13). To use the term postcolonial in the literal sense can be misunderstood and misleading, as it suggests that colonialism can be referred to in the past tense and the power disparities that are part of it no longer exists. McClintock (1992) further points out that the term assumes that history is linear and progressive, and the term “post” reduces the cultures of people beyond colonialism to prepositional time and confers on colonialism the prestige of history proper and suggests that colonialism is the determining marker of history. In other words, it is implied that, for the Canadian context, Aboriginal people are “marked, not positively by what distinguished them, but by a subordinate, retrospective to linear, European time “(p. 293). Colonized people continue to be subjects of colonization and have not achieved the reality of a postcolonial society (Loomba, 2011 p. 76; Youngblood Henderson, 2002). It can be argued that Aboriginal Canadians are not in a time of postcolonial as articulated by Long (2011):

There is clear evidence that colonizing experiences, relations, process, and structures continue to abound in Canada and that Aboriginal individuals, communities and

nations in this country have to fight each and every day for the right to have control over most areas of their lives. (p. xxvi)

Yazzie (2000) describes colonialism as a “triangle of power” in which the people at the top claim they have the right to control the people at the bottom. He states that even after independence the original habitants of the colonized nations did not get their independence and continued to be under the control of the colonizer. He suggests that postcolonialism has to start from within; we must exercise internal sovereignty, which is nothing more than taking control of our personal lives, our families, our clans, and our communities:

My misgivings, therefore, are not about the theoretical substance of “post-colonial theory,” much of which I greatly admire. Rather, I wish to question the orientation of the emerging discipline and its concomitant theories and curricula changes, around a singular, monolithic term, organized a binary axis of time rather than power, and which, it is premature celebration of the pastness of the colonialism, runs the risk of obscuring the continuities and discontinuities of colonial and imperial power. Nor do I want to banish the term to some chilly, verbal Gulag; there seems no reason why it should not be used judiciously in appropriate circumstances, in the context of other terms, if in a less grandiose and global role. (p. 47)

In summary, postcolonial theory is broadly interpreted in the literature and cannot be understood under one single definition. While postcolonialism as a theory may be difficult to define, for the purpose of this study, postcolonialism is not a state or a condition, does not denote a point in time, but rather it is an affirmation and acceptance that historical events that occurred as a result of colonialism affect the present and, by contesting it, we can potentially

affect the future. Long (2011) indicates that if there is a period where we can say we are in a state of postcolonial in Canada it would mean that there would have been large scale movement to successfully challenge the “ethnocentric tenet of colonialism” and restructuring of colonial relations in ways that would bring liberation to the oppressed and giving control over the social and material conditions of their lives (p. xxvii). In this context, postcolonial refers to influence of imperialism and colonization from the first moment of conquest to the present day.

Battiste (2000) suggest that there is a difference between Indigenous postcolonial and postcolonial theory in literature. Postcolonial Indigenous thought “emerges from the inability of Eurocentric theory to deal with the complexities of colonialism and its assumptions. Postcolonial Indigenous thought it based on our pain and our experiences” (p. xix). In First Nations education, there can be very little opposition to the premise that the schooling experience of First Nations, historically, has been at times painful, and incorporating postcolonial theory can help us to gain better understanding of it, and, through the understanding, gain knowledge and wisdom to make changes. Postcolonial refers to influence of imperialism and colonization from the first moment of conquest to the present day. While postcolonial theory allows First Nations to question and critique, the answers to these questions may never come or the answers will always be in the realm of yet to come. The important thing is that we continue to question, and, through questioning and as we gain understanding, we are in a better position to make effective changes. Perhaps what is most useful in postcolonial theory is that quest to search for answers, and to ask the questions and strive to articulate the kind of education that may result in the righting of wrongs rather than blindly accepting the status quo and never questioning. Sovereignty for First Nations people

in Canada will not happen unless First Nations people have the ability to make their own decisions and control their own lives, particularly in the area of the education of their children.

Leadership for First Nations Education

One of the theories of particular relevance is the connection between leadership and context and how the context influences leadership. Leithwood and Riehl (2005) suggest that leadership is “contextual and contingent” and that it is played out differently in different contexts (p. 14). Dimmock (2012) poses the question as to the extent to which leader’s values, knowledge, skills, and dispositions change to accommodate the context in which they are working, or whether or not leaders change the context to match their attributes and dispositions (p. 33). When there is an educational leader in a particular context, there are two options: either the leader adapts to the culture and context and changes the way that they lead, or they change the culture and context to adapt to their views and leadership style. There is very little question that effective preparation and development make a difference if schools are going to provide the best possible education (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Murphy, 2002; Bush, 2009).

Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) state that the hegemonic influences of Western knowledge have overshadowed the intellectual traditions of other cultures. They argue that this knowledge is often automatically transferred across cultures with little concern for cultural validity. Gooden and Dantely (2012) in their discussion of the school experience of African-Americans in the United States suggest that critical theory, race, and social justice need to be part of preparing persons who will potentially be working in environments that are dominated by students from other cultural backgrounds. There is a call for a change in the

education system in mainstream and public schools to accommodate the transitioning demographics in the schools with increased populations of different cultural groups (Malott, 2010; Gooden & Dantely, 2012). Often the focus had been on the skills and knowledge that the person has which determines their effectiveness as a, supposedly, “generic” educational leader. The focus has not always been on knowing about the cultural background of the school and community in which they are working. Nor has it been on conceptualizing and understanding leadership in a specific context where the populations of the students are from a particular culture group.

There is also agreement that there must be focused and specific preparation of school leaders if school improvement is going to occur (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Bush (2009) states that, given the importance of educational leadership, the development and preparation of school leaders should not be left to chance and the process must be deliberate and systematic (p. 386). Murphy (2007) discusses the differences in educational leadership programs and goes as far as saying that prospective schools are victims of “miseducation” and the practice of educational administration has become marginalized. He asserts that there is no evidence to suggest that the theoretical constructs in the behavioural sciences are useful in guiding the practice of school administration (p. 583). He suggests that part of the problem is that those who are teaching in university leadership preparation programs do not have the experience in the field and as such do not know the business of schooling. He asks the question: “What is it that senior leaders in schools and districts need in order to be effective and how can they best access that knowledge, those skills and those sets of values?” (p. 584). The answer that he proposes is that the best way to access that knowledge cannot be gained from the universities but through practical experience dealing with real questions and real

problems. Murphy's proposed solution to appropriate and effective leadership preparation can be very applicable to preparing educational leaders who will be working in school populations which have a high percentage to minorities, immigrants, or Indigenous peoples.

Then there is the question about the nature of leadership itself and how, throughout the years, there have been many definitions and interpretations of effective leadership. Our romance of leadership has caused us to be limited in what we study and write about, as we seem to be fixated on leaders to the exclusion of everything else. It is still trendy to have the word leadership in the title of books or articles that deal with exercising power, authority, and influence. We continue to explore definitions of leadership and we have yet to find a universally accepted definition (Jackson, 2005). Leadership can refer to rank where leaders are in a position of authority or it can have a moral imperative. There are many different definitions and types of leaders, which are evidenced in the fact that the leadership industry is big business. There is a growing sense of entitlement that leadership should in fact be distributed and the position no longer affords protection and leaders and followers have a more equal status.

Kellerman (2008) writes about relationships between superiors and subordinates in the workplace becoming more equal; hierarchies are becoming flatter because of cultural and societal changes, such as less deference to authority and the information revolution. Leaders generally have more power, authority, and influence, yet it should be understood that subordinates are critical to the power and authority they have. The leader attribution error prevalent in literature for many years explains the long accepted assumption that leaders matter and followers do not. The gap between leaders and followers is closing. There is no longer the great man or hero notion of leadership. People globally are being heard claiming

power, influence, and sometimes even authority, and wrestling these away from the traditionally privileged few. Kellerman states that this is the time of the follower, that now more than ever followers have more say. People in general are demanding greater equity and this makes leaders more vulnerable. Kellerman posits that followers are critically important to the work of leadership. Followers, usually referred to as subordinates, have tended to be ignored in educational administration literature, and we have not paid enough attention to followership, which is integral to the leadership process. She distinguishes between five types of followers based on their level of engagement.

Kellerman (2008) notes that the missionaries and early European settlers found Native Americans did not respond well to leadership and were perplexed by the European hierarchical system and the social class systems. We generally hear that there was not much resistance, but although people knew what was happening, why was there not more resistance to the missionaries and government officials who made decisions that continue to have repercussions to this day? Perhaps not having the understanding of the hierarchy in social stratification of European societies and a foreign system of leadership, they more easily complied with the missionary and government directives and did not question.

Alfred (1999) discusses leadership for First Nations communities in Canada at the political level. He states that the current political leadership in many First Nations communities is lacking and is at the root of the crises of many First Nation communities, including the education crisis. He advocates for a “revival” of leadership and for how leadership in First Nation communities must no longer mimic “the bad character and greed of mainstream politicians” but they must aspire to embody traditional values that sustained the

survival of First Nations communities for centuries. He states that “the key to the surviving and overcoming” the crisis that our First Nations communities are in is leadership (p. 13).

Learning From the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)

The Ontario Leadership Framework was developed in 2006 to bring about improvement in the education system in the province of Ontario. The goals include: providing a research based foundation for leadership, ensuring that leadership practices support student achievement and well-being, and providing a common language and understanding for leaders to engage in discussions about effective practice. Dr. Kenneth Leithwood as an advisor on education in Ontario conducted a review of the leadership research and provided the evidence base and rationale for the practices and attributes of effective leaders for the OLF. The framework outlines what good leadership looks like at both the school level and system (district) level that will make the most difference to student achievement and well-being. The OLF identifies the practices of successful school and system leaders, as well as the organizational practices of successful schools and districts. It also includes personal leadership resources that leaders should have to increase effectiveness. The OLF is a province-wide framework for whole system school reform in an area with over two million students (Young, Levin, & Wallin, 2007). Nevertheless, I chose to examine this framework for the purpose of this study to see how aspects of this framework can be used for system reform and improvement for a First Nations on-reserve schools. It is not, by any means, to form a basis for comparison of the work that is done by district level leaders and First Nations Directors of Education or to attempt to find similarities in the two systems. The framework is research and evidence based and provides information for aspiring and current education leaders as to what they need to be successful, and provides a basis on which to assesses and

provide feedback about the quality of leadership enacted in schools and school systems. The OLF asserts that strong districts need to be developed by strong leaders in order for systems to improve with student learning and well-being as the goal. The OLF acknowledges that the effective leadership practices are different at the system level and will differ from school level practices (p. 4). The characteristics of strong districts as identified in the OLF are as follows:

1. Shared mission, vision and goals.
2. Coherent instructional guidance system.
3. Multiple sources of evidence to inform decisions.
4. Learning-oriented organizational improvement.
5. Job-embedded professional learning.
6. Resources and structures aligned with mission.
7. Comprehensive leadership development.
8. Policy-oriented board of trustees.
9. Productive working relationships.

In order to develop and sustain the nine essential characteristics of strong districts, effective leadership practices are required to efficiently and effectively manage the organization and successful leaders require these core practices: setting direction, building relationships, and developing people. The personal leadership resources that are essential for leaders to have are systems thinking and proactivity. These are important for system leaders because of the contexts in which they lead. Proactivity is identified as a necessary psychological resource because people who are proactive are more likely to affect, stimulate and manage change, and show initiative and perseverance in bringing about change. Systems thinking is identified as necessary because leaders need to understand and take account of the many, often dense, complex, and reciprocal connections among different elements of an organization. Four domains that make positive contributions to student learning and well-

being are: (a) core processes, (b) supporting conditions, (c) approaches to leadership, and (d) development and relationships.

Leithwood (2013) states that district organizations hold little interest to the public and are often not thought about. The only time there is some attention given is when there are high profile issues. When it comes to educational matters, most attention is given to the school and the school principal. He suggests that the lack of visibility of the district level should not be equated with the lack of contribution. While I do not want to extend the comparison with school districts leaders and the Directors of Education excessively, because of the size factor and other obvious differences (urban as opposed to rural, the impact of colonialism, available resources, etc.), there are similarities in the sense that, in order to create a strong and effective organization that is conducive to student learning and well-being, there needs to be strong and effective leadership, at this level, to develop and sustain the organization.

Learning From the McKinsey Report

The McKinsey report entitled *How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better* relates the improvement journey of twenty school systems from around the world who had achieved significant, sustained and widespread gains in student outcomes through reform interventions. The study analyzed twenty school systems from around the world and identified elements that are replicable for school systems everywhere. Building on a 2007, the report details whole system reform and pathways to improvement of a diverse group of school systems. The authors of the report, Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber (2010), found that there was an agreement that improving school systems required “discipline and constant forward momentum” (p. 11). While there are diverse environments and contexts, socially, politically, geographically, and different starting points, the authors conclude that

there are some universal commonalities that can be replicated for other school systems who wish to embark on system reform (p. 18). They acknowledge that there has been massive investment put in to educational reform which has not made significant impact on positive outcomes for students, so they advocate for a different approach (p. 14). They stress the importance of contextualizing the various reform interventions and the importance of leadership making informed decisions in what are the best interventions to implement, so that there is improvement in the particular context in which the school system exists (p. 26).

Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber (2010) state:

School systems that sustain improvement over the longer term have learned both how to navigate the challenges of their context and to use their context to their advantage. The leaders of these systems tailor the three types of interventions required to their system's performance stage and circumstances. Contextualizing is all about the tactics the system leaders use in tailoring the set of the interventions needed on their performance journey to their specific context. Our research shows that the system leaders' prime aim in contextualizing the interventions is usually to gain the requisite support of the various stakeholders for the interventions being made. In talking to leaders and architects of the improving systems, it appears that one of the biggest choices facing school systems when contextualizing their interventions is to what degree an intervention should be mandated and to what extent should persuasion be used. The systems we studied have adopted different combinations of mandating and persuading to implement the same set of interventions. These choices appear to be based on four contextual attributes: 1) the desired pace of change; 2) whether the desired change is a "non-negotiable" for the system reform; 3) the degree to which

there are stark winners and losers as a result of the change; and 4) the credibility and stability of the system leadership and national government, and the historical and political context. (p. 21)

The authors arrived at six interventions that are common across all the improvement journeys: revising curriculum and standards; reviewing reward and remunerations structure; building technical skills of teachers and principals; assessing student learning; utilizing student data to guide delivery; and establishing policy documents and education laws. They raise the question as to whether or not the interventions should be mandated. They state that:

mandating enables fast action and fidelity of practice across the system, but risks stakeholder resistance. Persuasion allows stakeholders to gradually get used to the particular change and to feel real ownership over their decision, but risks complacency and the slowing of reform momentum.” (p. 62)

The authors argue that for a system’s improvement journey to be sustained over the long term, the improvements have to be integrated into the very fabric of the system pedagogy. They identified three ways that improving systems do this: by establishing collaborative practices, by developing a mediating layer between the schools and the center, and by architecting tomorrow’s leadership. Each of these aspects of sustaining improvement is an interconnected and integral part of the system pedagogy (p. 72).

The first is knowing where you are currently in terms of student outcomes: What is the status quo? The second is to determine the set of interventions needed. and the third is, to adapt the set of interventions into the current context, while “taking into account the history, culture and politics and structure of the school system and the nation” (p. 24). In addition to

these three elements, they also include two other factors necessary for improvement: namely, sustaining and ignition. Sustaining means implementing plans and processes for ensuring improvement are continued over the long term, and ignition is ensuring that conditions exist to spur a system to embark on the journey. One of the main factors in the sustaining phases is leadership continuity as well as a strong pedagogy supported by collaborative practices. In all the systems they found that these basic elements needed to exist if improvement was to occur, and there was consistency across all the systems studied. The other point they make is that the elements cannot exist without the other and have the same impact. A key factor in sustaining improvement is continuity in the system's leadership. Even if there is a change in leaders then the priorities and the initiatives are sustained across leaders. This provides opportunity for the evolution of the change and vision, and the most successful systems ensure continuity.

First Nations Education Leadership Strategy (FNELS)

The FNELS is an initiative of MFNERC to address the lack of training for Directors of Education working in First Nations communities. A group of Directors of Education initiated the development of modules for a leadership development program for current and aspiring Directors of Education in 2011. In Manitoba, there has been training provided for principals who work in First Nations schools by MFNERC through summer principals' institutes and networking meetings two or three times a year for the past several years. It is only recently that some attention has been given to training specifically for Directors of Education. I have often advocated for Directors of Education, as so much attention was given to leadership development for school principals and none or very little provided for the Directors of Education. A small working group began the work to develop modules to address the need for training for Directors of Education in Manitoba. The working group met often to discuss the

training and met with the directors at their regular bi-monthly meetings to get feedback. A survey was done to help the working group determine the training and professional development that was needed. It was determined that work would begin on the development of modules under the following topics:

1. Traditions and Culture, Language, Knowledge, Self.
2. Organizational Management of School Programs/Support.
3. Supervision/Management of Teachers.
4. Education Governance.
5. Policy Development.
6. Education Finance.
7. Post-Secondary Education.
8. Operation and Maintenance.
9. Transportation.
10. Historical Background of First Nation Education and Current Issues.
11. Legal Context of First Nations Education.

Unfortunately, the FNELS was stalled in 2012, due to lack of federal funding and commitment to the process. The first module was completed through a one-week training retreat in the summer of 2012. The content frameworks for the other modules were developed for the other modules in 2012, and work is continuing in 2016 to develop the modules for delivery in the future.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the related literature, the historical background, and related leadership strategies, as well as clearly indicating that the context of this study is specific to

First Nations education systems located on reserves in Manitoba. The issues of effective leadership, education leadership preparation, and school improvement, positive learning outcomes for students, culturally responsive curricula, and sustainable, meaningful transformation of First Nations education are of high importance. While leadership literature abounds, the definition of it remains elusive, so a challenge in this study is, if it cannot be defined in mainstream literature, then the question of what constitutes effective educational leadership for First Nations may be even more difficult to answer. However, the perspectives and stories of the leaders that I interviewed for this study hold important information that can lead to answering the question of what constitutes effective leadership for First Nations education. I also know that effective leadership, however it is defined, is critically important. Over the years I have had the opportunity to meet many First Nations people who have displayed exemplary leadership qualities that have served their community well.

For the purpose of this study, I reviewed three existing leadership models: the OLF, the McKinsey study, and the FNELS. These are sources that are described in this chapter, as they can be a useful starting point for a framework to develop a concrete, practical strategy for improvement for First Nations education in Manitoba.

My experiences in First Nations educational leadership, my identity as a Cree woman, a teacher, and a scholar, and the current status of education for First Nations students converged at this point in time leading me to engage in this research.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the qualitative research methodology, the theoretical framework, the recruitment of participants, procedures for the data collection, and processes that were used to interpret the data in relation to the research questions that guided the study. I also include my personal perspective as a First Nations researcher.

I chose qualitative research methodology for this study as it allows for investigating of topics in “all their complexity” and is also concerned with “understanding behavior from the subject’s own frame of reference” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006, p. 2). A qualitative study is an inquiry about how people “are experiencing an event, a series of events, and/or a condition” and “seeks to uncover the perspective of the group” (Agee, 2009, p. 434). Creswell (2007) states that a qualitative study begins with “the broad assumptions central to qualitative inquiry, a worldview consistent with it, and in many cases, a theoretical lens that shapes the study” (p. 42). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) use the analogy of a picture in saying that the qualitative research process is not about putting together a picture I know, as I collect the data, but it is about constructing a picture as I collect the information and examine the parts. They further state that qualitative researchers search for meaning in their research and their theoretical orientation can be better described as a paradigm, which they define as a “ loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research” (p. 24).

While I had a specific paradigm in mind as I conducted the study, that of postcolonial theory, I remained open to the direction in which the data led me as I heard the stories and words of the participants. Qualitative research methodology was used for this study because I

was seeking understanding of how the 12 participants made sense of their lives and what drove them to engage in the work that they do and in the manner that they do their work. The qualitative research paradigm allowed me to better relate to my own experience and allow for the data to reveal and affirm more those experiences and beliefs. I wanted to hear the participants' stories in their own words, and probe into the deeper meanings that may not always be evident in the articulation of the spoken word. While I have my own views and subjective experiences, the qualitative research process allowed me to further shape my views and to better understand my experiences.

It could be perceived as ironic that in the quest to emancipate from the colonialist influence and to incorporate a postcolonial mentality I chose a Western theory and research approach to find answers for a transformative paradigm. Is choosing this "Western" research methodology just another way of perpetuating research "through imperial eyes" (Smith, 1999, p. 56)? Smith (1999) describes this kind of research as an approach "which assumes that Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life and of human beings" (p. 56). I made a conscious decision not to do research through "imperial eyes" and to question myself of how I conduct the research as a Cree person; to be true to my Indigenous self, which was not only to choose a methodology to satisfy the scholarly expectation and the research ethics board but to choose a research methodology which was a close fit to be able to truly explore the nature of the work of Directors of Education through a personal interaction with those who do the work. I learned from educational leaders as I listened as they shared their perspectives, experiences, words, and stories in conversations where they felt safe and confident that what they said would be

treated respectfully. The challenge is to honor and respect that sharing by ensuring that what I say in this writing captures their collective wisdom and knowledge in relation to the research questions that guided this study. Ma Rhea (2015) talks about the “lack of fit” of colonial education systems and argues that there is a need for focused disruptions at all levels of the education systems “in order to overcome the endless reproduction of the same colonially-shaped, outdated systems that are no longer fit for purpose” (p. 176). She suggests, however, that this is a complex process and needs to involve many levels and a focus on leading and managing the Indigenous education systems is a starting point for meaningful change.

The lack of fit can also be applied to mainstream research methodologies that may not always be useful in Indigenous research. While I chose a mainstream research methodology to guide the research, I was very much aware that the stories that emerged from the interviews and conversations had meaning and value. I recognized that I had to allow my identity as a Cree person to be a natural part of the research process. I was raised listening to stories from my parents and the relatives who visited our home, or as we sat around fires at camps out on the land. We did not necessarily ask questions or try to find meaning in what the stories meant as the interpretation and meaning is within the stories themselves. McLeod (2005) discusses Cree narrative memory and storytelling and how the oral tradition helps us to maintain our identity as Cree people. He states: “As the storyteller weaves his tale, there are elements of description and analysis: the storyteller describes events and experiences, but also analyzes this experience” (p. 5). He further states that the revival of stories is necessary if we are to reverse the destruction of our language and identity.

The participants in this study told their stories because they felt that the stories and the messages in the stories would inform the research and hold the answers to the research

questions. As they told their stories, they were able to understand more clearly their roles and why they do their work in the way that they do. The stories also help the listener to make sense of their own lived experiences. Throughout the findings chapters, there is not a comprehensive analysis of the data because the stories speak for themselves. I encourage the “listeners” of these stories to find meaning for themselves. However, in terms of the research design overall this study utilizes qualitative research methodology.

Qualitative Research Design

The qualitative research methodology that is used in this study is relevant because the study was to investigate a social phenomenon from the interpretative and subjective stance of the participants. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stress that the key features of qualitative research include a concern with process and the inductive analysis —developed through the interconnection of disparate pieces of evidence. A major assumption in the study is that the accounts and views of the research participants constitute valid data that can lead to social transformation. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that the paradigms, assumptions, and worldviews of the researcher shape the validity procedures of qualitative inquiry (cited by Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125). Tierney and Lincoln (1994) assert that the researcher must reflect on the interpretative nature of the qualitative inquiry process. They suggest that this requires a degree of reflexivity on the part of the researcher to acknowledge that “reality is mediated by any number of influences such as the researcher’s own biases, the context in which the study is undertaken and the theoretical framework employed” (p. 110).

Theoretical Framework

Smith (1999) posits that theory is important for Indigenous peoples to help us to make sense of our reality. It enables us to make assumptions and predications about the world in which we live and contains within it methods for arranging and legitimizing priorities for what we say and do. She states:

Theory enables us to deal with contradiction and uncertainties. Perhaps more significantly, it gives us space to plan, to strategize, to take greater control over our resistances. The language of a theory can also be used as a way of organizing and determining action. It helps us to interpret what is being told to us, and to predict the consequences of what is being promised. Theory can also protect us because it contains within it a way of putting reality into perspective. If it is a good theory it also allows for new ideas and ways of looking at things to be incorporated constantly without the need to search constantly for new theories. (p. 38)

The decision to use the postcolonial construct as a framework for this study was to help me to examine the continuing impacts of colonialism, as it is not talked about enough or rarely acknowledged as we struggle to bring about effective change and improvement. The term decolonization is sometimes used in reference to First Nations; general statements are often made regarding teachers that those who work in our schools need to be decolonized or that the training programs need to come from a decolonized perspective. Ormiston (2010) states that decolonization is “about privileging, understanding, and sharing our concerns and worldviews” (p.53). Kumar (2009) suggests decolonization as a process which would “both reinstate and reinstitute the traditional values of Aboriginal cultures that have been disfigured

by the Eurocentric curriculum (p. 43). Chilisa (2012) defines decolonization “as a process of centering the concerns and worldviews of the colonized other so that they understand themselves through their own assumptions and perspectives” (p. 13). These statements are cited because they are applicable to the context of First Nations education in Manitoba. Through this research and the writing of this thesis, I hope that educators working in First Nations communities, and particularly these participants, will rethink the formal school system that has been instituted in their communities and begin to make changes to decolonize First Nations schooling. Battiste (2013) defines this as the process of unpacking the powerful Eurocentric assumptions of education, its narrative of race and difference in curriculum and pedagogy, and a “channel for generating a postcolonial education system in Canada and disrupting those normalized discourses and singularities and allowing diverse voices and perspectives and objectives into ‘mainstream’ schooling” (p. 107).

Selection of Participants

Once I received human ethics approval from Education/Nursing Ethics Board (Appendix) I began the process of receiving consent to contact the potential participants and the process of recruitment. I included in the recruitment process those Directors of Education who recently retired or who had moved into another position after having worked as a Director of Education in a First Nations community. Recent is defined as within the past 5 years. I selected the participants based on their knowledge and their experiences and what they could bring to the study. I chose to interview First Nations Directors of Education because of the important role that they have in the First Nations communities to set the direction for education.

Brown and Strega (2005) suggest that as researchers we need to ask about the ontological and epistemological foundations of the research by posing these questions: How can I best capture the complexities and contradiction of the worlds, experiences, or texts I am studying? Whose voice will/does my research represent? Whose interests will it serve? How can I tell if my research is good research? (p. 199). The participants in the study are First Nations Directors of Education, some of whom have many years of experience and some of whom are new to the position. Some have experience in the North only and some in the South only or a combination of both. The protocols for participating in research projects are not clearly delineated in First Nations communities but consent was requested from the First Nation authority to contact the participants to request for them to participate in the study.

The 2013-2014 MFNERC school directory listed 54 band-operated schools in Manitoba representing 48 First Nations communities. From this directory, the number of eligible participants (those who met the criteria) was 31. The directory also lists the contact information for the education portfolio councilor for the First Nation. An email was sent to the education portfolio councilor to get consent to contact the potential participant, and, if there was no response, the consent to contact was presented directly to the Chief and Council or to the education authority. The employers of the participants authorized their consent to contact the potential participants by signing the consent forms. The employer who signed the consent to contact was either someone from council or in some cases the consent was signed by the chairperson of the education authority as the Chief and Council delegate authority to the school board or education authority to administer all education matters. All authorities who were approached agreed with the consent to contact, and all signed employer consent forms indicate that they would like to receive a summary of the findings. It was challenging to

get the consent to contact from the Chief and Council or the education authority, and in the end there were 19 potential participants to contact. The participants who were actively working as Directors of Education were chosen from 19 who responded positively to an email containing information about the study. They were asked to respond via return email if they would be interested in participating and there were 19 positive responses. Out of the responders, 8 made the commitment to participate and dedicated some time out of their busy schedules to participate in the interviews.

The other potential participants were those who were no longer working as Directors of Education. An email was sent to 8 potential participants from this pool and four agreed to participate. They contributed greatly to the study. I felt it was important to include the recently retired or those who had moved into other positions, because of their wealth of experience and knowledge.

In Manitoba there are five major language groups: Denesuline (Dene), Anishinabe, Inninowuk (Cree), Ojibway-Cree, and Dakota. Consideration was given to having each language represented in the study. I felt that it was important to have this representation to highlight the diversity of First Nations people in Manitoba. There tends to be a belief that First Nations people are universal in their beliefs, traditions and worldviews. I was not able to get representation from all five language groups, with all of the participants being Cree or Ojibway, which are the two largest linguistic groups in Manitoba.

As a member of the target group for this study, I have frequent interaction with the group of Directors of Education working in band schools in Manitoba and know many of them personally. However, with the beginning of each school year, there is a degree of turnover and there are always some new directors that I do not know. The idea of random

selection of participants is meant to ensure validity of the study, but in this case I selected the participants based on their eligibility, availability, knowledge, and experiences, and what they can bring to the study.

From my experience, when I first became a Director of Education in the community I was the eighth person to hold the position within the 10-year period prior to my beginning the position. The reasons for the turnover vary. The high rate of turnover is partly related to the fact that the position is political in the sense that the Director of Education has to work closely with the political leaders and community members. The position of Director of Education is a political one and because of the frequent change in leadership at the Chief and Council level, the tendency is that the position changes when there are newly elected political leaders. The Directors of Education meet, usually on a bimonthly basis, but recently have met monthly, usually for 2-day meetings in the city of Winnipeg. These meeting times provided the opportunity to meet with the participants in a central location, rather than travelling to their various communities scattered throughout Manitoba.

The process of recruiting the final participants was challenging due to their geographical locations and their time schedules. However, the final sample of participants was representative of the diversity of the Manitoba context. In summary, the participants were experienced and well-educated, and they have diverse backgrounds. The selection of the participants for this study was based on these criteria: be a First Nations person, must have worked as a Director of Education in a First Nations band-operated school, or must have worked as a Director of Education in a band-operated school within the last 5 years.

The Interviews—Data Collection

The data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with each of 12 participants who were selected from the pool, who met the eligibility criteria, and who were willing to participate in the study. Once the participants were identified, I contacted them individually to discuss their participation in the study and schedule the interviews. The first interview was a face-to-face interview, and some of the second interviews were in phone when it became difficult to schedule the second interview in person. The third follow-up interview with each participant was a telephone interview related to questions for the purpose of clarifying or for further discussion on the stories that emerged from the interviews. The initial interview, particularly with the participants from the North, was scheduled to coincide with meetings in Winnipeg that occur on a quarterly basis or during the times when the participants attended conferences in Winnipeg. Some of the interviews were conducted at the conference site in an empty room or over lunch in the restaurant. The other participants I interviewed prior to the director's meetings or after, as those participants were in Winnipeg or in close proximity, which enabled access. The second interviews involved questions related to their preparation prior to becoming director and questions related to their training. In some cases the second interview included questions identified as third interview in the protocol.

The interviews provided information related to the nature of the work, the career paths of the participants, challenges and successes, and perspectives related to leading in a First Nations education context. The interview protocol (Appendix C) questions were related to their background and training, their career path, the nature of their work (roles and responsibilities), and views related to challenges and successes in their current role of Director of Education. The participants were initially interviewed in a time range from 50 to

90 minutes and the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The first interview was primarily to get the background information on the participants. Part 1 of the interview protocol involved questions on the participants' background such as the extent of their training, positions they have held prior to becoming Directors of Education and life experiences that have helped them in their work. Part 2 were questions related to their roles and responsibilities, challenges, and supports that they relied on in their work. After the initial interviews were conducted with all the participants, I conducted a preliminary analysis of the data and identified some emerging themes. Dependent on the themes and primary topics that resulted from the preliminary analysis, I determined what areas needed clarification and what questions, in addition to second interview questions from the interview protocol, needed further exploration or clarification.

At the beginning of each interview I informed the participant that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time and no compensation would be provided for them to participate in the study. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and all recordings were kept in a locked filing cabinet to protect the data during the course of this study. Participants were given pseudonyms for the purposes of this study and every attempt was made to protect the identity of the individuals who participated in this study, including their names, places of work, and their home communities. Anonymity was a concern because the group meets regularly to share personal and work related information, so they are well known to each other. This was clearly pointed out in the consent forms as well as at the beginning of the interviews. The participants were informed of the efforts to protect their identity but that it may be impossible to limit recognition by others in the final dissertation due to the limited pool of participants and the familiarity that exists between the Directors of Education in

Manitoba. As a further precaution to protect the identity of the participants, I provided a draft of the section of the dissertation for the participants to review that was pertinent to them (which was the story that I determined would be used in the final write-up) as well as the original transcripts, to give them opportunity to delete information that would potentially identify them. No other person had access to the audio recordings or the transcriptions of the interviews other than my primary advisor and the transcriptionists. These will be destroyed at the completion of the study. I developed the interview protocol prior to the beginning of the study and used the same general questions for the interviews. However, at the beginning of each interview, I informed the participants that I would allow the conversation to flow, and additional questions were asked according to the natural flow of the conversation and to probe more information and elicit further elaboration on some of the topics discussed. I made every effort to ensure that I did not lead or direct the interview in such a way that would reflect my own biases and values.

Denscombe (2010) describes this format as a semi-structured interview, which allows the interviewer to be flexible to allow for the development of ideas and to expand or elaborate on topics/issues that arise during the course of the conversations (p. 175). The semi-structured interviews allowed for exploring the challenges they experience as they do the work in their specific context and the psychological processes (thoughts, feelings, subjective opinions) involved as they do the practical work, to hear about their subjective and lived experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 2). The interviews were conducted over a 7-month period and interviews were transcribed as quickly as possible after the interview. The transcripts were provided to the participants to check for accuracy and identifying markers. The follow-up interview was established to clarify some responses from the first interview and ask additional

questions related to the work of the Director of Education and their preparation and training. I used a conversational format and provided the participants with the interview protocol ahead of time, so that they had the opportunity to reflect on the questions.

Data Analysis

The purpose of data analysis is organizing the information that is gathered through the interviews to extract information to address the research questions. Once all the interviews were conducted, transcribed, and checked by the participants, the first step was to acquaint myself with the data, although I had the initial exposure by engaging the participants in the interviews, through the transcribing process and checking the transcripts. After reviewing all the data, I began the process of analyzing the data inductively and interpreting the data. I went through the data in more detail to look for patterns and themes. The initial step involved listening to the audio tapes of the interview in its entirety. As I listened initially to the audio files of the interviews I made some notes related to the research questions and, in the ensuing step of reading the transcription, I continued to add to the notes related to the research questions or recurring themes. I found it very useful to transcribe the interviews as I was able to reflect on the responses. This was useful to me as I was able to get an overall sense of the kind of information that the participants were sharing and also to detect nuances in the voice inflection and words being used. The next step involved listening to the audio tape and matching it to the text to ensure accuracy. Some of the interviews I transcribed myself, but over half of the interviews were transcribed by a transcriptionist. The voice recordings were electronically sent to the transcriptionists, and the transcribed interviews were returned electronically. The transcriptions were sent to the participants to check for accuracy and in only two cases were changes or revisions requested on the responses during the process.

These initial steps were the preliminary stages of the data analysis process. The process of reflecting on the data began with the first interview and was continuous throughout the subsequent interviews. I was constantly making connections, looping the information back to the literature, the research questions, and the theoretical framework. I was challenged by the literature on qualitative research and my advisors to always ask “so what?” and “what does this really mean?” While the data was plentiful as a result of the interviews, the analytical process required careful thought and reflection, so that the study has depth and dimension that will lead to a better understanding of the role of the Director of Education in First Nations communities and, ultimately, provide direction for First Nations education in Manitoba.

Coding

The themes were coded so that I could begin to extract common themes in the interviews. This was done after the transcribed interviews were checked for accuracy and sent to the participants for member checks. I examined the data further and added to the preliminary lists and began to further clarify and organize the data into themes or categories. I made notes during the initial screening of the data on some of concepts or ideas. For example, one of the participants underwent a whole year of mentorship with an experienced director, and I was interested in getting more details of how that worked. I worked primarily from the electronic files and used various colors for highlighting particular themes. I coded the data from the interviews by identifying words, phrases, and ideas that struck me as I was reviewing the transcripts, and it was apparent that there were patterns and commonalities. As I went through the interviews and transcripts I made charts related to a particular theme and extracted the quotes relevant to theme. Through this process, I came up with 24 possible themes, and, as I continued to analyze the data, I was able to identify the occurred most

frequently in the data. I made several individual charts of the participants related to their data connecting it to the research question. I also made a master chart outlining the potential themes for all the participants. This helped me to organize all the data before I began to narrow the data down to specific themes.

McMillan (2004) describes this process for organizing and managing qualitative research data as a funnel: “In the beginning, the data may seem unconnected and too extensive to make much sense, but as the researcher works with the data, progressively more specific findings are generated” (p. 259). As more themes emerged, I began extracting the relevant quotes and sections of the transcriptions to a particular electronic file related to the theme or research questions. For example, for the question of the role of the Director of Education, I made a list of the roles that were identified from each participant into a particular file, and once all the data was collected I was able to count the number of times a specific role was mentioned. I used the same approach with the prior positions that they held, how they got into the role initially, their most challenging aspect, most rewarding, and so on. This information was organized into tables for easiest comparison and to summarize the findings related to a particular question in the interview protocol and the research question. For example, two of the questions asked for the positions they held prior to becoming a director and the extent of their training. These were organized in a table so that I would get a good picture of their career path and the academic qualifications and get a clear picture of the characteristics of the participants as a group.

For more detailed analysis I used notes on the margins of the transcription and color coding to indicate references that may relate to the theoretical framework. I also highlighted sections of the transcripts particularly relevant quotes related to the specific research

questions. I identified key words in the transcripts and used the Microsoft Find application to look for the key word in the other transcripts. All of the transcripts were line-numbered to make it easier to identify pieces of data and direct quotes. I used chart paper to record the initial themes after the first interviews were completed and came up with 8 preliminary themes some of which were not included after all the data was analyzed.

The Position of the Researcher

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state that qualitative researchers attempt to “objectively study the subjective states of their subjects,” but, considering that the data collected must “go through” the researcher’s mind, concern about objectivity arises. They state that the researcher, when going through the data, must continually confront his or her own opinions and prejudices with the data. They also suggest that the results of the study are likely to challenge the preconceived biases of the researcher (p. 37). Creswell and Miller (2000) state that what governs our perspective about narrative accounts is the “historical situatedness” of our inquiry which is based on our “social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender antecedents of the studied situations” (p. 126). They state that the implication for validity of this perspective is that researcher needs to be reflexive and disclose what they bring to the narrative.

As the researcher, I can say that I have a bias and worldview on the situation of First Nations education in Manitoba and that I believe that I am very aware of my historical situatedness. Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest that the researcher self-disclose their assumptions, beliefs, and biases that may shape the inquiry, and in this study my lens and perspective is positioned within the critical paradigm (p. 127). After many years of being involved in First Nations on-reserve education and because of my personal history as a First

Nations woman, educator, and leader, I have reflected much on the challenges that face First Nations education and the profound impact of social, cultural, and historical forces.

Absolon and Willett (2005) argue that there is no such thing as objectivity and neutrality in research, because all research is conducted through human epistemological lenses. They suggest that Aboriginal researchers need to locate themselves and put themselves forward from the onset of the study and seek validation of self in the research process. They consider these essential elements in the research process and Indigenous research methodologies (p. 97). Chilisa (2012) in discussing the credibility of qualitative research studies states that the closeness of the relationship between the participants and the researcher may create difficulties in the sense that the researcher can become overinvolved in the study (p. 168). Reflexivity as a strategy can serve to protect credibility, and she suggests that it is “an assessment of the influence of the researcher’s background and ways of perceiving reality, perceptions, experiences, ideological biases, and interests during the research” (p. 168). The data collected from the participants presented perspectives that challenged my biases and added to not only my understanding but to others as well, which is a tenet of critical qualitative research (Carspecken, 1996, p. 6). Since I am an Indigenous researcher, I locate myself and relate my historical situatedness and put forward my experiences and perspectives in relation to the topic of study.

Hingley (2000) suggests that, if we want to achieve postcolonial status, we must embark as individuals on “personal voyages of introspection,” and, if we want to change the colonial mindset that many of us have internalized, we have a responsibility to make a conscious choice for change (p. 101). I have lived and worked in a system which is rife with injustice and inequity and have often wondered: Why is this? The child who attends an on-

reserve school does not have the same opportunity to have an educational experience that can help them to develop their gifts and talents let alone one that respects them as valued human beings. In a treatise such as this, an academic endeavor, why do I hesitate to express my personal story regarding the education of my children? I am almost ashamed to admit that I withdrew my own children from the on-reserve school that I had dedicated much of my career to improving. I pulled them out of the on-reserve school before reaching high school because they were not getting the education that I want for them. Not because of the lack of good and caring teachers, dedicated school administrators, a safe physical environment, or a community that values education, but because I wanted them in an environment where they can develop their ability to function in the mainstream world. I wanted them to experience the exposure to other cultures, which helps to give them a better perspective on their own. Both of my children attended the on-reserve school from the time they were 4 years old up to their early teen years. They had been with the primarily the same group of children during all that time, who had the same cultural and language background as they had. Their school and personal life were relatively isolated, and, based on what I knew happened to our students who leave the reserve to attend postsecondary education, I wanted them to have the experience to an urban center while they were still young and I had some control on their young lives. I think that if things were different in the kind of education they were receiving on the reserve, I would not have been so willing to pull them out. If the on-reserve local control school really celebrated and honored their identity as Swampy Cree people, and recognized and elevated them as Canada's First people, I would want them to have that above all else. They should be able to thrive in their identity; to learn their language, learn from elders, learn the traditions, the gifts of the teachings of the land, and time honored values. Some say that this is the

responsibility of the home and parents. Yes it is, and my home and parenting has tried to do that but the argument is, if formal education, historically, played a part in negating these, then formal education has a part in building them up. As such, my children and First Nations students are not getting the best of both worlds in the on-reserve schools. The option was to try to give them the better of one world, in the hopes that they would have the confidence, the skills, and the self-esteem to explore their identity and find a balance later in their lives.

Early in the first fall, my son wanted to return home because he missed his friends at home, and, although he was making friends in his new school, he expressed a frustration of not being able to connect with them in the same way as he did with his friends back home. It was only after a lecture from me about different cultures, worldviews, and ethnocentrism was he able to understand and understand more clearly about his own Cree culture and accept the culture of his non-First Nation friends. My daughter was able to make friends easily, and, shortly after starting school in the city, her awareness of her own Cree culture and language was apparent by the questions she asked. She was willing and proud to share her experiences and information about her culture with her new friends. Although she did get asked if she was Pocohontas in her first month of school, she adjusted quite well and was not at all offended by the question, and nor was I. While part of the reason for having my children attend a private school in an urban center was to give them exposure to other cultures, the primary reason was for the opportunity to have an educational experience that was better for them in the sense of having more opportunities for extra-curricular programming in the areas of sports and the arts. It was about their personal development as First Nations people who have to coexist with, compete with, and relate to all other Canadians in an increasingly global society.

Indigenous Research

As part of the literature review for this study, I read many articles and books on Indigenous research methodology and explored how I could incorporate the literature of this emerging trend in scholarly research into this study. In the end I concluded that I would do Indigenous research, employ Indigenous research methodology by being true to myself as an Indigenous researcher, who has a worldview that is based on my Cree background. Absolon (2011) states that Indigenous research includes “re-search methods, practices, approaches that are guided by Indigenous worldviews, beliefs, values, principles, process and contexts. Indigenous methodologies are holistic, relational, interrelational and interdependent with Indigenous philosophies, beliefs and ways of life” (p.22). Western/mainstream methodologies have been tried, tested, and utilized prevalently, the emergence of Indigenous research has called us to question these methodologies and examine how we conduct research with Indigenous populations. Conventional research has not been kind to Aboriginal people and was often seen as alien to them and the results were often misguided and harmful (Castellano, 2004, p. 98).

It is not so much about “throwing out” these methodologies but to be cognizant that research on Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples has not always been beneficial to them. As an Aboriginal researcher I have a sacred responsibility to respect our knowledge and ensure that it is not just research for research sake (or for degree granting). It is about giving us an opportunity to have input into possible solutions for the state of First Nations education and to share our stories. As a First Nations researcher, I believe to that it is necessary to be critically conscious (Absolon, 2011) in the way that I approach research, the methodology that I use,

and how I interpret and use the data. Ermine (2000) comments on the role of a critically conscious scholar:

Critically conscious Indigenous scholars have a role to play in developing the conditions required for appropriate research discourses and transformational programming in educational institutions. Indigenous scholars are perhaps in the best position to chart the appropriate pathways to emancipating and transforming knowledge. The critical Indigenous scholar can readily occupy the ethical space that is characterized as the confluence of two worldviews. (p. 120)

Some of the findings from this study are presented through the stories of the participants. The stories emerged organically from the semi-structured interviews as I engaged the participants through the research protocol. Kovach (2009) discusses the use of story as an Indigenous research methodology and stresses that the researcher assumes the responsibility that if a story is shared that it will be treated with respect in acknowledgement of the relationship from which it emerges (p. 97). She states that the story is an effective means for gaining insight and making sense of the world and from her Cree perspective that “knowledge and story are inseparable and that interpretative knowing is highly valued, that story is purposeful” (p. 98). She suggests that for stories to emerge there must be trust. For many of the participants in this study, there was an element of trust and relationship, as I am an Indigenous researcher and a member of the group being studied. Throughout the process of data collection, I was able to elicit and recognize the stories that emerged. Kovach (2009) relates the importance of self-locating as researchers: to share personal aspects of our experiences with the participants (p. 110). The use of story in this study emerged as I conducted the interviews, as I shared some of my experiences, and participants realized not

only was I willing to listen to the story but that I would be able to relate to the story at a deeply personal level because of our shared background of being First Nations.

Conclusion

Through this study I sought to identify what particular skill sets and knowledge base are needed for Directors of Education to be effective in the work that they do. The participants in this research study express their views and through the data collection and subsequent analysis of the data contributed answers to the research questions posed in this study. This research study gave the opportunity for the participants to speak about their experiences as Directors of Education and to reflect on the responses to the questions. They welcomed the opportunity to share their stories about their work and their life experiences that impact on their work as education leaders. While the sample is relatively small, the themes that emerged from the data collection revealed valuable information and the participants showed passion for their work and have stayed in the position even though it may be challenging and difficult. The question that led to some great insight into the perspectives of these First Nations education leaders was the question related to the life experiences that the participants had that currently impacts the way they work and lead. This question led to the participants sharing very personal life experiences.

As I engaged in the data collection process I was cognizant of the underlying questions related to why the education system for First Nations students has not been successful in improving the academic achievement of students who attend on-reserve schools. Related to this is how are we assessing the academic achievement of students and by whose standards? Conroy (1974) in discussing colonization globally, points out that the colonizer school systems work against the colonized and previous ways of education are denigrated

because of the association with the colonized culture (p. 70). The Canadian Council on Learning (2009) report, *Redefining How Success is Measured in First Nations, Inuit and Metis Learning*, suggests that First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples engage in a process to define learning success that reflects their cultural and regional distinctness and ensure that measures for success are culturally relevant. As discussed earlier, First Nations are often classified as marginalized because Western and colonizer ideology has appropriated the center and in much the same way First Nations ways of knowing and learning have been relegated to the periphery and the measures for success in school are often not appropriate for First Nations. The inquiry is ultimately about finding out about these underlying impacts of colonialism and finding a new direction for First Nations education through a process of decolonization and embracing the view that postcolonialism begins with work of individuals thinking and behaving differently and constantly challenging the status quo. As a long time educator, as a First Nations person, and having a passion for First Nations education, the topic is of great personal and professional significance.

Many reports and studies have been done, the problems and challenges often articulated, and the recommendations and solutions have been suggested; reforms, policies and programs have been rendered numerous times, yet we have not seen radical change. My contention is that we have to use new paradigms and different approaches to address the issues. Qualitative research methods allows for this and an in-depth exploration of the subject through the lived experiences, words, and narratives of the participants. Battiste (2000) suggests that the foundation of postcolonial transformation is Indigenous scholarship that incorporates research involving moral dialogue and participation with Indigenous communities. Indigenous scholars are motivated by the need to understand, resist, and

transform “the crises related to the dual concerns of the effect that colonization has had on Indigenous peoples and the ongoing erosion of Indigenous languages, knowledge, and culture as a result of colonization” (p. xx). She suggests that we need to understand and systematically examine the complex and subtle ideologies that continue to influence education policy and pedagogy (p. xxi). Long and Dickason (2011) assert that engaging in postcolonial dialogue is vital to positive transformational change and allows those who are involved to understand and seek to change the circumstances, social attitudes, processes, and structures that privilege some at the expense of others (p.xxvi).

This chapter has reviewed the research design, the recruitment of participants, the data collection process, data analysis, and my position as the researcher. The next three chapters present the findings from the study and the main themes that emerged as a result of data collection and a careful analysis of the data.

Chapter Four

Findings (1): The Role of the First Nations Director of Education

Introduction

The first question that was answered in this study is *What is the role of the Director of Education in a First Nations school system?* Secondly, the study identified *What specific knowledge and skills are required to effectively perform their duties?* In order to gain some knowledge in how better to prepare school leaders the third question was, *How are they prepared for their role?* Lastly, *What is effective and appropriate leadership for First Nations education that will reflect a First Nations leadership paradigm that will potentially bring about long sought after transformation of First Nations education?*

This chapter presents the findings for the first research question: *What is the role of the Director of Education in a First Nations school system?* The themes identified were extrapolated through the coding process from the transcripts. The themes were identified through direct reference, in the participants' stories and in the nuances and inferences contained in their responses. The stories were selected if they reflected and captured succinctly a particular theme. Through the sharing of their stories the participants expressed their experiences in a meaningful and personal way. I felt that their story was a significantly important part of the data collection and collectively they contained the potential answers to the research questions. The selected stories came about as part of the process of data collection and one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Even though an interview protocol was followed, many of the participants talked freely about experiences and life events that have impacted on them as educational leaders for the First Nations in Manitoba. As I was listening and engaging in the conversations with the participants, I was able to envisage a story from

them that captured the essence of who they are, why they were in this position, and what caused them to do their work in such a way. The stories began to emerge in the first interview and as part of the second interview I asked participants to elaborate on their story in the context of leadership. I extracted the mini story and sent it to the participants to edit with the understanding that it would be used in the final write up. Their personal story and life experiences contained essential information about them as leaders and we can learn from their collective wisdom to determine answers and direction. The data is presented on each of the themes, connected to the literature and the bigger picture of how this relates to postcolonialism and how the findings contribute to what constitutes appropriate leadership for First Nations education.

Participants' Profiles

The participants that were selected had varying levels of experience as directors, with seven fairly new to the position (with less than 5 years of experience) and five “veteran” with more than 5 years of experience. Two of the participants were in their 1st year as Director of Education. All the participants had many years of teaching or working in school administration as principal or vice-principal or working in other positions. The participants who were new to the position brought a unique perspective, as they were in the process of adjusting to the position and establishing an understanding of their role. The more experienced participants were more clear about their role and reflective of what the role should be and how it has changed.

I was not able to get participants that represented all of the five major linguistic groups in Manitoba, mainly because the Dene, Dakota, and Ojibway-Cree have few schools and I did not get a response from them to participate in the study. There was one Ojibway-Cree director

who was very interested in participating in the study, but his schedule and his geographical isolation did not make it feasible for him to participate in the study. He explained to me that he had recently started the position of Director of Education and he felt that he would not be able to participate in the study because he was feeling overwhelmed with the work that he had to do. The Cree and the Ojibway peoples represent the highest population of First Nations in Manitoba. The participants represent six Cree communities and six Ojibway communities.

The academic qualifications range from a minimum of a Bachelor of Education degree to one participant holding two Masters of Education degrees. One participant had a Master of Arts degree. All of the participants had their Bachelor of Education degrees and six had Master's degrees either completed or in progress. Four out of the 12 participants had either a graduate diploma in education or a post-baccalaureate diploma in education. The participants who were completing their Master's degrees were working full time and doing their course work on-line or during the summer months. At the time of the data collection, there were two who were considering Ph.D. studies. All were involved or had been extensively involved in professional development activities.

The participants were responsible for the schools in the community in which they worked and there was a range in types and sizes of schools. Nine of the communities have a high school and six of the schools go up to Grade 9. There was a range in the student population in the schools that the participants had responsibility for. The smallest school had a population of 70 students while the largest student population had 1500 students attending two schools on the reserve. The school and community population specific to the participants will not be identified to further preserve anonymity, but the student population for all the schools represented by the participants total approximately 6600 students. This number

represents over one-third of the total student population of 15,600 Manitoba First Nations students who attend band-operated First Nations schools.

This study sample represents some stability with more of the directors working in or near their home communities although there was some “movement” for the positions during the course of the study. At the time of the final write-up of the study, three of the participants were no longer directors but working in different positions. Out of the 31 Directors of Education listed in the directory that were eligible participants, 21 of them are from the community in which they are working. This phenomenon is relatively recent, as previously there were many Directors of Education who were not from the communities. Although this data was not part of this study, from my experience and knowledge there has been more stability in this position in recent years as communities are realizing that leadership stability is important if there is going to be sustainability in programs, initiatives, and academic achievement. Some of the participants mentioned that, prior to them assuming the position of director, there were directors before them who were not from the community or there had been difficulty recruiting a suitable candidate for the position.

Several of the participants had served terms in political office at the community level as band councilors and one participant had served as a Chief. It is important to note that many of the participants were currently in political positions or had political experience. Four of the participants had served on the reserve band council, three as councilors, and one as Chief. Two additional participants had experience working with the federal government and one worked for a First Nations political organization for several years.

In the background section of the interview protocol the participants were asked how they got into the position of director. Out of the 12 participants, six of them were appointed or

requested to apply to the position (Brenda, Jase, Martha, Rayna, Shan and Vienna), two of the participants (Shan and Vienna) were involved in creating the role of the Director of Education in their community.

All of the “retired” directors were working in other positions after leaving the position of director. Out of the eight participants who worked as directors for more than 15 years and are no longer working as directors, they did so in their home community (Cathy, Jase, Rayna, and Shan). Out of those who actively working, six are in their home community as directors.

An important part of the interviews was to ask questions about the background of the participants in order to gain a degree of familiarity with the participants. The purpose of the first seven questions of the interview protocol was to solicit this information that allowed me to develop a profile of each participant. Table 1 shows the profiles of the participants.

Table 1

Participant Profiles

Name	Nation	Gender	Current Status	Region	Years as Director	Years of Experience	Academic Qualifications
Brenda	Ojibway	Female	Active	South	1	30 +	B.Ed. – BUNTEP (Brandon University Teacher Education Program) PBDE(Post Baccalaureate Diploma in Education)
Carol	Cree	Female	Active	North	3	30+	B.Ed.
Cathy	Cree	Female	Active	North	16	16	2 years in college – Business Administration B.Ed. M.Ed. in Progress
Glen	Cree	Male	Active	North	2	15	Graduate Diploma in Educational Leadership B.Ed. M.Ed. in Progress
Jase	Cree	Male	Retired Working	North	22	30 +	B.Ed.
Lonnie	Ojibway	Male	Active	South	2 months	15	B.Ed. M.Ed. In progress
Marla	Ojibway	Female	Active	South	2	28	B.Ed. PBDE M.Ed.
Martha	Cree	Female	Active/ Working	North	1.5	15	Graduate Diploma in Special Education M.Ed. Reading Recovery Certification Training
Rayna	Cree	Female	Retired Working	South	18	30 +	B.Ed. PBDE (Educational Leadership)
Rena	Ojibway	Female	Active	North	4 months	30 +	B.Ed. P.E.N.T. (Program for the Education of Native Teachers) 2 M.Ed. degrees, education administration & special ed.
Shan	Ojibway	Female	Retired	South	15	30 +	B.Ed. Pre-Masters M.A.
Vienna	Ojibway	Female	Retired Working	South	6	30 +	B.Ed.

The Role of the First Nations Director of Education

The first research question for this study sought to identify the role of First Nations Directors of Education as described by the participants. The interview protocol included this question: What is the role of the Director of Education in a First Nations school system? Additional questions, along with probes and prompts as part of the conversations explored a wide range of issues related to their role, including questions on what they felt was the most important role and on identifying the most challenging and rewarding aspects of their work.

The findings related directly to this question are outlined in Table 2. The list of tasks, activities, roles, and responsibilities indicated by the participants were varied and some mentioned more frequently than others. As a means of organizing the responses in regards to the tasks, roles, responsibilities, and activities identified by the participants, I used Larry Cuban's (1988) basic categorization of the roles of that were developed to describe the work of the superintendent of public schools in the United States.

Cuban (1988) identifies three core roles that are performed by superintendents and tasks conducted by superintendents can be classified under these categories: managerial and political, and instructional. The position of the Director of Education is similar to the position of superintendent in a public school system in certain ways, because their reach and scope of work is broad and they work under an authority such as a school board to carry out the direction of a geographical area. I felt that using Cuban's categorization of roles would help to get a good picture of the roles associated with the position of Director of Education. Also I felt that using Cuban's typology would encompass many of the roles mentioned and would help to illuminate the role in a more focused way. For example, the Director of Education is often referred to as being "political," as they are concerned with dealing with community

members and working closely with the Chief and Council on education issues. Their position is concerned with public relations, as well as managing all aspects of education in the community and ensuring that quality instruction occurs in the school. The Directors of Education are also concerned with the federal government, as they operate under federal funding guidelines and regulations. All of these tasks associated with the core roles were mentioned frequently by the participants. For the purpose of clustering the roles I will use these three core responsibilities to group the tasks identified by the participants. First, I will provide a brief description of the core roles as defined by Cuban (1988).

The managerial role includes tasks associated with carrying out school board policies such as planning, sharing information, hiring and firing, supervising staff, managing conflicts, and a wide array of administrative activities required to maintain organizational stability (Cuban, 1988, p. 136). Cuban suggests that it is usually the managerial role that takes precedence over the instructional role, and the two roles often remain largely separate. Other tasks that are involved with this role include budgeting, facility management, and student transportation. Cuban suggests that the more ideal situation would be to have a balance between the two roles (managerial and instructional) and not to put emphasis on one role at the expense of another. The tasks associated with the managerial role are often referred to as administrivia and involve necessary daily tasks such as paperwork, reports, and phone calls, writing memos, answering emails, and implementing policies.

The political role is associated with meeting with parents, officials, and members of the public to “nourish public support for schools or offset criticism” (p. 139). Cuban suggests that this can be termed community leadership and public relations. This role also involves the authority, rules, and influence that superintendents utilize in governing their school district.

The superintendent position involves attempting to fulfill expectations from varied groups and conflict is often part of the picture. He points out that superintendents act politically when they exercise their power and authority and deal with the various stakeholder groups that they come into contact with in the course of their work.

The concept of the instructional role for superintendents shifts from direct teaching in the classroom to the concept of a teacher of the school community. The superintendent is responsible for instructional leadership and support of teachers and school administrators in improving pedagogy, implementing the curriculum and innovative programming, and ensuring that supervision of teachers takes place. Cuban outlines the instructional role of the superintendent as being broader, including shaping the vision of the district, establishing a district climate, and “designing rituals and structures that infuse life in both the mission and climate through communication skills and personal example” (Cuban, 1998, p. 133). He states that the community becomes the classroom for this role with the superintendent’s intentions, goals, and strategies becoming the lesson plans. He suggests that the instructional role can be done directly by the superintendent or delegated. Some superintendents are more hand-on than others with some being directly involved with teaching teachers in a school district. Cuban points out that this is the work that superintendents should do and the level of involvement between superintendents varies greatly, with some teaching teachers and some delegating fully to others. This role is concerned with the instruction that happens in the classroom and how teachers deliver content of the curriculum.

Table 2 provides a summary of the responses and shows the roles, which are check marked if the role was mentioned in the interview. The number on the right column indicates the number of times the role was mentioned. The numbers at the top of the table represent

each of the participants, and their corresponding pseudonym is listed at the bottom of the table.

Table 2

Roles of the Director of Education

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Managerial													
Fiscal/Finance Management/Budgeting/ Fundraising/Seeking Funds/Grant & proposal writing		√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	10
HR /Staff Relations		√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	10
Overall management of education all aspects	√	√		√	√	√			√	√	√	√	9
Policy development/ Implementation			√		√	√		√	√		√		6
Facility/ Operations & Maintenance/ Management/New School Planning/Infrastructure		√			√			√	√		√		5
Build capacity				√		√	√	√		√	√		6
Planning	√	√			√		√				√		5
Transportation			√		√			√		√			4
Postsecondary programs			√			√		√	√				4
Resources/resourcing		√				√							2
Political													
Liase/Confer with Chief and Council/Board	√	√			√	√	√	√			√	√	8
School/Community Relations/ Community Meetings/Forums/Parental Engagement		√	√	√	√				√	√	√		7
Provide direction/guidance for education/decision-maker/ Set Goals and Objectives/vision	√	√		√	√						√	√	6
Build Trust/Rapport	√	√			√		√				√		5
Be a team leader/Leadership		√	√				√	√			√		5
Build partnerships/Networking							√				√	√	3
Change the thinking/Decolonize						√				√	√	√	4
Keep abreast of trends/politics of education/ Federal politics how it impacts FN education		√			√				√				3
Public relations/public speaking					√				√			√	3
Facilitation/Conflict Management						√	√				√		3

Communication			√					√			√		3	
Problem Solving	√				√								2	
Be a change agent/manage change		√									√		2	
Instructional														
Culture and First Nations Language Programming/Overall programming/Land-Based Education		√	√	√	√	√					√	√	√	8
Work with/Support School Administration	√	√					√	√				√		5
Instructional Leadership			√				√	√	√					4
Safety/caring/Nurturing Environment/Build student self-esteem		√		√				√						3
Curriculum Development								√				√		2
Early Childhood, Day care Headstart						√						√		2
Updating on trends changes		√					√							2
High School Programming			√											1
Monitor School Progress														1
Help teachers improve/professional Development									√					1

1 – Brenda, 2 – Carol, 3 – Cathy, 4 – Jase, 5 – Lonnie, 6 – Marla, 7 – Martha, 8 – Rayna, 9 – Rena, 10 – Shan, 11 – Vienna, 12 – Glen

In summary the focus of the work of the Director of Education in a First Nations community is centered on the managerial and political roles. While the role of the director varies from community to community with some having more supports than others, it is concluded that the scope of their work is wide. The role that was identified most frequently was to be responsible for finances and the education budgets. The concern for funding and finance is uppermost in the minds of the participants in their daily work because they experience every day the impacts of chronic underfunding for First Nations education. They work in a political environment where educational issues are impacted by policies of the local, provincial, and federal governments. It is evident that the scope and breadth of their work is

vast because of the wide range of roles associated with the position and multiple roles and tasks associated with being a Director of Education.

The first five tasks in the managerial category are all very much on the mundane but necessary activities sometimes referred to as administrivia. Although these tasks may be time consuming they are necessary in order to maintain organizational stability (Cuban, 1988, p. 36). Cuban states that for the superintendents who want to stick with doing only what the school board directs, they will concentrate on these tasks. For those who envision a direction that will impact students, teachers, and principals beyond what is existing, they will merge the two roles of instructional and managerial and find a balance between the two. The first six tasks in the political category have to do with working with the community and other stakeholders for public relations and relationship building. This is significant information and implications are discussed in the following sections as related to the themes that emerged from the data analysis. The two overall themes that emerged from this analysis are: (a) relationships and community, and (b) local system of education-reality of politics. Under the first theme of relationships and community there were three subthemes: (a) relationship building; (b) the global role of the Director of Education; and (c) compassion and healing. Under the second theme there were four subthemes: (a) the role the Chief and Council; (b) role of the school board; (c) the combined role of Director of Education and principal; and (d) instructional leadership.

Theme 1: Relationships and Community

Ultimately, Indigenous leadership was about commitment to the nurturing of a healthy community and enriching the cultural traditions on one's people. Leaders were

predisposed to care deeply and imagine richly with regard to their people. (Cajete, 2001, p. 90)

The participants stressed the importance of being community-minded. What does this mean, to have a community mind? It means their work has to consider the whole community context, and building trusting and healthy relationships with people is an essential component of their work. The role of the director encompasses education beyond the school building and their responsibility extends significantly beyond the nursery-Grade 12 school population. The Director of Education needs to have a wider knowledge base and a further reach than the school buildings and being community-minded is part of their responsibility.

Relationship building. Brenda feels that building trust, healthy relationships, and good communication with the community in which you work is most important. She states that this is important “just because you have their kids.” Cathy is grateful for the relationship that she has with the community, and when asked what has helped her in her position she states:

What has helped me is coming from a small community, knowing the people and having that trust and a good working relationship has helped me grow.

Communication is very important because if you don't have it then you hit mounds of issues. That can trickle down right from the top all the way down to the children, and to the parents. (Cathy1.1.103-106)

Marla shares her perspective on relationship building and the importance of showing you care about their community:

As a Director you should develop a healthy relationship with the community with as many people as you can and show them your willingness to be there with them, to

make a commitment to their community and that you really do care about education.

When people get to know you, they appreciate what you are about and you are more likely to get their support. (Marla2.1.740-745)

Jase comments that as a director you have to know the people and get a good sense of where they are coming from. He suggests that you cannot work in a vacuum and stick only to working with the school staff, the board, or the Chief and Council, but you need to work with and understand the community people. He talked about the importance of the director being visible out in the community, and doing everything they can to be out there: attending graduations, school events, being on the radio station, and generally using every opportunity to “schmooze” (see Jase’s story). It is important to be transparent and be open with the “all the stakeholders” and to engage them. Leadership is about communication, building relationships, and being visible and approachable, according to Jase. Rena shares the importance of communication, and one of the tasks of the education director, in her view, is to hold community meetings and have community forums on education matters.

Martha speaks about being invested in the community, because this is her home. She attended school here and her children attend school here. She admits that she “bears the burden of it” knowing that the school is struggling and that there are education gaps. This helps her in her work as director, to keep working even though she may not always get the support from the community members and the local political leadership. She states that as an educational leader in your home community you take on the responsibility of trying to work with a system that may be broken. She suggests that it is important to know the culture, because then you can understand where the parents are coming from in terms of their experience with education:

So I think we put up with a lot of abuse, but when you understand where it's coming from you don't take it as personally. And you help the parents deal with their issues. Usually they're projecting their experiences on what they think their child is experiencing. (Marthal.1.469-471)

Shan relates the importance of relationships for First Nations, and building relationships is an essential component of leadership in a First Nations context:

Life is like a circle: people enter and leave your life. Sometimes they become more permanent so those relationships are really important. When you read First Nations scholars like Youngblood Henderson he talks about the value of relationships in First Nations societies and that it is one of the most important things. You will notice when the community judges a person, when you ask a community member: "What do they think of the leaders?" If they (the leaders) have built a good relationship, they will say, "I like them." Those friendships and relationships are more important than anything else in First Nations. I didn't realize that until most recently how important friendships and relationships are in terms of building good leaders in the First Nations. If you have good relationships with people you will be a strong leader because they will value that. They will see you as a friend. (Shan2.1.314-324)

Shan also suggests that building relationships is important for students:

Our kids need to be able to build relationships and friendships with other students whether it is in the city or whether it is from other First Nations communities. They have to start building those relationships because those very people will influence them life later on in the workplace or in the university. So they (the students) have to start building those relationships early in their life! (Shan2.1.315-319)

Vienna reflects on her experience of being a director and the importance of getting people to be free to talk to “the boss”:

Even though we have a hierarchy system, you have to remind people that we’re on a team; it’s not us against you. I think we tend to do that sometimes. We make people feel as if, “Oh you can’t talk to the boss.” It’s our own fault for doing that if you make people feel that they are not part of a team, that you make them feel they are subordinates. (Vienna 1.1.755-759)

The theme of building relationships was a prevalent theme in this study. Associated with the importance of building relationships was the need to care and to maintain an open line of communication. It does not mean sitting in the office to wait for people to come but to be out there in the community, to be visible and being proactive in engaging people and bringing them to the school in a variety of ways. The findings in this section indicate that these participants were very much committed to being communicative and seeking to build relationships even though community members may not be entirely receptive. Martha mentions being invested in the community, and even though there may be negativity it is important not to take it personally as it is a symptom of historical experiences. The First Nations schools represented in this study are band-operated schools and this means, specifically as First Nations people, that parents, community members, and leaders have the right and responsibility to participate in setting direction and priorities for education, and often it is incumbent upon the Director of Education to ensure this happens. The OLF outlined setting direction, building relationships, and developing people as essential core practices for successful leaders. The participants in this study have a focus on people and relationships and meaningful connections with community.

A global role. The participants often referred to their role being global and encompassing a wide scope of responsibility. Some of the participants compared the position to that of a provincial school superintendent, but different in many respects. The provincial superintendent would have more schools that they would be responsible for; they are more likely to have more areas delegated to others. There are some First Nations schools that have a higher student population than some provincial school divisions in Manitoba. Lonnie mentions that the provincial supportive infrastructure for education is much more elaborate than what you would have for a First Nations system, and it would have more resources and supports. In most First Nations the director is responsible directly for transportation, human resources, and the postsecondary programs (including community-based programs). They may not necessarily have other support staff to supervise these areas. The Director of Education is responsible for everything that has to do with education in the community, as well as being aware and knowledgeable about regional and national developments in First Nations education that normally has impacts on the local education system. For example, it was important for Directors of Education to be aware of the federal legislation (Bill C-33) that was being proposed by the federal government in early 2014, so that they could present the implications of the proposed bill to the Chief and Council, the community members and to school staff.

Lonnie mentions that he has to be aware of a wide range of maintenance issues, such as the fire panel or the heating system, and be familiar with the Canada Labour Code. He states, “you never know when the issues come up and you have to rely on your own knowledge” (Lonnie2.1.522-528). Cathy also has a bus driver’s license, as she may be put in a situation where a driver is needed. Many of the tasks and functions of the director are

“normal” educational and management duties, such as writing reports, addressing parent concerns, personnel issues, budgeting, and planning. There are some tasks and roles mentioned that are above and beyond what may be called for in their job description.

Brenda feels that one of her main responsibilities is to push for equality and to ensure that her students get the same quality of education as provincial public school students, and there should be no reason for them to have anything less:

This role is a very important role I would like to see the school progress in providing our students the best possible education there is. I want to make this a reality and push for equal opportunity for our First Nations. (Brenda1.1.192-200)

Shan is adamant that the Director of Education is not just concerned with the K-12 school.

Shan was the participant that placed the most emphasis on the broader role of the Director of Education, and she was adamant that it was not just a job, but the director needed to be concerned about more than the technical aspects of schooling:

It is more than that, much bigger than that! It has to be a global view of education. As an educator and as a director you must focus on much wider, more global education issues that impact Canada, the world, and Indigenous people as a whole. You need to be able to see education changes in the States so that you can bring that to the community. Education isn't just the school, education is parental involvement, life-long, universal, pre-nursery, it's all inclusive, and it is more than technology, there is much wider development in the world than just our school. It is important for the Director of Education to be the visionary! (Shan1.1.346-353)

While Lonnie understood that management of the daily operations were a big part of his role, he also acknowledged that there were more issues outside of the school building that he needs to be concerned with as a director:

You have to oversee everything that has to do with education for the community, the school is one aspect postsecondary is another aspect, programs for adults is a different one. You need to so be able to keep abreast of the developments in First Nations education at a national-political level. (Lonnie1.1.346-349)

Vienna agrees that the role of the Director of Education is broad and she believes that she has a role to advocate for education and to be the vision keeper and ensure that the community is working towards their vision:

I think the main role is to be the education advocate for your community and the responsibilities are to make sure that everybody's following the vision, especially the people that are in charge. Those people that you're responsible for to make sure they're on the same page, to show the community that there is a vision.

(Vienna1.1.538-542)

Carol states that she is to be a team leader, set direction, and be the liaison with the Chief and Council:

I see that one of my major roles is to be a team leader and build that environment not just in the school but relate it to education, to set the direction, to be the one to work with chief and council and say: This is what they said: we want academics improved, we want a safe and caring nurturing environment for our kids and we want to see some culture and language activities in our school. So that is what the primary responsibility of the director is to set the goals and objectives of the program. Not necessarily how

we are going to achieve this to me that is the role of the principal and the administration to be the ones to say this is the way we can do this. (Caro11.1.253-262)

Rena shares that as education director she has multiple roles:

I think there are a lot of roles of the education director, from having community education meetings, being involved in financial planning meetings, being involved in policy development and in curriculum development. You also need to be the chief and council and staff liaison, bringing issues to the chief and council. You need to have education forums with the community and get involved with postsecondary.

(Rena1.1.216-221)

Glen's reflects on how we have to go beyond schooling to educate students on the skills that will help them to live better in modern society:

But I think it is important for people to know that they are a different breed and we are just as good as anybody else. How do we convey that message so that people start believing that? The way that we are and the way we are supposed to teach right now is that we have to teach these kids how to think critically. That is the message that has been given to us. They have to be able to problem solve. They have to be able to communicate. They have to be well versed in technology. I say those things because they were part of our teachings long time ago, traditionally. Way before the white people came into this country and I will tell you why. My late father in law, again, who attended the residential school, but later on in his life, he went into the land and he made his living from there and how he was taught was from his dad. His dad taught him the teachings and those teachings involved communication, they involved problem solving, they involved critical thinking and technology. He used those skills

to survive in modern society. This is what we have to teach our kids. (Glen2.1.233-248)

The participants in this study indicated that the role of the Director of Education encompasses a wide scope that goes beyond the boundaries of the school.

Compassion and healing. Many of the participants feel a sense of responsibility and frequently expressed compassion and empathy for the people that they work with. They have an intimate awareness of the healing that needs to happen. They feel responsible to promote healing and care that requires them to “be gentle” with the community as a way to reconciling with them with the education system that has scarred them in the past, either through the residential school experience or a negative experience that they may have had with attending school on or off reserve. Through their stories, words, and nuances in the interviews participants referred to the need for healing and felt they had to be part of the reconciliation; to be part of the process of apology for the negative educational experiences of the past. The more experienced participants were more aware of the need to connect with the community and recognized that the historical and current context influenced how people related to the school and the education system. They knew that reparation of the relationship had to be part of the job. The participants who had less experience initially struggled with working with the community and building and establishing relationships. They were more focused on the work of the school and staff and did not focus on building the relationship with the community.

Marla is very passionate about her role as to help people realize that colonization and history has affected the way of life of Aboriginal people:

I go into the community and there are some people who are convinced we have to let our way of life go and forget about our identity, that there is doom and gloom if you

try to hang on to being Indian because look what happened to us. I feel that I have to undo that way of thinking. If you go into the community right now and say who wants to learn Ojibway I can guarantee that most of the people will say what for? We are losing the language. I feel I have to go in there and teach them about what happened. When they realize the injustice that has occurred over time, how we have been brainwashed to give up who you are. I think that upsets them. You have to give them the knowledge first before they can make an educated opinion about something. So that is my own personal thing; I need to go in there and help people understand what happened to us. Being Indian is not a bad thing. Being proud of who you are is not a bad thing. It should actually assist you to be successful in this society. (Marla1.1.404-416)

Rayna has a particularly strong sense of compassion and takes on the responsibility of caring for the community and helping others to deal with grief and emotions. She feels responsible partly because there are usually less resources and supports available than what may be available to other Canadians. She points out:

We had a teacher death from a vehicle accident. The funeral was held in the school. I had to have a debriefing for the students and the teachers. All those kinds of things you have to be able to handle, you have to be strong. These issues are affecting us more and more like colonization, residential schools and the murdered and missing Aboriginal women. One of the recent ones was a student in our high school. When something like that happens it affects everybody, the teachers, the students, and the community. (Rayna1.1.168-173)

Rayna states that she made sure that she continued with personal professional development annually to help her spirituality and wellness. She feels that this was important for her to help her deal with the many social issues in her community. She provides an example of a suicidal staff member who she had to drive around during the night to talk to her.

Rena feels a sense of responsibility to be there for the teachers as a support. She says that when a teacher has problems her role is “not to put them down or reprimand or discipline but to help them and give them ideas or resources to improve and to suggest professional development for them” (Rena1.1.179-182). Rena feels that it is important for a director to role model life-long learning and on-going professional growth. She spoke about how a “soft-heart” is necessary to a point:

The compassion has to be there but there is a limit. You have to know the limit.

Enough is enough: you have to reach a point when enough is enough, then take action for the benefit of the staff, students and the community. (Rena1.1.319-322)

Martha feels that the injustices of the past shows in behaviours that make the job of the Director of Education more challenging:

So it’s a struggle and you really need to know the culture, to know their collective history, their educational history. To know about residential schools and all the colonization stuff. It helps because it’s reflected in their behaviours. They are dysfunctional behaviours and I won’t even mince the words. (Martha2.1.474-478)

Cathy relates this role of the school and how she has tried to do her part to change the view that the community has on traditional activities:

We have different cultural activities (in the school) whether it’s a boy’s star blanket club or a girl’s drum group. These activities are part of the school. They are more in

school day time activities as opposed to after school. Our community is a hockey community and many of our kids are either in hockey or go to the arena. Activities are becoming more accepted, we even used to offer catechism in the school. I think the community is changing their way of looking at community life and school life. There are more traditional activities that promote culture and language and the traditional aspect of it. Bringing in the drum 20 years ago would have offended some people. Actually I was trying to promote the drum in the school many years ago and it was not accepted. Now we have some hand drums in the school. I think things are changing and those things are becoming more accepted because of the movement and attention with the Indian residential schools. People talking about it trying to understand it and accepting it, I am kind of working with the school in bringing those things out to be more open and work on more acceptances. Now most of these elders are starting to understand that the school is okay. You can be part of the school. My own perspective has changed. Just individually people have been going through their own healing process. Education has been trying to help with their process, embedding more programming being instrumental in promoting that aspect of their own healing. We try to work with the school to be open and to work with the community on this.

(Cathy2.1.342-358)

The participants felt a responsibility to the people and showed compassion and a sense of empathy with them. Compassion and healing was a prevalent theme, and that the school had a role to play to be a conduit in which people can recover from the residential schools and negative historical experiences of formal schooling.

Theme 2: Local System of Education—Reality of Politics

The participants in this study frequently referenced the local system and governance structure of education in their community. The position of director is one part of the system that is a level of authority in the on-reserve education system. The school administration is the first level, the Director of Education is the second level, and the Chief and Council is the third level of the governance system. If a school board exists, then it is also the second level. Each level has its role and level of authority that must be recognized and acknowledged for the system to work well. In order for the system to work well each level of authority must respect the other levels of authority. For example the school board member or council would not normally deal with school staff issues. The only way that they would be involved is if the Director of Education was not able to deal with the matter and referred it to the school board and if the school board was not able to deal with it, the matter would go to the council as the last step.

Lonnie states that he considered the system of education in the community prior to accepting the position of director and feels that he has a good support system. He states: “A good structural system within the community makes a big difference whether or not you move into director position” (Lonnie 1.1.51-53). Jase suggests that it is important for people to know and accept the appropriate levels of authority in the community and going to the Chief and Council for education issues should not be the first step. It is important, he suggests, that people in the community and the school staff recognize the levels of the system. This also includes the role of the Chief and Council. The system quickly breaks down if decisions are overruled arbitrarily from the next level of authority. Shan, similarly, points out that everyone has to know the level of authority in the local system: “the principal is there to manage the

school,” and the director is there to provide the resources and the support for the principal and other supervisors in the system do their work. Some of the participants in this study were more hands-on in the school than others. Four participants indicated they were at the school regularly. Two participants indicated that they were at the school every day or as much as possible, because they actually had an office in the school and were involved in day to day activities.

Vienna asserts that the position of director was needed in her community because the Chief and council were micromanaging education. Not by their choice but because without the director, every problem from education was coming to them, “whether it was disciplining the teacher or education staff missing work and they were tired of it.” She mentions that it may be hard to justify the position for small schools and small communities, but it is needed in order for the local system to be effective and that it is important for people to know about the process:

I think making people understand that they’re part of a team is very important. I think we operate on a hierarchy system in our community. Like, we’re always looking at who’s the boss. It’s difficult for some people to have that respect for your immediate supervisor and the chain of command. We have a process in place if you can’t resolve anything from your immediate supervisor, to go to the next level, to have that respect for who’s in charge of what. (Vienna2.1.26-32)

Rena knows the importance of respecting the system that exists:

I have a good relationship with the community. They have issues they will come to me in a professional manner. I would ask them, “Did you talk to the principal about it? You have to go to the principal about it. Take that issue to the principal.” They say,

“Okay”. They are good with it. I don’t want them to by-pass the principal on these issues. (Rena2.1.326-330)

Lonnie refers to a tiered level of responsibility and each level has its level of authority and specific knowledge base that is required if the system is going to work well:

It is importance to have strong and stable community leadership; supportive leadership because if you micro manage, it renders you ineffective. If they are going to overturn every decision you make. I think it is the same thing from the director to the principal, if the director is steady in there trying to micro manage then you might as well not even have a principal because if the teachers, the parents and the students will see that right away and try to exploit it. It is important to follow protocol and be able to stand back and still give guidance but in a way that is not overruling decisions.

(Lonnie1.1.297-304)

A system of education exists at the local First Nations level, and the participants expressed the importance for each level to exist and that each level of authority is respected and roles are clear. There is often a breakdown in the efficiency of the governance in First Nations education at the local level when persons in authority are not clear about their role.

Sometimes it is a council member or a school board member who may not be clear about their roles and step out of their boundary of authority. The participants did not talk about it too much, but they admit that it does happen occasionally that their decisions are overruled by another level of authority.

The Director of Education and the Chief and Council. The Chief and Council are responsible for the education program and set the direction overall for the work in all the areas. They communicate regularly with the school board or the Director of Education on

educational matters. The Director of Education acts as the liaison between the school board and the Chief and Council. Many of the participants mentioned their role as being closely connected to the political leadership of the community in which they worked. They identified their role as the as the go-between or the liaison between the school, the school board (if one exists), the community, and the Chief and Council. Some mentioned about how it is sometimes a challenge to be in that position when you consider the close family relationships that are part of a First Nations community.

The Chief and Council rely on the Director of Education as the technical expert to keep them up-dated and informed. Glen mentions that the director has to ensure that the Chief and Council of the First Nations have the necessary information to ensure that they can make informed decision on educational issues. Rayna stresses the importance of working closely with the Chief and Council and to communicate with them: “You have to maintain the relationship with them, as well as the school board. You have to work to build mutual respect and build the relationship with the chief and council.” Often the direct line of communication on education is with the Chief and Council in the absence of a school board. Carol points out, in her community, where there is no school board, that she keeps in touch with the Chief and Council and communicates with them when she can:

Honestly, the chief and I have a pretty good relationship. Sometimes we end up talking late at night when he is finished what he is doing. 11:00 at night all of a sudden the phone will ring because he wants to check on something. Sometimes when I run into the office and he happens to be just sitting there doing paperwork I go in there and talk to him for a while. We don't usually have that time, they (the council) don't have that time to sit down and have those types of discussions. Once in a while we will

have a meeting on education with the council usually at the beginning of the year. We present our operational plan and every once in a while we will be called on the carpet for something we've done. It is usually nothing. I haven't been called in front of the Chief and Council for anything but the chief talks to me about things once in a while. (Caro11.1.224-236)

The relationship between the participants and the local political leadership varied but most felt that the roles and level of authority needed to be defined and understood. The participants felt that there needed to be a balance of keeping the Chief and Council informed about educational matters and being given the autonomy to make decisions and to be allowed to manage education without interference in the decision making.

Vienna stresses the importance of keeping the Chief and Council informed so that they are aware of what is going on:

You keep your Chief in Council informed and other administration, you keep them informed of the needs and decisions that you make. If they hear about it from the community then they resent the fact that they don't know anything about it. If something happens and a parent approaches them, then they know. Constantly keeping the communication line open. (Vienna1.1.786-791)

The Director of Education and the role of the school board. The school board sets policies and works closely with the Director of Education to ensure the operation and administration of the school and education programs are running smoothly. The Director of Education works closely with the school administration and is the liaison between the school administration and the school board. Out of the communities represented in this study, six of them had functioning school boards and many of the other communities had school boards in

the past but were dissolved by the council for a variety of reasons. Rena mentions that the school board in her community was dissolved by the Chief and Council because the school board was micromanaging and showing favoritism to certain people. She noted that they were not trained on their roles and responsibilities and if they had been properly trained things might have worked out better. She wishes that there was a parent council or committee that she could work with because the Chief and Council are usually very busy to meet with her. She comments, though, that if one was created they would have to be clear in their role. This is often difficult, to have an objective and neutral school committee, because of close family relationships in the communities. Brenda identifies her main role as to work with the school administration and attend necessary meetings. She also agrees that she has to maintain the relationship with the Chief and Council. She states: "They are our superiors. For us they function as the school board as we do not have a school board" (Brenda1.1.206-210). Cathy works with a school board consisting of five members and one elder. She states that the current board is supportive. There have been challenges in the past when past board members came with their own agenda and were often not clear on their roles and responsibilities and just "wanted to crack the whip." She feels that if there is a board with some formal training and experience it would be a benefit to have them for the purpose of accountability and transparency. Martha, on the other hand, did not have a school board in her community:

The chief dismantled all the boards so the school board is the Chief and Council. I think that's probably where a lot of our challenges are arising from. There used to be a school board. So it's just the challenge of not having the support. Okay, there we go, that was another big one. As a director not having another layer of support to support you. (Martha1.1.294-298)

The First Nations represented in this study do not all have a functioning school board or school committee. The participants expressed that their jobs would be made easier if a school board existed and for those who did have a school board, the director was seen as the liaison. From my experience and based on the data on this study, it seems to be more common for school boards not to exist, partly because of the lack of funding and partly because of the difficulty that may come up when community members who sit on the school board are not clear about their roles. However, there are advantages to having a school board or a school committee. The OLF outlines one of the characteristics of strong districts is effective board governance. Board members play an important role if they are policy oriented and participate in the system's mission, vision, and goals. The framework identified essential characteristics of strong districts and concludes that "growth in student achievement and well-being is encouraged when elected boards of trustees focus most of their attention on board policy and concern themselves with ensuring the district mission and vision drive the district's improvement efforts" (Leithwood, 2013, p.19). The McKinsey study also identified the importance of boards and how continuity in board leadership strengthened systems (p.81).

Combined role of Director of Education and principal. The Director of Education in the First Nations system of education is an important part of the system, and if the director and principal position is combined into one position the system is more likely to create a number of challenges, as it merges two distinct levels of authority. Out of the communities represented in this study, seven of them had, at one point, a combined principal/director position and two of the participants had worked as principal/director. Shan comments on how the system can become dysfunctional if the two positions of Director of Education and principal are combined: "To meld the two almost makes the system non-functional.

Remember we talked about the first second and third level services and the importance of having a system at the local level. Student issues are dealt with by the principal, for example, and not the director” (Shan2.1.337-339). Brenda worked as the vice-principal for many years and worked with a director/principal who mentored her. The Chief and Council decided to create two separate positions for principal and director. She took over as director but still maintained the office in the school. She is still very much of a hands-on and still helps out with discipline when needed. This system seems to work well for them because of the long-term relationship with the school administration and the community who are clear on the roles and the level of authority. Rena frequently visits the school but not for the purpose of making decisions or intervening on any matters but rather for lending her support. Rena also worked as a director/principal and shared that she found it difficult as her time was fully devoted to the school as principal:

Doing both jobs was difficult. I could not do much of the director’s job, because there was just too much of the principal’s duties that had to be done. It is still a big job. All those years we did not have a guidance counsellor and there were a lot of discipline issues. So as the principal/director, I had to talk to the kids and so I was basically a principal/counsellor as well as director (Rena.1.1.51-56).

Martha relates the experience in her community about the high turnover of school administrators and how they (the Chief and Council) tried to save money by combining the role:

Our principals were getting fired, fired, fired. They hired a principal/director after they fired our last principal in attempts to save money, thinking they could save money. Our school has just a little 560, sometimes 600 students, right, so they expected a

principal to do the role of the director, to do the dual role. The person they hired was not First Nations. He did have some experience working in the federal government so I guess he really felt he could do the job and affect change and be the educational leader that he envisioned himself to be. But it didn't work out. He barely made the year. They just let him finish his contract and he left the very last day of school, his bags were packed and he was on that plane. (Martha2.1.269-279)

When asked about the combined director/principal role, the participants felt that this was not a good practice. They felt that the amount of work is overwhelming as well as the need to have this level to deal with education matters.

The Director of Education and instructional leadership. In Table 2, the amount of times the instructional leadership tasks are mentioned are much less than tasks associated with the managerial and the political roles. Instructional leadership does not have the focus because of the time spent on such things as finances and human resources issues. Lonnie mentions that it is hard to keep up with the administrivia, and much of his time is spent on “seeking funding whether it is for capital dollars for building improvements or trying to assist in getting a new school, all these different areas such as adult education and post-secondary. There are many areas to manage and monitor” (Lonnie2.1.28-31). Many of the references to instructional leadership had to do with implementing First Nations languages in the school curriculum. Marla relates how she had a discussion with the principal of her school to change the system and do something different and told him what she would do:

I'd challenge those teachers. I'd say afternoons, there's no sitting at desks. You tell me how you're going to teach these kids about their history, their culture, who they are. Really build their confidence. You only have the afternoon to do it, every day, let's try

that out and see how that's going to look. You're really challenging them. You want education overhaul, that's the way it's going to have to happen, but really you probably have the community saying what the heck's going on here? Our kids aren't learning, they're not going to know how to read at the end of this, but right now, what are we dealing with? Kids are restless. We have some hyperactive kids who don't want to sit at their desk. (Marla2.1.422-432)

Brenda, as the education director, is concerned with being an effective instructional leader and as director is closely connected with what happens in the classroom:

Education directors need to be equipped with knowledge and the understanding of issues in regards to education. The students are number one, they are the main focus when you step into these halls, that is my belief, the number one priority is the students because of these students you want good people to train them; you want effective teachers and educators to teach them. (Brenda2.1.314-320)

Rena has a particular commitment to instructional leadership and shares her perspectives on her role:

I think the primary responsibility of the education director is to ensure that the programs in the school are properly implemented and properly followed. Also to ensure that the policies are implemented as well, the provincial curriculum or if there is a community curriculum, to oversee all that. I think that is the primary responsibility of the education director to oversee and to ensure the school follows the program which makes sense to ensure that the children receive the education that they are entitled to. They have the right to the education. An education director has to work

closely with the principal as well. You are there to support them and to give them direction. Instructional leadership! (Rena1.1.229-238)

Martha expressed frustration when she went into school administration in her community. She initially worked as vice-principal she thought that she would have time to be an instructional leader and be able to support teachers to improve instruction in her school. She did not have time to focus on instruction in her position as principal or vice-principal. She was optimistic when she became a director:

When I took the position as director and as a principal, I saw my role as being an educational leader. I accepted the challenge because I thought my experiences, right from classroom teacher to resource to vice-principal, you know that global experience, would help me lead. I could foresee a lot of the challenges, just being from the local perspective. I was able to get things going just because I had that experience. So I saw my role as an educational leader, a planner to implement programs, to support the teachers. (Martha1.1.497-504)

However she soon found that she was not able to fulfill that role:

Of all of my positions in the educational field, I was most unsatisfied with being a director. I came in with so much anticipation, I thought finally I'll be able to read, I'll be able to research best practices, I'll be able to make recommendations for best practices and there's always a honeymoon phase and I observed it, and this is very important I think, it almost like hooks the directors and principals in, there's always a honeymoon phase. What I mean by that is when Chief and Councils or school boards hire the directors or principals, they roll out the red carpet, they give them almost everything for the first three, four months and then everything is cut off and you're on

your own. The same thing happened with the directorship. It all became about money.

It all became a struggle and you know you lose the enthusiasm. (Martha 1.1.536-548)

Cathy talks about how important it is that the Director of Education has a full grasp about what goes on at the school and community level:

Education directors need to get to know the school, getting their feet wet in the school system, understanding what takes place in the school on a daily basis, understanding the students, understanding the different learning needs the students have, understanding the challenges that the teachers have, understanding the community politics, and working with parents, just having that communication that is essential. Education directors have to be instructional leaders, they have to be it makes the whole educational system work better in a more fluid way whereas if you don't have that knowledge you are kind of stuck in your administration seat. (Cathy 2.1.275-281)

The importance of instructional leadership is supported by the literature. The participants in this study did not mention tasks frequently associated with instructional leadership as being central to their roles apart from references were about changing the curriculum to include more language and cultural programming. If they did reference instructional leadership it was to say that they could not focus on it due to the time and amount of other work that they had to do. It is important to note that the participants indicated that they had a role to play to ensure that there was more cultural and language programming in their schools. The incorporation of more language and cultural programming into the school is critical if students are going to be more engaged. The First Nations reserve schools were inherited from colonial (i.e., the federal government) and Directors of Education can ensure that more relevant programming is instituted in the schools so that change is initiated at a foundational level. A

central theme in this thesis is transforming First Nations schooling so that there are better outcomes for First Nations students.

The Role of the Director of Education—Commentary and Reflections

The focus on building relationships was evident in the data. The engagement of the community was important to the participants. Leithwood et al.(2004), in their review of research on how effective leadership influences student learning, indicate that the participation of community stakeholders and parents contributes to student success and that it is important for school leaders to ensure that “the boundaries of their work encompass children’s experiences in the home and wider community” (p. 46). They state that there is evidence that strong family educational cultures provide children with intellectual, social, and emotional capacities that improve their chances of school success. The wider communities in which the children live contribute to the capacities needed for school success, and that it really does “take a village to raise a child.” The community around the child is, they suggest, the social capital that the child needs to increase their chances of experiencing success in school. It is incumbent upon the educational leader to engage with the community stakeholders to garner support for the school and the child. Public relations, communication with the community, and productive relationships with parents are essential parts of the process of school improvement (p. 48).

Ma Rhea (2015) advocates for engaging Indigenous communities to bring about higher academic standards and educational performance by Indigenous students. In reference to Aboriginal people in Australia, she states that the people remember the school as a “site that proactively sought to eradicate Indigenous culture through its civilizing project” (p. 97). She suggests that, as part of leading and managing Indigenous education, it is necessary to

bring back the community into inclusive engagement and this can be done through “a mix of empowerment and enabling activities” (pp. 97-98). The participants in this study frequently mentioned engaging community and building the relationship as a means of reconciling the past experiences that they people may have had with schooling and that this was important in their work; to bring back the community into inclusive engagement. Ma Rhea (2015) discusses the situation of Aboriginal people in Australia who saw the schools as sites to eradicate their culture, and there was a need for a reconciliation process to occur so that parents and community would start to see the school as welcoming and embracing the culture. This is also what needs to happen in First Nations schools. As indicated earlier in Chapter Two, First Nations education remains for the most part, status quo with the legacy of imposed institutions that according to Battiste (2000) have been used as “a sword of cultural imperialism to assimilate Native North America into a hegemonic system” (Battiste, 2013, p. 162).

The relationship between First Nations and the formal education system has been problematic since first contact because the hegemonic Euro-centric system replaced their culture and traditions. The First Nations Directors of Education who were part of this study were aware that systemic inequalities and conditions continue to exist that are not conducive to the success of First Nations learners and perpetuate their marginality. It is this level of leadership that can engage parents, community, and First Nations collectively and individually to become masters of their own destiny. Parents and community members can be more engaged, and it is incumbent on education leaders to create ways in which they can be empowered and enabled in the education of their children. The main purpose of transferring control of education to First Nations was to ensure that the schools in First Nations

communities would be the means through which their histories, languages, values, customs, traditions, and philosophies could be transmitted, revived, and sustained. “We want education to give our children a strong sense of identity with confidence in their personal worth and ability” (ICIE, 1972, p. 3). This has to do with the differentiation between schooling and education as discussed in Chapter One. The participants reference the importance of education which should not be undermined by the regulations of schooling. There are regulations, standards, and expectations for the on-reserve schools to deliver schooling that is based on the Eurocentric scripts and the curriculum does not fully reflect giving students a strong sense of identity, confidence in their personal worth and ability. It was clear that in many of their comments that they were drawing this distinction between education and schooling. The way in which the Directors of Education build relationships and engage community can be more strategic and for some of the participants it is one of their main roles. Seeking to build those relationships is with a sense of compassion and knowing intuitively that working with people who may have been scarred by past experiences with education needs patience and humility.

The First Nations community where I worked for several years was not very different from many other First Nations communities in terms of the way community members viewed the school. There was that sense of distrust, and often when parents would walk through the doors of the school, their demeanor would change and it seemed as if they were angry. For the participants who work in their home community, the anger is sometimes difficult to take and having an awareness of that person’s past helps to be able to cope with the situations. In many of the First Nations communities, recently, there have been many sessions for residential school survivors as part of the Truth and Reconciliation process and the compensation for residential school survivors. This has brought about some resurfacing of their experiences that

sometimes translates into negative emotions and behavior resulting from the trauma of those experiences. There is recognition on the part of the directors in this study that this is a reality that is part of their experience in working in education. For many years the focus of the school where I worked was to build the relationships with the parents and students. The initial action I took when I first became the principal and then the principal/director was to make the school and front office space more physically welcoming and more aesthetically pleasing. There were plants, pictures, student work, and places to sit. This seemed like a minor change, but it did make a difference. The current office space in the First Nation where I worked consists of sofas and coffee tables, so that visitors feel immediately more at ease. At the school, I assigned greeters at the front doors for morning duty so that they could welcome students and to be ready to gauge their feelings as soon as they walked through the doors. I am sure there were many crises avoided because greeters were able to assess if the child was troubled as soon as they walked through the doors and get them help as needed. First Nations schools need to take these extra steps to make the schools more welcoming and caring, because too often the school building and formal structures of schooling elicit painful memories and emotions.

Building relationships, establishing trust, and communication are important aspects of their work. Crippen and Wallin (2008) in their study of the leadership styles of Manitoba superintendents found that building community was an important priority. They state: “a school division becomes an effective learning community through collaborative, cooperative efforts among the superintendent, the board of trustees, and the other educational stakeholders” (p. 157). The role of the First Nations Director of Education was often referred to as a liaison and to be the bridge builder between the school, the school board, community

members, and the political leadership. At times, a big part of their role is to be a bridge builder between the past and the present in terms of helping community people to hear from their “soul wounds” (Duran, Firehammer, & Gonazalez, 2008) that were perpetuated from the negative experiences that they had in the colonial institutions of schooling. The history of trauma through colonization oppression and the residential schools continues to have intergenerational impact on the communities (p. 292). This is often manifested in behaviours such as being angry towards the school staff, defensiveness whenever there is an incident with their children that causes them to overreact, or fear or reticence to be involved in the school. The participants in this study are aware of this, and this has an effect on the way that they lead and are more likely to take on the role of reconciliation.

Often the first reaction when an incident occurs is to blame the teacher, principal, or director. Anger and defensiveness is often a part of the reaction and it is a long process to build up a relationship with parents and community members so that they do not see the school from an adversarial perspective. This began to change when they realized that their children were successful through innovative programming and that schooling that was being delivered was becoming more “educative” in the sense that their children were more engaged through land-based education, learning their language, and the school developing a more caring culture.

Clearly there is a lack of a focus on instructional leadership and the challenges, the system and the complexity prevent this from being the focus of the Director of Education’s work. There are many factors that are part of the role of the education director that interferes with their ability to be an instructional leader. The OLF referenced in Chapter Two, in

defining strong school districts identified effective leadership practices as a requirement in order to efficiently and effectively manage the organization.

Once again to compare the Director of Education position to the role of a superintendent in a provincial system, Peterson (2002) emphasizes that the superintendent has an important role to play in influencing the academic achievement of students through their relationships with the school principal and the education boards (p.159). Considering the education gap for First Nations students as discussed in various reports (RCAP, 1996; Auditor General's Reports, 2004, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2006), instructional leadership requires greater focus. The role of the Director of Education, although, already multi-faceted, needs to more fully encompass instructional leadership. The Director of Education can spearhead activities that develop the system as a learning organization and actively provide guidance to the school administration and school staff. While instructional leadership is more directly the role of the school administration, the Director of Education can play a key role in setting the direction and ensuring that there is a focus on student learning. Hallinger (as cited by Hallinger, 2008) points out that instructional leadership is an essential component for school effectiveness. Hallinger's model proposes three dimensions for instructional leadership: (a) defining the school's mission; (b) managing the instructional program; and (c) promoting a positive school-learning climate (p.332). While it is delegated to the school principal, the superintendent or the Director of Education has a key role to play to support the implementation of the instructional leadership at the school level. They also have the means to mandate, through policy, implementation of an instructional leadership model.

When I first became a Director of Education, I was more prepared than others, because I worked as a director/principal for one year, so I had an idea of what to expect. I was

a director/principal for one year. I maintained two offices, one as a principal for the school and one in the education building for the director. The least confusing was deciding whether to turn right or left at the fork in the road when getting to work in the morning or returning to work after lunch. If I turned right I would be going to the director's office and if I turned left I would be in the principal's office. The decision was made by a mental coin flip and that determined the role that I would play for that time I was in the building. The most confusing was trying to determine if I was making a decision as a principal or director. In my situation as director/principal, the school board was more directly involved with the school matters, because I would report to the board at the monthly meetings as a principal. If there was a need for a matter to go to the next level from the school, it would go directly to the board. Usually there is some separation between the Director of Education and the principal as they have separate responsibility and represent a distinct tier in the system.

Togneri and Anderson as cited by Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), make the point that school districts are more successful and effective if the school board has a policy governance role and avoids direct involvement in managing the school system (p. 44). This is in reference to the public school system, but I believe that it is applicable to the reserve school system, to some extent. The role of the board should be to focus on policy development, goal and standards setting, strategic planning, and monitoring school/system progress. I would suggest that the role of the school board would be less defined as this in the First Nations context as they would be more closely connected to the plans and implementation of goals and standards. They would ensure that the Director of Education is held responsible for implementation of the plans and policies but be more engaged with the process. Sheppard et al. (2013) state that the pressure and support of an

effective school board is essential to meaningful and sustained systems-level change and eliminating school boards is “poor public policy” (p. 1). In the First Nations on-reserve school systems, school boards are often dissolved for a variety of reasons, including lack of funding to support school boards and to provide training. Lack of training sometimes results in problems due to lack of understanding of their role and not being aware of education issues that would allow them to make informed decisions. Sheppard et al. (2013) in their study of school boards from across Canada indicate the importance of professional development and training for school board trustees in such areas as Research on Student Learning, Legal and Policy Issues, Community Engagement, and Student Achievement Issues (p. 32).

Rena states that her role as the Director of Education to oversee programs in the school and to ensure that programs and policies are properly implemented and followed. Directors need to be aware of their position in the system and operate within their level of authority. Marla relates an incident with a bus driver shortly after she began her position in the community and was not so familiar with how things worked. Someone from the community reported the behavior of the bus driver and when she spoke to bus driver the behavior did not change. It was only when she spoke to his supervisor, who then spoke to the bus driver that the behavior changed.

Leadership continuity is important at the Director of Education level, school level, and particularly at the political leadership level. Vienna points out that it is difficult to maintain momentum on initiatives when the leadership changes:

But the other difficulty is the continuation when our leadership changes every two years, and it's hard to have that continuity when you have a different kind of leader. I know we hate to talk about policies, but sometimes that's the only way you can push

for something to retain its momentum. Like, if you develop an education policy that says, for example again, we're going to start language immersion in kindergarten. If something simple like that is implemented and the whole community buys into it and ratifies it, then the next leadership can't change it, because that's that continuity you need, from the community. If they ratify it and say, yes, that's a good idea. We should do it right now, and just put it in. (Vienna2.1.215-224)

Mourshed, Chijioke, and Barber (2010) address the importance of leadership continuity if systems are going to sustain improvement. They stress that the most successful education systems ensure continuity, which allows for the evolution of the change and the vision. They identify that this is an important element for sustaining school system improvement:

This plays an important role in ensuring that the priorities, drive, mindset and resourcing of change is sustained across leaders. All systems need to somehow traverse smoothly from one leader to the next, so that change becomes evolutionary in nature. The most successful systems actively foster the development of the next generation of system leadership from within, ensuring that there is a continuity of purpose and vision in sustaining the system's pedagogy and improvement. (p. 22)

Mourshed, Chijioke, and Barber (2010) stress the importance of a "mediating layer" between the center and the school. The center is described as the ministry or head office and the mediating layer fills the role of being a support for the school and a communication buffer between the school and the center. They say that school improvement and student learning is not sustained unless there is a system of support. They identify the mediating layer as an

important part of the system with the role of “interpreting, standardizing, and communicating support provided by the center” (p.82). The feedback from the educators in their study indicated the critical role of the mediating layer, which was the need for a school board to be a required layer in the system. The authors state that system improvement is not sustainable unless there is integration and intermediation across each level of the system, and it is the mediating layer that acts as the integrator and mediator between the classrooms and the center. The focus for improving the system is on the schools and what happens in classrooms, but there is a need for a system of support, and a local education authority or a school board can act as the mediating layer. In the First Nations school system, the local band government acts in a number of ways as the ministry as they set the overall direction for education in the context of the broader needs of the community. Although the Chief and Council members do not usually have an education background, they are often required to make important decisions impacting education on the reserve. The school board or local education authority fulfills the purpose of the mediating layer in supporting system improvements with the Director of Education being the point person to act on their behalf. In the absence of school boards or school committees at the local level it is the Chief and Council who take over the role of the “mediating layer” which sometimes may result in inefficiency.

The themes that are embodied in the following stories serve to emphasize that the Director of Education is community-minded role, that their scope of work extends beyond their office and schools, and that they have to work to build relationships and lead with the people in mind.

Bringing It All Together Through Story

Jase's Story—The Schmoozer: The Art of Communication

At one time my wife said to me, “You are such a schmoozer.” As a Director of Education, it is important for me to be a schmoozer. I have to be with the people. I had to explain to my wife why it had to be the way it was. She came from a different mindset. At a function I was her escort and she thought I should sit with her. She said, “You should sit with me.” I said to her, “No, I want to walk around and say hello to all these people.” She sometimes felt that I was ignoring her or leaving her alone at social functions but I had to explain to her why and then she understood and accepted it.

I attended many Christmas concerts and I stood at the door and greeted people, said hello to them, just to be seen. It's about being visible and people can talk to you. My advice for education directors is to be visible because that's what it comes down to. It helps in your work—because it's communication. When you communicate and when you see those people somewhere when they have a small problem they'll tell you about it. If they don't tell you about it, that small problem at times becomes bigger. They may tell ten other people and it becomes bigger than what it really is. If you can take care of it, when you nip it in the bud, the problem does not escalate. They'll give you feedback about little stuff and you'll start hearing feedback about principal, teachers, you know, whether it's good or bad. Of course you take everything with a grain of salt but you put it away for reference. You don't necessarily use it, but you put it away and maybe some things do come up that, you know, that validates those statements or does not validate those statements.

With the staff it is the same thing, they can come here but I always remind them that they should go to the principal first, follow the chain of command, and go to your head of authority. I go to all their functions, if they have a little picnic, if they have these before school starts functions, make sure you try and attend them. Attend the orientation and sit down with them, make your speech or sit down for a whole day.

The idea of being approachable because you're out in the community is key. I went out for an hour for lunch and when I came back I joked and said, "I'm holding office hours even when I am out in the community". You are to be with the people. Don't hide. Don't run away from the people. As a director I tried not to travel very much. I went to community functions. I tried to go to every graduation in the community, linger around there, just sit around, and move with the crowd.

(Jase1.1.270-314)

Jase's leadership style is suitable for a First Nations school system. His goal is to schmooze and build those relationships with the community that may have been damaged by a negative experience. A central premise in this thesis is moving away from the way schools and schooling were perceived and experienced historically by First Nations. In order to this rethinking and changing perception, the actions we take have to be strategic. Jase has chosen to play a conciliatory role to help his community with this process.

Brenda's Story—Leadership With Humility

My Grandmother came to the school one time a few years ago. She was quite an elderly woman already. My nephew was about 6 years old and he was having trouble in school because we had just recently lost our cousin; his mother. My Grandmother

came down to pick up the report card and see the teacher. One of the native teachers, but who was not from this community but a nearby community, belittled her. She took it as an offence, she was a grandmother and the particular teacher said. "You mean you are still coming down here?!" Like an attitude question and maybe she didn't mean anything by it but to my grandmother that was very offensive because she did not have the education that she (the teacher) did. She felt lower than she was. She felt that the way she talked to her was very demeaning. She took offence to that but she chose not to say anything to her. After she told me, "I will never go back to the school, no matter if anyone asks me; I will never go there again." She said because of her.

What we say, words are powerful, what we say when the public comes through those doors is very important and the message that we give. I have learned that from that experience with my grandmother. Every time I see a community person walk through those doors coming in to see about their son or daughter or their granddaughter, I acknowledge them, no matter how old they are, to acknowledge them and to talk to them. I ask them in my language *Kakon ake wichanan?* How can I help you? I speak to them in their language, to come to their level, not to act like you are above them.

Even the janitors they are my best friends, when I was a vice-principal they were my best friends. I talked to them and joke around with them and just be with them and just be at their level. Now as a Director I treat them the same. Just because I am a VP or Director doesn't mean that I am higher than they are. We are all equal. Yes, we have different titles and different jobs but overall we are here together for one thing and one thing only and that is for the children. The top down approach doesn't work in this community anyway. They want respect, and if you show respect, you will get respect

in return. I can't be anyone else that I am not. I want to be who I am and to be what God made me to be. (Brenda 2.1.209-277)

Brenda's story represents the need to have humility as an educational leader in a First Nations school. Much like Jase, she is also playing the conciliatory role by ensuring that elders and anyone else who comes into her school building are welcomed in their language and treated with respect. This is truly postcolonial approach to leadership for First Nations education. Alfred (1999) calls for a revival of leadership that embodies traditional values that sustained the survival of First Nations communities for centuries. Brenda is not the top down hierarchical type of leader, and her approach is to work in a respectful be treating her "subordinates" and all persons as her equals.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the data on the research question: What is the role of the Director of Education in a First Nations schools system? The profiles of the participants in this study were presented in Table 1. The information in the table shows that they all have Bachelor of Education degrees and the majority of them have graduate school qualifications with four having completed a Master's degree and an additional three working on their Master's. Table 2 shows that the First Nations Director of Education plays multiple roles in a complex environment. The primary roles of the participants are concentrated on the managerial and political roles as shown in Table 2. They are the liaison between the political leadership and the school administration and school staff. They are the liaison between the community members and the school administration and school staff. They act as a go-between the school board (if one exists) and the political leadership. They provide the technical

expertise and knowledge to inform the political leadership on education matters. They deal daily with the deficits in resources, space, and funding due to lack of adequate support for First Nations education. According to Cuban's typology of core roles, the focus is on the managerial and political and less so on the instructional role.

The participants confront daily symptoms of historical injustices and are focused on building relationships with the community members who have been scarred directly or intergenerationally by formal schooling. They are bridge-builders, vision keepers, and advocates for equality. They feel a responsibility for reconciliation and to show compassion for the people that they work with. In their own way, the participants in this study are exercising their resistance to colonial influence and working to decolonize the structures of schooling that exist in the current system. As mentioned earlier, the fact is that the schooling experience of First Nations, historically, has been at times painful, and a postcolonial perspective helps us to gain better understanding of the events of history and, through the understanding and awareness, to gain the knowledge and wisdom to make changes. The participants in this study intuitively are working to decolonize the system and are making the changes. They are questioning the system and searching within themselves and in the work they do for answers as to how to reconcile the past and make the present experience of schooling better for the community members and for the students who attend their schools. The simple acts of making a grandmother feel welcome in the school or driving around with a teacher at night who is grieving are acts of resistance and efforts of reparation and reconciliation. They are making changes in the education system, looking at a new way, different from the status quo. The unfortunate reality is that the focus of their tasks

(managerial and political), while important and necessary, leaves little room for the focus on the instructional role.

The participants in this study realize the importance of incorporating cultural and language programs into the schools but are constrained and limited by lack of time to be instructional leaders. They encounter attitudes from the people that are remnants of colonization where they were taught that the First Nations languages and traditional practices were wrong. They are working to change this. They go about their daily work: Jase continues to schmooze, to build the bridges; Brenda will continue to push for equality; Martha will remain vested, even if she has to put up with unfair blaming; Marla will continue her efforts to change the thinking of colonized minds; Carol will continue to be a vision keeper; Shan, Vienna, Glen, Cathy, and Lonnie will continue to push for the language, culture, and traditional activities to be more integral to education. Rayna and Rena will continue with their “soft hearts” to care for the people they encounter in their daily work. As Tully (2000) puts it, they are finding ways to keep Indigenous ways alive and well for future generations; participating in the dominant institutions but refusing to surrender and struggle against the structures and attempting to transform them from within (pp. 42, 50). The process for re-creating a formal schooling system to replace and challenge the existing one will take some time, and a big part of the process is to undo the influence of colonialism and to work strategically to de-colonize our structures of schooling.

The participants all have their story, and, to pull this chapter together, Jase’s and Brenda’s stories capture collectively for all the participants the importance of communication and building relationships as a key role.

Chapter Five

Findings (2): The Knowledge and Skill Required—Preparation for the Role

Introduction

Why did I do it? I came in with my eyes open. I knew it [the job] had a lot of flexibility, and within that time [when I was director], even though it was a short time, I grew. My whole understanding of First Nation education changed. I thought I knew but when I became a director I got to know even more. It opened up to me a side of education that I really didn't understand or never really paid any attention to. I came to understand that this is a vital role; it affects everything you know and do. I never really appreciated the complexity of the job before that. I was the same as everybody else: "The directors are not giving us the money" everything was the director's fault until I got here [into this position]. Now I understand it is the system. It's the federal government and the way the whole system is set up, that's what causes all the problems. (Martha1.1.673-685)

This quotation from Martha was chosen as an introduction for the findings related to this question. The quote is in reference to expectations of the role, preparation for the job, and the complexity of the factors that influence the way in which Directors of Education work. The second research question was focused on identifying the knowledge and skills that were required for the participants to effectively perform their duties. The research question is, *What specific knowledge and skills are required to effectively perform their duties?* The participants were asked to identify specific knowledge and skills that are required for them to be able to effectively perform their work. There were many suggestions and recommendations made by

the participants for preparing and training for Directors of Education. The combination of academic training, professional development, mentorship, work experience, and skills developed over time and most of the participants were currently capable of doing the job and were qualified to fulfill the tasks and responsibilities related to the position. Most of them had to learn through experience and developed their skills while working, through mentorships, course work and professional development, and trial and error. Many express the need for more training and have recommendations for training for current or aspiring directors. The themes that were identified for the second research question were (a) a background in education; (b) human resource management; (c) knowledge of the language, history, culture, and traditions. The themes for research question three were mentorship and university training.

Background in Education

Participants felt that a Director of Education requires a minimum Bachelor of Education degree and courses/training in education administration such as a Master's degree, or post-baccalaureate and the Level 1 and 2 certification issued by the Province of Manitoba. They felt that teaching experience and experience in school administration greatly helps. Several participants mentioned the importance of having a business or financial background and being familiar with technology. They also stressed the importance of having some management training to be able to deal with the responsibilities involved in areas such as decision-making, strategic planning, personnel, and management of day to day operations. Rena makes her suggestions:

An education director has to have experience in education. You have to know the school. What are the needs? You have to be able to do some workshops with the

community and the staff. You have to have an education background, be committed and always aim for that A+ for your school. (Rena2.1.420-423)

Cathy stresses the importance of having an education background:

The director of education needs an education and financial background, good community relations working with people and having people skills, and I think those are the main things. I think you need to have educational business knowledge, in order to effectively efficiently, administer and manage an education program; you need the business minded approach you need to have business knowledge to understand the funding and the education background. (Carol2.1.199-203)

Lonnie agrees that an education director needs to have an education background:

You need to have to have knowledge of how a school works. If you are a school administrator you have knowledge of the inner workings of the school, things like: timetabling and curriculum and those kinds of things are important to know. You need to ensure that you know how those things how they relate to each other as a whole, it's important. Because if you don't know about that, and somebody comes to you with a request, meanwhile, it's a very important part of improving, say, the math program, for example, but, if you have no knowledge of that then I could see it as it would make you look like you don't know what you're doing. You need to have that base knowledge. These skills are developed through experience. You have to keep informed of what's going on within the different parts of the organization. You have to know what's going on within post-secondary, school maintenance, school administration, bus safety, things like that. You have to know what's going on in all those areas because if somebody questions you about it and you don't know, well

then, what are you doing in that position? A lot of that, I think, is from previous experience. Like, working within the school, working as a teacher, as a principal, I think, is important. I think that's where First Nation Directors are unique as compared to Superintendents of School Divisions and the public sector. I think there's the base knowledge that you need to have of your own local policies and procedures. And then, on top of that, you have the Public Schools Act, Administrator's Act, that type of knowledge. The technical knowledge, operational knowledge of how a school operates, how an organization is to operate, knowing the mandate that you're given by the Board or by Chief and Council or the community and what they see as a priority. You have to work towards that, your planning: your community plan. (Lonnie2.1.181-208)

Shan completed a Master of Arts degree through an on-line university and values what she learned in what was an intensive course. She learned the value of teamwork which she carried to her work as director. Glen agrees that a Director of Education needs a background in education with a Bachelor of Education degree and a graduate diploma in education should be the minimum. He also stresses the importance of not only having the formal training but networking with other directors who may be more experienced.

Vienna thinks that the credentials and the training required for Directors of Education should be standardized and common salary scales developed as we move into developing aggregates or a school division for First Nations schools:

For education directors, that title itself, something should be developed, I don't know from where, the regional level? What is an education director? We have people that don't have more than a grade 12 that are becoming education directors. They have to

have at least a B.Ed. and experience, at least. A scale of some sort should be developed, recommendations to support salaries. We need to standardize the skills. We have an opportunity now that we're going into a school division, that something be adopted. If they (the educator directors) are going to become any kind of advocate for education then they need the experience and the education for it. (Vienna1.1.802-811)

Human resource (HR) management. Training in human resource management was identified as a priority in order to do an effective job as Director of Education. Working with and dealing with people was an emphasis with this group of directors. As mentioned previously, developing relationships and having effective communication skills were important, as well as the need to be able to handle the HR issues that come up in the daily work. Brenda stresses that you need to be able to work with people:

You can't just plop in there, you need to have prior knowledge and not just go in there just because you want to be in there. You have to have strategic planning and communication skills and you have to be firm and fair and not throw your weight around. You need to work with your people, work with the people that you are entrusted with like the staff. (Brenda.2.1.40-44)

Lonnie points out that dealing with staff is an important part of the job, and he asserts that one has to be decisive and to be able to adapt. He states: "you've got to have knowledge in finance, in being a manager and some experience and knowledge in HR" (Lonnie2.1.179-180). Shan has some clear recommendations for training for aspiring Directors of Education with HR being a priority, as well as training on how systems work. She also emphasizes that they need to "know how to read finance documents, how to put together so many pieces and be

able to prioritize (S1.1.361=363). Marla speaks about the difficulty of being a director and dealing with HR issues. If you want to work with people in a good way, a relationship has to be developed first:

If you don't have the support or if they don't see you in that regard, you can't just go in there and start calling the shots just because you're a director. People aren't going to appreciate that, and that's what I found in this community, I don't know if it's any different than any other community, but really, the only way you can start telling people what to do is if you've been there a while. You won't get that by being demanding, you'll get that once you've developed a trusting relationship with people. (Marla2.1.761-768)

Carol stresses the importance of having the right people for the work that needs to be done, which means being strategic in working with people so that the students can learn:

The planning is important and to make sure that you have the right people, to get people to change their ways so that they are part of the team and can contribute. I would spend a lot of time with them to make them aware of how important they were and to make them aware of how important it was to be there for the students and to be there all the time for them. I would talk to them about their behavior towards the students. If you want the students to respect you then it has to be a reciprocal process. You have to respect the students for who they are. (Carol1.1. 277-285)

Knowledge of the history, culture, and traditions. Many of the participants also mentioned the importance of knowing the cultural context of the community in which they work. Glen stated that it is important for an education leader to have knowledge of the culture of the school they are running, so that the cultural teachings can be incorporated into the

programs (Glen2.1.179-181). Marla's perspective is that there needs to be a balance in the kind of knowledge that is required. She states:

I think we really need to be in tune with what the community needs. The best person to fit that role (of director) would actually be somebody from the community.

Sometimes you don't have people qualified to take on the role, because you need both the history, traditions, language and the academic background, of western knowledge.

What you're working with is a mainstream society system, in some ways, because the curriculum we follow, the methodologies, everything that's out there—what you're trying to do is you're preparing the young people for the larger world and our society.

The foundations of all our education institutions are very western mainstream. Ideally, you'd want someone from your community with an academic background, as well as

somebody who's knowledgeable about your traditions, and there are many

communities out there that actually have had Christianity in their communities for so long, that they still believe our traditional ways are evil. They actually say that, and

even knowing that, about certain communities, you need to know that background,

they wouldn't even hire you if you went in there and said we're going to start doing

sweats and sun dances and so on. You'd eliminate yourself out of that position, in

some cases but, personally, as an educator, I believe it's paramount that people have,

at least, a base knowledge of all of that information about a community, to better meet

the needs of the people that you're going to be serving (Marla2.1.91-111).

Shan emphasizes the importance of being confident as a First Nations person and being clear about your identity:

As a director you have to know who you are as a First Nations person because it builds self-confidence. When you are a confident leader and sure of your teachings you can do great things and contribute to education. I believe you would have the ability to deal with the cultural issues in the community and the school that all communities face and are in denial of. Managing that is critical because you have to have those things in the school. (Shan1.1.222-227)

Rayna also agree that it is important to be aware of the community context and be familiar with the issues that the community faces:

I think it is important to know the history, the traditions and the language of the culture of the people. That is the only way you will know about the people and understand. There are many social issues, the students may come from a needy family, and you will get to know those families. I think it is important to train and employ your own people because they are not going to leave and you will have your stability. When you have an external person (someone not from the community) working, you will see that this is not how it is done. They have different views and they do not see things in the same way. It's the way you work with the people and how you deal with them that matters. (Rayna2.1.14-121)

Rayna thinks that Directors of Education should have educational leadership training from a First Nations perspective. Marla states that academic university education is part of the training involved, but if you are going to work in leadership in First Nations “immerse yourself in the culture.” It is not just about what you read in a book but to experience the culture and the language, know the elders, and understand the diversity in the community. Rena suggests education directors should get orientation to the position and MFNERC should

be responsible for providing workshops on cultural awareness, land-based curriculum, colonization, and residential schools.

Shan's Story—Search for Identity

I grew up in residential school; spent most of my life there until I was in Grade 11. I attended grade 12 in Winnipeg. The whole focus that year was just adapting. I had no life experience because I was an institutional person. My thinking was institutionalized, very narrow and without exposure to the world, no understanding the world even reading the newspaper every day and understanding what is happening in the world. Everyday life and everyday living, I was not used to it. When we are in this world we assume a lot of things because things are just done. For example having to go for lunch, you know what you have to do when you go for lunch in a restaurant but if you never experienced going to a restaurant as an adult what do you do? I had so much trouble with psychology in university. I could not understand psychology because I had no life experiences to base it on. I finally understood much later.

So my first struggle with identity was with being an Indian. I had to work through it, to search and finally to discover my identity. The search for identity was an interesting journey. They were very harsh with you in school. . . . It was not good to be an Indian because people would think you were this or this or this. You had to protect yourself so often it was a matter of denying who you were. It was around grade four that it became clear to me that I was Indian and I was going to hold on to that. I decided then that I was going to be a teacher, to work with Indian kids. This made me a strong Indian person. I internalized that goal way back then. There were forces around me trying to force me to deny that. I internalized it then, before that I was

totally confused. I went to an integrated school when I was in grade three and before that I was in the residential school. There were only about 20 of us who were fit to be integrated into the Marble School Division. So that first year in grade three was totally confusing mixed in with white kids. I moved in grade four into a different school. I saw how well the teachers worked with the kids and it made me want to become a teacher. It made me want to change.

I continued to struggle with being an Indian through my teenage years. I knew I was an Indian but I struggled with whether I was Cree or Ojibway. That was a real struggle for me. I started understanding my history a bit more once I started going to university. I finished my university and I decided I needed to know whether I was a Cree or an Ojibway. So I started asking people questions. My mom was from here and she was clearly Cree, and my dad was from another community that was clearly Ojibway. My mother spoke Cree. Some of my family says they are Cree and I didn't know if I was Cree or Ojibway so my identity wasn't clear. Today, some of my sisters and brothers say they are Cree but I never say anything because that is their choice.

I went to an Ojibway elder and I asked him, "How do I decide who I am? How do I decide as an Indian person who I am? How do I decide if I am Cree or Ojibway? How do I make that decision?" He said, "You need to decide because whatever you decide will make a difference in your life, what teachings you follow and what your language is. You have to know who you are. You have to choose between Cree and Ojibway because that is where your teachings come from." He didn't tell me who I was, he simply told me I needed to decide and how important it was for me to know. It is so important to know who you are as an individual. I thought about it and I

researched my history. I looked at the signing of the treaty so my grandfather was there at the signing and my dad moved from Callier which was Ojibway and they moved from there to this reserve so I decided that I was Ojibway.

I took some time and then based on my prayers and other things I decided that I was an Ojibway person and from that moment my life became so much easier. It was so profound once I knew. I went to Ojibway sweats I listened to Ojibway elders and teachers. I found my Ojibway teacher and I received my teachings. . . . My spiritual teachings . . . my cultural teachings and that provided me with a stronger personal vision of education. I learned about all the things that I needed to learn about.

You have to have an identity to know who you and accept it. So many people are confused about the role of the language in schools. There should be no confusion. Once I knew who I was I was able to differentiate the roles in schools in everything and identify them. Sometimes people identify cultural as spiritual and that is not what it is. There is no place for spiritual classes in school. If kids want spiritual you need to offer them that but you don't need to go around promoting it. I know who I am I know my history. You have to have your language in the school. Native Studies, you have to have those things in the school. I had very good teachers. I had the best teachers in Manitoba. I was taught about the medicines and the science of it. All of those people are gone now. I was fortunate that I sought my teachings at that time. It is so important to know your history and be clear about your identity. (Shan1.1.211-267)

Shan's story is a search for her identity after hers was lost through her residential school experience. She determined that she was going to find her identity and made sure that she acquired the knowledge that would set her back on her journey of traditional ways. When she

received her teachings and clarified her identity she was able to see more clearly her personal vision for education.

Research Question # 4—How Are Directors of Education Prepared for Their Role?

The participants in this study were prepared for their role in various ways, including teaching experience, mentorship, and professional development and university courses. Most of them felt that they did have some preparation but had to learn many responsibilities while they were already in the position. The following section provides more details of the career paths of the participants, the training that they received, and how they came to be where they are.

Brenda is currently working in her home community in her first year as director. She followed a more traditional career path working as a teacher for several years, then as a vice-principal and acting-principal. She worked for several years as a school administrator and was working under the direction of an experienced administrator, Mr. Grey, who also fulfilled the duties of a Director of Education. For many years, Mr. Grey held the combined director/principal position. There had not been a director in her community and the Chief and Council felt that one was needed so she was mentored by Mr. Grey for several years. Brenda was trained to take over the position of director, and the transition for her was fairly smooth because Mr. Grey had mentored her. Brenda was prepared for her role by working in school administration for several years and then going through a mentorship with an experience administrator. Brenda is one of five participants who underwent mentorship as part of their path to becoming a director. Brenda is grateful that she had a mentor. If she did not have a mentor she feels that she “would be feeling my way around in the dark.” She recommends to

those who do want the directorship to be mentored so that they get a clear idea “how the business works.”

Carol had many years of experience in teaching, as well as experience in working as an education advisor for a Manitoba First Nations political organization before she decided that she was going to become a Director of Education. Her years of experience in teaching and her many working in education at a regional and national level gave her much insight and preparation for her role as director. She comments:

I am knowledgeable about education. I made it a point to become more knowledgeable in the position I was in. I had to give the chiefs analysis on certain issues. I made a point of becoming more knowledgeable by researching and by talking to people that knew about them. I had to get to know about issues so that I could present the information to the communities so that they would be aware of education issues that could impact them. (Carol1.1.100-106)

Carol was prepared for the position of director because of her teaching experience and her work with education at a regional and national level. She felt comfortable going into the position of director because she was aware of the big picture and the issues that impact on education for First Nations.

Cathy was an exception in terms of being prepared for the role. She entered the position of Director of Education without any experience in teaching or a teaching degree. She had not considered becoming a teacher and stated that she had definitely not planned on becoming a Director of Education. Cathy felt that she was not prepared to become a director, and her only experience was observing the previous director and she had a financial background which she felt would help her in the position. She spent the first few years getting

familiar with education programming and instructional matters while pursuing her Bachelor of Education degree and beginning her Masters' degree. Cathy's career path was unusual, and her story is detailed later in this chapter.

Glen applied after several years of teaching and applied for the position with the knowledge that, if he got the job, he would work under a mentor for a few months. The community where he works has initiated a mentorship program for training the Director of Education which lasts 12-18 months. Glen was in the mentorship program for one year and feels that it could have lasted longer, as there was not enough time to learn some of the basics particularly in the area of finance. He contends that circumstances rather than a career plan led him into the position of school administration because he was acting principal to replace someone on sick leave and when the person did not return he assumed the position of principal, and the position of director came up and he applied and was the successful applicant. He was prepared for his role as director because of his years of experience in teaching and 12 years in school administration. He also received additional training by taking courses in school administration for a graduate diploma and coursework for his Masters' degree. Many of the Directors of Education in this study and in Manitoba in general come into the position with little or no preparation. Glen offers his observation that too many of the directors learn on the job, and there should be a formal process for knowledge transfer as there is a lot to learn particularly in regards to funding and budgets. There is a need to learn the practical skills but also to gain the understanding that the role involves more than that. Glen suggests that directors have to have confidence in themselves to be able to influence people to change their way of thinking when it comes to culture and language. He cautions, however, that the school cannot be responsible for everything: "it is not fair to the school to

be responsible for everything and for decolonizing education; it has to come from the community level too” (Glen2.1 320-322).

Jase was a fairly new university graduate when he entered into the position of Director of Education. The band council at the time felt that they needed someone in the position who could work with them at a crucial time when the education authority was in the process of becoming incorporated. The council also felt at the time that it was important for them to have their own people (people from their own community) as a means to build capacity and stability for education. Jase was appointed to the position by the band council and took the opportunity after he assumed the position to engage in professional development that was arranged by the education authority and the band council as a way to train their community members including the education authority board members as a means of strengthening their system. This helped him to learn about administration and topics related to education.

Lonnie was a classroom teacher and a vice-principal and principal before assuming the role of Director of Education. He commented that path is beneficial for a person who aspires to become a director and that it would be difficult for a person to being a director without teaching or school administration experience. He feels that to get into the position of director without the background of working in a school would be “a very steep learning curve” and someone could get lost and overwhelmed if they did not follow that progression. He felt that he was ready to enter the position of director because of his years of teaching, working in school administration and working with a mentor for several years.

Marla has worked as a classroom teacher, guidance counsellor and cultural program coordinator in the provincial public school system for 28 years. She feels that the experience of working in the provincial system has helped her in the current position of Director of

Education. She feels that she was prepared for the position of Director of Education because she had developed skills in administration from working in the provincial system. She feels that because of her experience she was established in her philosophy and leadership, which helped to ease her to transition into the position of director. She feels that her background of coming from a small community and familiarity with isolated communities has helped her in her current position. She stresses that her “heart” has always been with the community. She states that generally she was very well-prepared to take on the position of director and the only things that she was not familiar with was the political structure and the governance of the community and the way it worked. She was able to adjust because she knew that she had to “attach” herself to another person who knew the job and who would be able to mentor her. She states that you have to have your way of “aligning yourself and gathering support to get through it.” She was well-qualified but felt that it was important to meet regularly with her mentor who was a previous director to help her get a better understanding of the way things work. She comments that just reading the policies and job description would not be the best way to learn about the job.

Martha had “never considered the idea at all” of becoming a Director of Education but applied for the position when it came up. She knew that the position was a political one and not very stable but went into the position willingly when she was requested to apply for the position. She commented that two years in the position was the norm and as it turned out she resigned during the course of the study. She applied for the position at the request of the band council and agreed to apply because the council felt that they needed someone in the position with “cultural sensitivity” and someone who was familiar with the way the system worked. She commented that it was important for the director to realize that a First Nation system is a

different system from the provincial system because of the political and governance structure. She expressed some frustration of working in that system prior to her resignation but stated that the main reason that she left the position was to focus on the new position that she had in the community.

Rayna was working as an elected band councilor and had to decide whether to continue in that position or do something different. She has held various positions in the community and was being recognized as a leader by elders and community members who encouraged her to apply for the position of Director of Education. She was not sure if she wanted to continue in her position on the band council, because she felt that she needed a change. She applied and was successful, but she had not planned to be a teacher or a Director of Education because of her experience in residential school.

Rena first worked as a director/principal combined role after the previous Director of Education “got canned,” and after a few months she became the director and felt that a Director of Education was a needed a position in her isolated northern community. She felt that the position was needed because they would be able to provide more information for the school because she felt that the school was “in the dark” in terms of new strategies, new theories, or innovative programs. She felt they were not kept informed on what was happening with the government on issues such as funding which could impact their school. Rena felt that her education course work in educational administration, counselling, and special education helped her in her work.

Shan assumed the position after working for several years with an experienced education administrator. She calls the “training” a partnership rather than a mentorship because they were at a stage in the development of their system where they each played a

distinct role. She states that he was on the front line advocating for funding and a new school and she was in the background working on other things to build up the system.

Vienna wanted to go back to her home community after being away working for the federal government, and she had decided that she did not want to be a principal but still wanted to come home to be with her family. Her community had not had a Director of Education before, and the Chief and Council had decided it was time for one as it had been recommended in a school evaluation report. The community had not had a Director of Education before so she created the position to include more than just the school but also to include supervision of the early childhood programs. Vienna felt that she had the experience to be able to do the job of director because of her experience in the classroom and working for the federal government. She indicated that she had no interest in becoming a principal because she felt the role of principal involved being a disciplinarian with the students and she did not have the heart for that.

Mentorship. Related to the theme of preparation for the role of Director of Education, several of the participants shared examples of how they were connected to mentors who helped them in their work. Lonnie pointed out how working closely with the previous director and having an open communication helped him in his work. He comments that a mentor “is someone who gives you some ideas,” but it is up to you as part of your growth and development to make the decision and decide on the best action to take. He states that once you make the decision, then you have to stick to it and live with the consequences:

I’ve had a mentor as an administrator and now as a director. So, that was important. Because there’s no place you go to school to learn about some of this stuff. It’s all experience. You’ve got to have somebody who’s been through that experience. A

mentor is somebody who gives you some ideas and you got to make up your own darn mind about what you want to do and live with the consequences of that decision. I think that's the only way you learn sometimes. I think being able to do that helps you grow and helps you grow quickly within administration. If you still have to call to get advice, staff are going to see that you're not decisive and that's going to be your end. It's going to end you in that position because it's just going to snowball and get worse if you can't make a decision on things and you've got to stick to it (the decision).

(Lonnie2.1.129-140)

Marla states that the way to learn about the roles and responsibilities is to attach yourself to someone who you are compatible with to help you maneuver in the system and show you the ropes. According to Marla, reading the policies and the job description is not the best or most exciting way to learn, and it is important to learn from someone who has experience in the position. Glen became a director and worked with the previous director for one year. He was involved in the mentorship full time and he was taught about daily operations such the writing reports and proposals. He would have liked to learn more about budgeting and finance during the mentorship and suggests that a structured mentorship last a full two years. He suggests that a formal mentorship be set up for directors and a system of networking with other directors in Manitoba. Glen's community has a mentorship program that is the most structured out of all the communities represented in this study. Jase suggests that if someone from outside the community is coming in to be a director that they work with someone from the community to become familiar with the culture and context of the community. Brenda was involved in a structured mentorship where she worked with someone for many years before she became a director. Rayna worked for 18 months as trainee with an

experienced director to learn all the roles and responsibilities of an education director prior to become a director.

University training. Most of the participants stated that the courses that they took and the degree programs did not adequately prepare them to work in First Nations communities. Lonnie states that he found the course that he took were provided by instructors who were not aware of the realities of teaching in First Nations communities, and it was apparent that some of the instructors had not spent time in the classroom for many years and many have not spent any time on a reserve. He states that his training in postsecondary did not prepare him for working in First Nations education. He recommended some courses that were useful, such as education law and educational administration courses. Lonnie mentions that often the most useful things about the courses were the opportunity to share and learn from the other students taking the course. Marla, on the other hand, made sure that she always connected her “mainstream” education courses back to herself as a First Nations person and applied the First Nations context to the content of the courses. She states: “every single one of my writing, regardless of what they were, I always found a connection to talk about my experience and what it did for me.” Rena received a Master’s degree in Special Education and found it very useful as she was able to learn about the disabilities that affect learning and able to empathize with teachers who work with special needs children. She also received a degree in counselling which she found very practical as she was able to use the counselling skills when she worked as a school administrator. Martha states:

But university never prepared me for that job, not even close. Not even close and most of the professors didn’t even have a clue about First Nations education, local control,

they couldn't even understand it or they didn't want to understand it. They couldn't even fathom you know local control, they would ask: "What is that?" (M.1.1.618-622).

Vienna was asked about her university training, and she stated that her university training did not prepare her at all for the work that she was doing. She felt that as a First Nations person she was trained to be a "white teacher," and being a colonized person she was trained to become a colonizer. She mentions she was taught a Westernized form of leadership. She also realized through her training that she was lacking knowledge about her own people and that she did not know about her history as a First Nations person. She mentions that a psychology course helped her more than anything else. Glen expressed appreciation for the training that he received, especially the courses that he took in education law, because they helped to deal with staff issues. He learned about human and legal rights that help him in managing human resources. He also mentions a course on Aboriginal issues that has helped him to have a better understanding of some of the frustration that happens in the workplace and to be able to deal with the frustration. Rayna indicates that she enjoyed her university course, particularly the leadership training. What she found most useful was when the instructors would bring in speakers who were working in the field to speak to the students. She said that she became interested in education reform, and she realized that she wanted First Nations schools to have what public schools had and First Nations were so limited in what they had compared to provincial schools. She finished her post baccalaureate and entered the Master's program. She credits her university training for inspiring her to become an advocate for First Nations education and challenging Indian Affairs to do more for First Nations education. Her advocacy helped to bring about the Gathering Strength initiative which resulted in more funding and services for First Nations in Manitoba to begin the process of education reform.

Prior Positions of Participants

The participants were asked about what other positions they held prior to becoming director. This information is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Career Paths of Participants

Name	Classroom teacher (EY/MY)	Classroom teacher (SY)	Vice- Principal	Principal	Resource Teacher	Language Teacher	Other
Brenda	√		√				
Carol	√						Political Advisor
Cathy							Finance Clerk Band Council
Glen	√		√				
Jase		√					Education Coordinator Local Government advisor Band Council
Lonnie	√	√	√	√			
Marla		√					Cultural Program Coordinator Guidance Counsellor
Martha	√	√	√	√	√		Phys. Ed. Teacher Band Councilor
Rayna	√				√		Language Coordinator Band Council Assistant Director University Instructor Assistant
Rena	√		√				Principal/Director
Shan	√						Federal Government Assistant Superintendent Consultant
Vienna	√			√			Band Council Principal Teacher all grades Language Coordinator

Knowledge and Skills Set and Preparation for the Role—Commentary and Reflections

The research questions discussed in this chapter were focused on determining the knowledge and skills that were required for the position of Director of Education and how they are prepared for the role. The themes and sub-themes for the research question relating to identification of knowledge and skill required are: (a) education background is required; (b) human resource management training required; and (c) knowledge of the history, culture, and traditions. The themes and sub-themes for the research question relating to preparation for the role are: (a) mentoring; and (b) university preparation.

The 12 participants in this study identified the knowledge and skills required for the position of Director of Education. A common reference, which might be an obvious conclusion, was the requirement for anyone working in the position of director to have some experience in the classroom and have formal training in a university education program. The participants agreed that, in order to be able to provide direction for the school administration and to be able to work towards school improvement, they needed to have this background. The participants' answers specified the need for a minimum of a B.Ed. degree and that having work experience in school administration as principal or vice-principal was necessary. While the participants indicated that university training was required for this position, they also had their views on the university preparation programs and their appropriateness in training for working in this context and this is discussed further in the next chapter.

The participants in this study were committed to their positions and took their roles and responsibilities very seriously. They were involved in on-going training and professional development throughout their careers in order to be able to provide leadership for the First

Nations community in which they worked. Brenda's career path prepared her well for the position of Director of Education. She taught for many years, in her home community, as well as in other communities. She came back to her home community, became a vice-principal for several years working under the mentorship of a director/principal. She eventually was appointed to the position of Director of Education, while continuing with the same mentor. Cathy, on the other hand, went into the position without any experience or background in education, and the reason that the school continued to operate well was because of the experienced school principal who had worked in the community in the same school for many years. The range and diversity in the preparation for the role was evident in these participants.

The literature discussed in Chapter Two indicates that leadership preparation must be focused and cannot be left to chance ((Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Bush 2009). This is even more important in First Nations education given the complexity of the context in which the Directors of Education lead. While the need for specific qualifications for those who wish to work in the position can include a minimum B.Ed. or a M.Ed. and specialized training in mainstream leadership programs, there is a need for the training specific to the context of First Nations education. Several participants pointed out that the university courses overall did not prepare them to work in the First Nations context. Murphy (2007) points out that mainstream education training programs are not necessarily useful in guiding the practice of school administration and that part of the problem is that those who are teaching in university leadership preparation programs do not have the experience in the field (p. 584). The answer, he suggests, cannot be gained from the universities but through practical experience dealing with real questions and real problems. While the university training in

educational administration and leadership course can be useful, the practical aspect can be addressed through practical experience in the field being incorporated as part of the training. Other specific skills that were identified by the participants include: (a) strategic planning; (b) decision-making skills; (c) effective reading/writing/speaking/communication skills; (d) public relations; (e) public speaking; (f) critical thinking; (g) problem solving; (h) budgeting/financial management; (i) facilitation skills; (j) meeting management; and (k) policy development. These skills were mentioned by the participants as training that would be useful to have and that they recommend that Directors of Education should be trained in.

Bringing It All Together Through Story

Cathy's Story—The Journey of Learning

In the early part of my career I worked as a finance clerk for the band. I became a band councilor with the education portfolio. I did not teach nor did I have a B.Ed. prior to becoming a Director of Education. I did this backwards. I now have my Bachelor of Education degree, a General Studies degree, two years of college, one year of Business Administration and currently in the Masters' program. I ended up in the position of Director of Education because I had a financial background and understood funding. I had not considered and it had not even crossed my mind to end up in education. The opportunity came up. I only had an interest in the position from observing the former director and only thought about it when the position came open. I applied knowing that I had an understanding about the funding structure.

The first years were difficult. It took me a while getting familiar with all the different programs and the school. I was not immersed in the school administration aspect or school operations. I was not really involved with management of things as

my strength was with the financial structure and not really programming. I learned along the way. Coming from a small community helped me greatly. I already had the trust and a good working relationship with the people because I had worked as a band councilor and finance clerk. This has helped me grow and work within the parameters of education and I learned as I was working, learning on the job and knowing the people.

I have come to realize the importance of education; I have come to understand school administration, issues, policies, and processes. The experience has given me a lot of insights as to what should be the priorities in education at the community and regional level. Since 1999 up to 2005, it was a process of learning and understanding school administration and how administration works. Prior to that I didn't really have an idea about it. It was more challenging dealing with and understanding school programming, they became more understandable as I studied. It boosted my confidence in terms of being able to relate to teachers, talking about the curriculum and different strategies and ways to help students. Before my training in education I didn't know some of the things such as modeling and differentiated instruction. The most rewarding is having the opportunity to work with the community and being able to work at home and be trained and to have the position as the education director.

Vienna's Story—The Colonized Teacher

I had an opportunity in those first fifteen years of my education career to teach the kids the language, but I didn't. I was trained as a Native person to be a white teacher. Being a teacher in a First Nations community puts you in the position to be able to make a difference. For example, I could have done half and half with the languages but I was too busy teaching English and not worrying about teaching the Ojibway

language. I became the colonizer. Everything is good in the white world. I never said that, of course but that is the way I was taught. You don't teach the kids about racism or religion. It's just a state of being as you're the white colonizer. I look at it now and realize that I was colonized and I became the colonizer. I was colonizing the little kids. I was taught the white ways, the right ways according to the mainstream. If you want to succeed, the kids have to master English. I never learned anything about anything else. I was very naïve, about treaty rights. I knew what my treaty card could buy me but realistically about my own rights as a First Nation person, I did not know. There were these extremists, the revolutionists. I got completely turned off by that like the American Indian Movement and Chief Dan George. So to me that was the extreme the revolutionaries and the other side was being naïve. I was taught in the mainstream and I learned nothing. I was taught and I taught a Westernized leadership which I practiced.

Conclusion

This chapter addresses two research questions: What specific knowledge and skills are required to effectively perform their duties? How are they prepared for the role?

The participants identified what kind of knowledge and what skills are needed in order to be a Director of Education. Formal schooling/training is needed at the university level in what Marla terms "Western knowledge," but you also need knowledge of the history, traditions, and language of the community in which you work. They identified human resource management training as a critical area because their work is immersed in working with people. They recommend mentorship and a university education that is geared to what they need for working in this context.

I chose the three stories to help synthesize the data in relation to these research questions. Cathy's story shows that she was not prepared for the role when she started as she did not have an education background. Her story is a journey of learning and is unique. As she states, "she did this backwards." Vienna's story shows that the training she received did not help her in being prepared for her role, and eventually she realized that her training was detrimental to her effectiveness as a leader. Shan's story is representative of many stories of many First Nations people in Manitoba and Canada. Through her story I can hear the voices of elders who mourn the children that they lost when they were taken away to residential schools. Her story speaks for those who still cry tears because they lost their language and were strapped and punished for speaking their mother tongue. I feel her joy in her words and the joys of other First Nations who resiliently found their identity and strength in traditional teachings, as taught by elders who also survived the oppression of colonialism. Her words and story are an inspiration and instill in those who hear her story the hope that all First Nations can search and find what she found. I am grateful that she worked as a Director of Education and continues to work in First Nations education to share and live out her story. While people who may read this thesis may be unable to relate to postcolonialism as a lens on which to look at First Nations education, take away a lesson from Shan's story, even with the reality of colonialism and that colonial powers aimed to subjugate and destroy, there is hope, life, and a positive future.

Chapter Six

Findings (3): Leadership for First Nations Education

Introduction

Telling the story of one's journey is tracing one's step through people, events and places that formed you. And as we pause at each special memory we realize that we have indeed been formed by our encounters with the stories of others. (Cajete, 2001, p. 9)

The fourth research question is: *What is effective and appropriate leadership for First Nations education that will reflect a First Nations leadership paradigm that will potentially bring about long sought after transformation of First Nations education?* Initially, I felt that I was not getting the "data" to be able to answer this research question, and I began to wonder how this was going to result in some findings. The answer to the question was elusive, and sometimes I felt that the participants did not answer the question specifically. The question related to this in the interview protocol was about how to best prepare First Nations students for success, and what needed to be done to improve First Nations education. I initially did not ask a question directly about leadership, although it came up frequently in the interviews. The depth of the responses to this question varied greatly with the participants, with some being more prepared to think more philosophically and deeper than others. Some admitted that they had not thought much about what constitutes effective leadership and about the impacts of colonization on the daily work of schooling. I used prompts and my own experiences and thoughts to elicit more conversation. I realized that the potential answers to this question were embedded in the stories that they told, and the stories held depth and meaning. It was through their stories that I received insight into leadership for First Nations education and insight

about the participants as leaders. In the words of Thomas King (2003), “the truth about stories is that that’s all we are.” Ben Okri (1997), a Nigerian storyteller, states, “One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are also living the stories we planted—knowingly or unknowingly—in ourselves” (cited by King, 2003. p.153).

The participants spoke freely about how they conduct their work, the values that affect the way they lead and the life experiences and teachings that cause them to work in the way that they do. They spoke about the life experiences as First Nations persons that impacted them in the way that they lead. They told their story about why they chose to become education leaders and what they wanted to do. They spoke extensively of what needed to happen in First Nations education, in their schools, in their communities, and in a more global context. The words that they were speaking and the message in their stories was what needed to be said, and it was up to me to relate those stories and share them, because I believe that this is what needed to come out of this research. I wanted to follow the guidelines and protocols, but there seemed to be no way to exclude the stories that I chose to use. I reviewed the data, and read the transcripts repeatedly, and coded. The following themes emerged from the data analysis and are supported by relevant quotes and the stories that are included: (a) First Nations languages integral to First Nations schools; (b) First Nations relationship to the land and the environment; and (c) residential schools.

Theme 1—Curriculum in First Nations Schools

In addressing the reproduction on inequality and emphasizing engagement and success for marginalized learners, it is crucial to critically examine the literate traditions and orientations of all, while paying particular attention to knowledge and practices that historically been devalued and marginalized.” (D’Warte and Somerville, 2014, p.56)

Postcolonial theory posits the centrality of Western values, beliefs, and practices in public education, and, by inference, that Indigenous knowledge has been delegitimized in the school system. All participants mentioned this in one way or another. Lonnie suggests that our youth are getting a good education that is coming from the Western society's curriculum. When he started searching his identity and acquiring his Anishinaabe language, he began to think differently about education and realized that First Nations students needed more than just the provincial curriculum. Marla asserts that although the schools may teach the provincial curriculum, it is a mainstream curriculum which does not place any value on being "Indian." She states that you come out of it (formal schooling) "being brainwashed to believe that being Indian is nothing," and the message that the young people get is that they don't need to learn their language, value their identity, or know anything from before Canada was colonized. She relates the story of her own children going through the public system and one son in particular, who was taught, and believed, that we owe everything to the Europeans and we would not have what we have today if it was not for them. She believes that what is taught in the public school curriculum omits a large part of Canadian history, and students who come out of high school believe that your success is determined how successful you are in mainstream society. Marla speaks about an awakening that is happening among First Nations, and there is much more awareness in terms of the influence of Christianity and colonization. People are starting to be much more accepting of the traditional ways and respecting of their history. This is especially happening in the youth, as some of the older people are more entrenched in their beliefs that traditional ways are wrong. Marla thinks that this is changing for young people because they are getting more education and seeing other people who are embracing everything about traditions, identity, the way of life, and teachings. She also

suggests, though, that we respect diversity and First Nations who choose to believe in Christianity. It all involves connecting to the Creator and finding peace. Marla tells her story about her own upbringing and how the values and traditional ways are what has helped her to be an educational leader and helped her to be confident (see Marla's story).

Cathy speaks about the controversy about bringing in traditional activities into the school, but finds that students are more engaged and parents becoming more involved in the school:

Trying to introduce cultural traditions was such a controversy in the past year. We hired a Cree worker from the community and a traditional worker, both from the community who speak the language. Both are well-versed with parents and people and traditional culture. So we are promoting it more for this school year. I think it will impact students in a positive way. I hope so. I should not say I hope so because when I see students at the school some would greet us saying hello in Cree. Even just one word makes a difference. Part of the duties and tasks of the cultural worker is to organize cultural activities from nursery to grade 12 whether its brain tanning, ice fishing, filleting or making star blankets. This year we went full force to try offer more to all the grades. It is very important to do these things, to bring them into the school. We see parents coming in observing participating as we are always trying to increase parental involvement. We always try to use local resources to come in and show their skill and knowledge in our school for the students. Parental involvement helps attendance, behavior of students. When we have parent teacher days we have many parents from nursery to grade 8; high school, not so much. It is improving though. (Cathy2.1.251-264)

Theme 2—Language Integral to First Nations

Indigenous people have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning. (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2008, Article 14)

All the participants spoke about the importance of First Nations language and ensuring that the education system does as much as it can to revitalize, preserve, and maintain the First Nations languages. Lonnie stresses the importance of language and how, as educators, we have to promote the language. We will be doing our youth an injustice if we do not push the language. Language creates identity, and identity gives them confidence. Language is not lost, and, as they learn it, it makes them connect to a part of themselves that tells them who they really are. Elders said that “language is not lost and it is inside of us and we just have to bring it out” (L1.1.284-286). Lonnie emphasizes the importance of knowing how to speak and understand the language, as it helps you to understand traditional teachings and concepts that are not translatable into English. Certain words, kinship terms, and relationships with the land and spiritual concepts are hard to understand if they are translated literally into English.

Marla has decided that the whole system needs an overhaul, and if she had her way she would tell all her teachers to teach reading and writing in the morning where the teachers can teach the students at their desks and the rest of the day would be spent on teaching about the history, culture, and the language out of their desks and out on the land. So many of our students are not engaged, and we need to change our method of teaching to be creative. Marla states that “we have been conditioned to think this is how school works. You go to school every day, 9:00 to 3:30 you sit at the desk, manage the kids, they can’t get out of line, they all

have to say and do things together” (Marla2.1.440-443). Marla mentions the book *Defeathering the Indian*, where the author, Emma LaRoque, speaks about stereotypes and the need to ensure that we do in our schools does not perpetuate stereotypes. Marla comments that braids, feathers, and beads are part of who we are as First Nations people and that we can’t just stop using them as cultural symbols, and suggests that it is like asking a Catholic person to throw away the rosary and stop using it for prayer.

Jase stresses the value of knowing the language of the community in which you are working because people can communicate better with you if they do not know English well. He also comments on the importance of family connections, and there is a difference in how people relate to you if they know your family history which sparks an instant connection. If you are not from the community it is much more difficult to establish the trust and the connection. Rena agrees that if you speak the language there is better communication with people and with the elders. “Elders don’t speak English well and don’t understand it that well and when you have elder’s meetings you can talk Ojibway. They know who you are and they don’t see you as a stranger” (Rena2.1.463-466). Rena says that they no longer have a language program in their school because they do not have the funding to pay for an instructor and resources. Brenda stresses the importance of retaining the language: “It is our right and our identity of who we are and where we go from here. Our language gives us power to be who we are and which community we belong to” (Brenda2.1.169-172).

Cathy feels that the director should be aware of the background of First Nations people, because “the past histories of our young people show a pattern of lost identities because of residential schools and intergenerational impacts.” If the director has an awareness of these histories then they can work to address these in the education of the community. Cree

is taught in the school in all grades in her school. Vienna's experience is an example of the evolution of a First Nations leader, she admits that she was colonized and taught to be a colonizer. She expressed regret about her naivety in her years of teaching where she did not seize the opportunity to teach her language. She is a passionate promoter of the First Nations languages and admits that there may be change afoot:

I think there is an awakening. The round tables and discussions on residential schools really brought language forward. People are realizing what colonization has done to us. It is the elders who are saying it: "Now I know why I was not good at parenting. Now I know why I did not teaching my language to my children and grandkids." We have taken giant steps towards our own people believing in themselves. Not to blame the education system but to be empowered to say, "Hey, I can do something."

(Vienna2.1.125-131)

Glen talks about the importance of not just giving the language "lip service." As an education leader you need to model and set an example about the importance of language:

The other thing that we need to have as leaders is that we have to have that confidence that we can change our of thinking, like it can come out easily from our mouth that I respect the language and culture but do I practice it. If I don't practice it, they are not going to take me seriously. Those things that you convey, that if you are saying it they have to see that it is in you too, that you are modelling it. If I think that learning the Cree Language is important, I better show that. Speak in my language and promote it in the work place and the school but I think we also have to be careful that we can't take everything on in the education system and we are taking away from what should

be happening in the home, that is one of things that I am very concerned about.

(Glen2.1.303-313)

Theme 3—First Nations Relationship to the Land and the Environment

A prevalent theme in the data is the connection to the land of the participants and the implications this has for First Nations. Lonnie thinks about all the things that he learned when he was involved in the traditional occupations of hunting, fishing, and trapping. His uncles made him go ice-fishing when he moved back to the “rez,” and it was there he was taught the language, the values, and a very solid work ethic. Marla comments on the Indigenous worldview being presented through the Astronomy Project that is part of MFNERC’s service to First Nations schools, and how that makes so much more sense to teach constellations and astronomy using that approach. She speaks eloquently about being out on the land, and that it is not about living in the past: “when you are out there on the land, in the bush and you are doing ceremony, it is the most peaceful, gentle way you can be with and relate to another human being.” Jase states that an education director who is from the community will be able to understand the philosophy of First Nations and know that healing is important and it is the land that heals. He mentions the National Hockey League player Jordan Tootoo, who has said that when he is in trouble he goes to the land and it heals. He goes out on the land for a few weeks out of the year to rejuvenate. Land-based education is a healing tool, as it mellows people and it helps them deal with everything. When you take the students out on the land their gifts and skills emerge.

Rena realizes that students enjoyed the fishing trip that some of the students went on, but the funding is not always available for the expenses:

That will be good if we can at least get some funding to run a land-based program for three or four months. It will be good to hire someone from the community, a trapper or fisherman to do the teaching for a land-based curriculum. Provide them the resources and equipment for things like that. We did that last year at the beginning of the school year. The Phys. Ed. teacher took the grade 8's and 9's fishing up the river. They went bought the life jackets. Student enjoyed that. They took food and fishing rods. The students went fishing by the rapids. The kids really like that. (Rena2.1.520-528)

Vienna points out that introducing First Nations language and curriculum into the school does not have to be complicated and it is a matter of just doing it:

We have our culture which doesn't mean just powwows and sweats and all that stuff. Culture is our way of life, which to me is land-based education. We need to teach the students about their history as a people, but also the practical things, in science and math. They should be all integrated into that. Water quality is just one example, teaching math, science and English there and understanding our drinking water system. 20 or 30 years ago, you could go down to the river and get a cup of water. Why is it today that you can't do that? I think we just make it so complicated by saying, "Oh we don't have a curriculum to teach our children language and culture." If you've been educated as a teacher you can take any curriculum and adapt it to your own language. If I open this curriculum document and it says I have to teach about the names of all the trees, the life system of a tree or whatever, there's so much you can do with that. You can take the kids outside, you can teach them the parts of the tree, you can teach them how a tree grows and what it needs. And you can do it in your language. It's common sense. (Vienna2.1.405-421)

The relationship to the land and respect for the environment was always an important part of the education of First Nations children, prior to colonization. Rayna's story reflects how her connection to the land has helped her to be the kind of leader that she is.

Rayna's Story—Relationships, Families, and the Land

I think what has helped me in leadership is that I come from a big family of nine children. I am the middle child, the fifth one. When we were growing up, the first two went to residential school and the third one was raised by my maternal grandparents. That left me and a brother as the older children. I was seen as the oldest sibling so that is why I would take care of everything and everyone. We lived off the land. Every summer after school we were flown to a fish camp and we lived there for six weeks. We lived like that, probably one of the last in my generation that lived off the land with our own family and other families. We worked with several families at the camp, we all had our tents and we worked together and shared everything. We would do things together. We would take go to an island and we would go fix the nets. We sometimes helped with cleaning the fish. We made a community of people by working together and people shared. The elders were there, the parents and the children. You learned to get along with everybody. We had fun and we would go out on the boats and go swimming and pick berries. One of the elders showed us to pick up gooseberries and he would cut out the root and he would take the branch and would shake the berries over the blanket and he would put that plant back into the land. He told us this is what you do you don't just pull out the plant and throw it away. It's going to grow back. We learned about the land to respect the land, to respect the environment, we learned about the environment very much. I don't know how we used

to get away with it when our mother would cart us off in a boat just to go pick berries. We would preserve food. We would do that and as a family and go out as a family to cut wood. It was about families, being together and connected to the land and respecting the environment. (Rayna 1.1.185-204)

Theme 4—Residential Schools Live On

There is no denying the reality and impacts of residential schools, not only on the education system as a whole but also on the lives of the participants. Lonnie's mother did not teach him the language, although she was a fluent speaker. Both of his parents believed that it was better for them to conform to the mainstream society, because they were living in the city. He states that his mother's experience in residential school made her think "that this way was better." Marla believes that the residential schools, the sixties scoop, and the Child Welfare System has negatively impacted our communities and continue to negatively impact our schools. Jase values the experience of living with and working with his fellow students in residential school, and now knows so many of them in Manitoba, and they are a valuable work connection and network of relationships. Glen talks about the impacts of residential school on the people, and many of us were conditioned to be passive, and we were told not to speak unless spoken to and at times we were not even allowed to speak. This conditioning still impacts this generation and the staff members in the school, as they do not have the confidence to speak to those in authority or to challenge or question. Another one of the participants speaks also about the continuing impacts of residential schools in her community, and also how her personal experience with residential schools has affected her. She was sexually molested and understands how that experience is so damaging, and it has helped her to be more empathetic in working with people and children who are affected by their

experience. Vienna talks about how some people in the community have a distorted view of education:

The light bulb went off. I left my community lots of times; it's like a different world. It's the way education is seen in our community. They see it as something foreign. Education system does school, but it's also as if everything is written in stone as to how kids are taught. Even though we've had school boards and education committees all these years, they didn't facilitate any kind of change, because they didn't know that they could. We have never been given the key to say "Here, do what you want to do and it will be okay." We have never had that confidence to run our own schools as we saw fit. (Vienna2.1.149-156)

Glen speaks about the tension that exists in some communities between the Christian influence and traditional ways of First Nations people, and how it is a balancing act that has to be performed so as not to offend:

There are different values that clash—Christian values and traditional values. We try not to make it worse. I don't think bannock making is a sin, but according to some people when they start doing ceremonies in the school, it is a sin. We try to stay away from those areas and if people want to practice their ways we can give them an opportunity to do that and provide a place for that to happen. It does not have to be a school wide initiative but some of things are popular. The Spring Hunt that is a big thing because it is land-based. There is no resistance to that but if we start teaching about ceremonies that is when we start getting into trouble on both sides. If we start bringing in the Christian values into the school then we get into trouble. Until they

come to an understanding and they can get along we will just continue to do that just to be careful, we have to be careful what we do. (Glen2.1.182-195)

Leadership for First Nations Education—Commentary and Reflections

While the OLF and the McKinsey study have a framework for improvement and educational system reform, and the educational leadership literature specifies a variety of theories and approaches to leadership, what constitutes effective leadership and leadership preparation in a First Nations context needs to be clearly articulated. To what extent and how is the training different from the mainstream? Should it be different? Certainly the nine essential characteristics of strong districts identified in the OLF and effective leadership core practices of (a) setting direction, (b) building relationships, and (c) developing people are generally applicable to this context. First Nations Directors of Education need to be systems thinkers and be proactive in stimulating and managing change, as they also have to take into account the many and complex elements involved in their work. Four domains that make positive contributions to student learning and well-being are: (a) core processes; (b) supporting conditions; (c) approaches to leadership development; and, (d) relationships. The authors of the McKinsey Report identify the six interventions required for improvement: (a) revising curriculum and standards; (b) reviewing reward and remunerations structure; (c) building technical skills of teachers and principals; (d) assessing student learning; (e) utilizing student data to guide delivery; and (f) establishing policy documents and education laws. These are all necessary prerequisites for improvement in the First Nations schools. In regards to the FNELS, the modules that would be most appropriate for development for training would be: (a) traditions and culture, language, knowledge and self; (b) historical background of First Nation education; and (c) current issues. The other area of priority would be human

resource management and finance training. Appropriate and needs-based support has been given to leadership and management training for those who are tasked with running the on-reserve schools in an often complex and challenging environment. Effective educational leadership is necessary in all schooling environments and we need to be clear in how that is defined in a First Nations context. We need to articulate and identify how to best train and develop education leaders to run an on-reserve education system so that there is improvement and schools are more effective in achieving success for students. From the perspective of these education leaders it is about going back to the roots of First Nations education: teaching the language and ensuring that the students are secure in their identity as First Nations people. In addition to, and in association with, historical influences of colonization, the residential school system and the historical underfunding for facilities, resources and infrastructure, the state of crisis in some of the on-reserve schools may be attributed to the leadership. This study was not a leadership study, per se, and I intentionally did not want to focus it as a research about leadership, but there is an educational leadership component and it could be all about leadership. Ultimately if learning outcomes and school success is going to be improved for First Nations students, someone at the school and community level has to “make things happen.” Western methods of administration and philosophies have become homogenized in the past few decades across many school systems throughout the world, and education programs, values, and practices are being adopted as part of public education. We need to raise the questions as to whether or not these educational practices are consistent with and sustaining cultural heritage and if culture should play a more prominent role in how we think about educational leadership. Ah Nee-Benham and Napier (2002) state that educational

leadership theories are grounded in Western traditions and socio-cultural norms that have not always considered alternative views and non-Western thought and practice:

Western leadership theories tend to focus on an individual name a leader who acts in a way to influence others, called followers, to change their attitudes and/or behaviors.

This atomistic view of leadership can be contrasted with a native view, which regards leadership as a process within a particular cultural and community context that is place and time bound. (p.134)

This can be extended to how we need to consider preparing and developing school leaders who are involved in contexts where the populations of the students are from minority cultural groups. The system of education needs to change to accommodate the transitioning demographics in our schools, including how we prepare leaders to work in these environments (Malott, 2010; Gooden & Dantely, 2012). This can be said about leadership development for First Nations in Canada, as it is the system of education that perpetuates their marginalization and has contributed to their inability to succeed in education (Richards, 2008).

Denscombe (2010) outlines the use of narrative analysis in qualitative research and how stories can be useful in providing information about the research topic. He suggests that stories can be analyzed in terms of how they construct the social and personal worlds (p. 291). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) say that through the qualitative research process, researchers search for meaning in their research, and their theoretical paradigm orients their thinking and research. The stories illustrate best the answers to the research questions and embody the theoretical framework. Graveline (1998) states:

We are reclaiming our voices. Through voice we speak/write of our acts of resistance, the healing and empowering values of our Traditions and the role of the European colonizers in the destruction of our communities. Through voice we are gaining our own sense of conscious reality and providing another lens through which Eurocentric educators may view themselves. (p.41)

The theoretical framework that I chose for this study is my orientation to question, to look at things from a critical perspective in the context of colonialism and postcolonialism. While I was continuously consciously aware of remaining objective to the flow of data from the participants, it was a while before I picked up on the stories that had a clear message. I thought of my own story of how I worked so many years in First Nations on-reserve schools wondering why things were the way they were.

The question of effective and appropriate leadership for First Nations education was a component of this study. What do we need to do that will potentially bring about long sought after transformation of First Nations education? Ma Rhea (2015) in her discussion about leading and managing Indigenous education systems in a postcolonial world states that there needs to be this focus on leadership and management because of “hidden systemic epistemological commitments that are made and then embedded into structures of education and its administration” (p. 15). The way that educational leaders are prepared and supported will have an impact on the work of schooling and administration. Grande states that the training that is instituted for education serves to “reproduce the hegemonic system” and those of us who work in these contexts need to critique the system and to change it so that people who have been marginalized will have a better chance of success (as cited by Mallot, 2010, p. 171). Much of the conflict and ineffectiveness of on-reserve schools being able to provide a

quality education may have to do with the differing world views and values that are inherent in the curriculum being taught and the way it is being delivered (Little Bear, 2000).

Political struggles between First Nations leaders and the federal government have often been front and center when it comes to critical issues regarding First Nations. While these are inevitable, the struggle has often diverted attention away from more concrete issues related to how best to build the necessary infrastructure and capacity of educators that lead to improved quality of education and relevance for the students who attend the on-reserve schools. With the advent of band-operated schools, the legacy of colonialism and the assimilation policies partially went underground but remained embedded in the institutional structures and the attitudes towards education that were inherited and which we perpetuate to this day in the on-reserve schools.

Many First Nations leaders have called for transformational change in education as the system of education for First Nations continues to fail. While it is not fair to put the onus solely on schools to decolonize and “deal with” the impacts of colonialism, if indeed that is possible, the idea is that schools as sites of knowledge and knowledge creation can do much to instill in First Nations children their cultural identity that they once had prior to colonization. The on-reserve schools can be instrumental in confronting the colonial aftermath in a way that does not have to be simply antagonistic but rather to affirm and reaffirm the cultural and language loss and to “remember” the knowledge systems and values that once allowed them to thrive as a people. The participants in this study are saying exactly that. The knowledge systems and the values can be taught, within the context of the schooling structures, so that they can instill in First Nations the sense of identity and self-worth.

It does not sound complicated and makes sense that schooling took this away. The education experience of many First Nations was an alienation from self, family, traditions, values, culture, and historical connections. This was carried over generations, and now it can be revitalized through formal schooling that is more closely linked to the education in the true sense of the word (how it is defined in Chapter One). Battiste (2013) calls for recognizing and reaffirming the learning spirit of Indigenous students and how important it is that educators “understand the structure of doubt the Canadian education system has generated among Aboriginal people” (p. 180). She further states that it is this coercive system that continues to fail students and drains their capacity for achievement, and it is time to fully integrate “their knowledge and heritage into an educational system that values and respects Indigenous ways of knowing and allows Aboriginal students to embrace and celebrate who they are instead of making them doubt themselves” (p.180).

Bringing it all Together through Story

Lonnie's Story—Discovering My Identity in Language

I have had the experience of living both on and off reserve. I think this experience has helped me overall in my work as an education director because I am able to relate to living in the city, in town and on the reserve. I was born and raised in Vancouver in a multicultural society. It would be considered a normal middle class life. My dad was a journey man plumber and he was earning half-decent wages, in a city that was considered on the verge of booming in growth so there was a lot of work. My mother was a homemaker and there was my brother and I. We went to school, played hockey, played ball, and had a multicultural set of friends. There was a Czechoslovakian boy, an African America boy, a Vietnamese, two Italian boys, a Mexican girl and myself. That was our neighborhood gang that hung around together. So we got to try each other's food and do's and don'ts within their beliefs. I lived there until I was 11 years old and then I moved to the reserve. It was a big change, going from a multicultural society to a single culture society which is what exists on a reserve with all First Nations people.

It was hard moving back to the reserve because I didn't speak the language. I had not grown up there so I was seen as an outsider, as non-First Nation, even by my cousins. Oh I felt terrible! I was bullied. I was teased. I had to fight to defend myself because I didn't speak my language. They didn't know me because I did not speak the language, I was considered an outsider until I learned the language and lived there for a while, then I was fine. I had to learn the language. I simply had to! It wasn't a matter of if I wanted to. If I was going to live there I had to learn the language. It was 100%

spoken at my age level, there was 36 kids in my class in grade 6 when I move there and they all spoke the language. Every one of them! Except me! Even the teacher spoke Ojibway most of the time in class even though it wasn't an immersion class it was just because all the kids spoke everyone spoke it, everyone spoke it. So the teacher spoke it so I had to learn.

It took me a year and a half to learn the language. Fluently, just through my peers, through my uncles. My uncles knew I was getting a hard time so they said, "We are not going to speak to you in English, you're going to learn it so they will quit giving you a hard time." So they only spoke to me in Ojibway and they taught me that way, through real life situations, through fishing through hunting, through doing yard work. They would not speak English to me, only if I didn't understand they would say, "We are saying this . . . so listen!" and they would continue speaking.

Well you know what? It has taught me more of who I am. Being able to participate in ceremonies and knowing the language has changed me, it has changed the dynamics of how I understand through learning my language. There are things that I can't translate from Ojibway to English. They have a different meaning that is not in the translation into English. Learning those types of things was valuable, as a First Nations person: where you come from and where you stand within the world. In regards to family as well, learning your position within family, as you grow and as you become an adult and as you become a middle aged person. As a kid, I grew up I knew English, my thoughts were around the Western thinking. But, once I learned Ojibway, when people were talking, I was thinking in Ojibway and translating into English after. Like, when I was learning the language, okay, "sit" is "abin". Then after, when

people were talking I was automatically translating it. That's the context I would think in. Especially after you start getting into ceremonies and learning those traditional ways, it helps you change that . . . change to think like that. That's when that change happened, is when I was able to automatically understand without having to translate. It connects you more closely with the teachings and being able to understand because there are things that are said that you can't really translate back to English. They almost have a feeling to them, a concept or a philosophy that just doesn't fit in with a translation. There are certain words that to try and think of a translation is difficult. For example, a ghost but it's not a ghost they're talking about it's something else in Ojibway, it's more than that. When traditional people are praying they pray to the Creator, to Mother Earth, if you don't understand what they're saying, it's different. If somebody translated it to English it wouldn't be the same and it would lose its meaning.

People don't understand that with the First Nation languages there are ties to kinship that change the language. It's different. But, that's kinship rules within the language. Understanding that in the language increases your identity of who you are because you have to understand your position in the family and where you fit in the world. You learn respect, especially respect for when somebody older than you talks; even if you're talking, you stop and you listen. I don't know how to explain it, it's just entrenched in you that when somebody older than you is talking, they're older, they're wiser, I guess, is how you would translate it. They're wiser than you, well, you have to listen to them out of respect. Because they've lived life more, they've done more. Listen to them.

If we're going to talk about identity for these kids . . . hundred percent of our kids who are attending our First Nations' schools are Cree or Ojibway or First Nations and we say their language is important but, why? Is it just so that they could have a credit in university or is this their whole identity? Thinking, it's a way of thinking, a feeling, an identity, it's a connection to who they are as people, It's better to have a leader who understands the language and who knows about the cultural traditions rather than somebody who doesn't. Because it helps you think of yourself as other than a minority. As the First Peoples that were around here, your history relates back here. That's why history is important. You work with the community, work with the people, if you know that language is important and culture is important for you to have that background: how does that impact the way that you work with the community? You have to promote the language, you have to give them good reasons why they should feel the same way. We've got to start trying to instill that in them. It's the kids who will carry the message because they're engaged in it and it is building positive self-esteem so that carries out to them and it will carry out to the rest of the community.

It's all connected, to me an education director leader is critical, it is not just the school it is a more overarching leader in different ways in the community. If you have that leader who is grounded in their identity it is going to affect everybody in the community and how the school is run and the types of programs that are instituted in the school. This type of leader will be more likely to promote cultural and language programming.

Marla and Her Grandmother—A Defining Life Experience

I always think of my grandmother. She was my first teacher. The way that I grew up, growing up in the bush, the way we lived off the land defines who I am as a human being, more than anything else. As a child growing up in a small community we were just a small group of people living in poverty. But really! . . . There was such a richness living in that community. That's the part I loved about it! This is what I always talk about and in fact when we moved away from there I detested living in Winnipeg and the way it was. I could not connect with it. I eventually went back there. I was the only one that left my family and went back to live with my grandmother. I wanted to be in my home environment where our first language is Ojibway, where I felt protected, welcomed and cared for. I didn't feel that in the city. Too bad that is the way it is. I would not accept that so I ended up moving back.

It was a little two room school house that I attended when I was in grade seven and eight. What really stays in my mind is this little house that we lived in; my grandmother, my two uncles and my three cousins all lived together in this little two room house. I really appreciate my grandmother taking me in. I mean she lived on a small pension but she still welcomed me into the family and allowed me to live with her and she took care of me. Our way of life there made a lot of sense compared to what was going on here in the city. I really loved being just being around my community and listening and hearing the language. I could relate to our culture even though other people might not see it. That way of life was so good. I enjoyed going to school. Each day that I came home I can expect to see my grandmother there making bread and providing for us and that is all I needed going through those teenage years. I

lived with her until I was an adult and she was old. She was always there, a very stable force.

She always spoke to me in my language. I always knew she loved me. I knew she would always take care of me and she would talk about some of the things that happened in her life and how she got through it. She worked very hard and she would wake up early every morning and start her day. She had some cows and chickens. She had a big garden. Before my parents moved away to the city we lived off the land. I would say 75% of our diet was off the land. We ate all the wild meat that was out there: deer, fish, and ducks. We only subsidized our diet only with what the store had to offer. Everything was homemade . . . the berries in the summer and they would do all the canning in the summer. I realized that that was the best. We didn't have running water. She would pray on a daily basis every day and people would say she was meditating. She would turn everything off in the house and she would just kind of sit there and she would have quiet time. My grandmother was a very spiritual person. She lived to be 103. She experienced a lot in her lifetime. She would wonder about the way people behaved and she would ask, "Why would they choose to do this? Look at how harmful it is." It didn't make sense to her. She never drank in her life. That is the thing I love about her the most. She was always there, a steady person, that I can always count on. She would never waver. She was there . . . all the time and I believe she practiced what she believed on a daily basis, even her traditional ways. Sometimes she had to hide them (her traditional ways) like whenever she would pick medicines in the bush, she had to do it secretly.

One thing I remember is growing up living in that community when they introduced sliced bread. Apparently if you had sliced bread it kind of showed that you were more up there and when you ate bannock you were kind of digressing. If you had company, they would say, “Go hide the bannock”!

Glen’s Story - Leadership and Followership

In our Cree community--- how can I explain this concept of my understanding of leadership? Let’s say we were travelling, we were a nomadic people. So we are travelling the different waterways. There is a different leader for just the river. When you come to the rapids there is a different leader for that too... and so forth. In the wintertime, there is a different leader. Depending on the particular situation and if you were the expert in that particular moment then you became the leader. That is how I explain the process of leadership. Sometimes I have to sit back and not be the leader. I am not the expert at that particular time and in that particular area and somebody else has to take the lead in that and I have to allow that to happen. I think that’s a skill that has to be developed. People perceive you as the director and you should be directing everything and know everything. That is a mistake that a lot of people make... you have to allow the people around you to be able to help you out. You are only as good as they are and if you respect them they will give you 110%. You have to allow them to be part of the process. Dictating! I don’t think that works. (That idea of followership... a leader is only as good as the followers or a leader needs to have followers). As First Nations people we have been conditioned to be passive. It has something to do with the residential schools. We were told not to speak unless spoken to and we were not allowed to speak. Sometimes that happens in the work that we do. I want to be able to have a staff member come to me, not necessarily challenge me but question. To have that confidence to

question me on a particular issue, to be critical in a good way and myself as a leader, not have that reaction ... (leans forward and points a finger). It's a process because they are so used to being dealt with in a certain way. You know what people have said to me? "I am afraid of you". I don't want people to be afraid of me. I want people to be open to me so we can grow, so that I have a chance to grow and the organization has a chance to grow. If you are afraid of me then that is not going to happen. They said, "I am scared of you because of your authority". I don't classify myself as scary-looking. It is because of the title that I hold and they are used to that, they are used to a certain type of behavior from a person in authority. That is the biggest thing for me to be able to get people to question, especially women. First Nations women have been muzzled. I respect you, you women, you are not going to take any ... from any man. I respect that. My wife is the same way. She is very independent, very tough to a point but we still have to have that relationship and but we understand that. We understand that there are certain things that I will not say or do to her because if I do. Look out! You have to be accountable for your decision making and when you are waiting for someone else then that is not good. They have to have that confidence that you are going to have their backs too. Not all decisions are going to be right, there are some decisions that are going to be wrong but that's okay. Like the other day, a principal phoned me almost in tears because we planned an event and it didn't go the way it is supposed to go. I said. "That is okay, it's okay. What are you worrying for?" When the time comes when you have to actually use it, you know the steps to take. A little bit of it in an organization is okay, what you call "controlled chaos!" That's true as far as I am concerned. It's growth. It keeps you on your toes because sometimes if it becomes too monotonous you can lure yourself to sleep and get into complacency.

Conclusion

I chose these three stories to include in this section because capture the essence of leadership for First Nations education. Lonnie and Marla share their very personal stories of moving from the city to the “rez” and share about the language. Both of these stories were a response to the question of life experiences that impact them as leaders. It is being sure of identity, learning the language (and how you learned it), and how it connects you to the teachings and being able to understand traditional ways and meaning in ceremonies. This is what First Nations education should be re-learning, the lost languages, by engaging in the traditional occupations and being out on the land. It’s about being sure of your identity so that you can reconnect with the elders’ teachings and those things which sustained us in the past. Glen’s story reinforces the notion of recognizing the importance of followership, empowering those around you to help you in the work of leadership.

Chapter Seven

Implications and Conclusions

Introduction

I think that hopelessness comes from not understanding your purpose, and that is what our identity, as Aboriginal people, gives us. It gives us our purpose in life. It gives us our connection back with the Creator. I've listened to traditional elders, who have given what life is all about, those really spiritual people that really gave it a lot of thought they say the same thing, even if they are from different communities. It is our connection with the Creator. It is what makes us strong. What I believe will bring back the hope in our community, is our identity. (Marla2.1.215-223)

The purpose of this study was to explore the work of First Nations Directors of Education. To explore means to talk or think about something in a thoughtful, detailed, and careful way (Merriam-Webster). As I sat, listened, and interacted with the participants during the interviews, as I listened to the interview recordings, and read and re-read the transcripts, and engaged in the coding process, it was certainly a journey of exploration. At the very beginning of this study, the men and women who were part of this study were participants and a data-producing sampling from who I had to extract some data to “use” for a purpose. At the end of the data analysis and conclusion of the study, they were caring, passionate, dedicated, life-long learners, and an incredible group of people who cared, contributed, and have much to offer to First Nations education in Manitoba. The 12 participants were very committed individuals with much expertise and knowledge who are champions for our First Nations students who attend our schools. They are motivated to do their best for students in what are

sometime frustrating and challenging conditions. They lead from the heart and are a source of inspiration and strength for many in their communities.

The personal information that they shared about their life journeys had to be carried respectfully, and it was up to me to choose what to share that would honor them as truly knowledgeable in their field so that their legacy would be perpetuated through helping to prepare those who choose to try to make a difference for First Nations education and schooling. I believe that the words and stories that the participants shared were sacred because they carried with them voices of the past; our grandmothers and grandfathers who knew how to “educate,” who knew what it takes to bring up a child who has confidence, self-worth, and a strong identity. I believe that the stories themselves, whether they were the extracted and edited stories or the responses to the questions, carry the voices of the ancestors who had wisdom that they had shared with others through the oral tradition of the Cree and the Ojibway people represented by the participants in this study. The participants carried the message that needed to be heard.

Study Summary

After contact and settlement by Europeans in Canada, the imposition of formal schooling by the federal government and the missionary organizations served to disrupt First Nations ways of learning and knowledge acquisition (Battiste, 2000; Graveline, 1998). The transfer to local control in the 1970’s should have been the touchstone to bring about change and an opportunity to deal with the aftermath of colonialism and the assimilation policies that had impacted First Nations people through education. This did not occur on the scale that it should have. There was not widespread emancipation from the colonizer’s form of education and ways of acquiring knowledge. With local control of education by First Nations, the

question may be asked: Why wasn't there the transformation at the point when First Nations communities began to take over control of their schools? There did not seem to be a concerted effort to contest the curriculum, the structures, and the established practices of schooling. Formal schooling, shaped by a history of colonization, has not contributed enough to First Nations moving forward, so nonetheless, it is formal schooling that can help to restore their well-being and identity so that they can move into a space in Canadian society where they are no longer marginalized.

There was a practical purpose for this study: through data collection the intent of the study was to seek for answers to the research questions and to seek to define what constitutes effective leadership in this context that will lead to positive change for First Nations students. As discussed in Chapter One, the practical issues that plague First Nations education currently identified by the various reports include underfunding, lack of a governance structure, lack of an education legislative base, and the lack of necessary infrastructure to support an effective operation. These have hampered the progress of First Nations education in Manitoba for decades. The system of education that exists is flawed in many ways, but effective and appropriate leadership can make a positive difference.

There is a need to determine what this system of formal schooling should look like and what form leadership should take in the band-operated schools, so that there is transformative positive change. The results of the study provide a better understanding of the nature of the work involved in managing the on-reserve school system and what needs to be done to improve First Nations education. The results of this study provide information for communities and those in leadership who are working towards improvements for a population that has been educationally impoverished for far too long. The research on school

effectiveness and school improvement shows that the two most influential factors are classroom practice and the quality of leadership (Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins, 2007). The Director of Education is in a position to support the school administration to influence classroom practice through effective leadership. Leadership at the school level is important and leadership at this level is equally important.

There was also a philosophical purpose: the study was concerned with identifying what is wrong and what is going on in the education system that has failed First Nations for decades. This philosophical purpose necessitated involvement of a postcolonial foundation, a social justice orientation, and an incorporation of a decolonization lens and a critical paradigm. Wallace and Poulson (2003) describe “knowledge-for-critical evaluation” as one type of knowledge generation that one can engage in research. They state that this is a process of “attempting to develop theoretical and research knowledge from an explicitly negative standpoint towards practice and policy, in order to criticize and expose the prevailing ideology underlying existing practice and policy and to argue why it should be rejected, and sometimes advocating improvement according to an alternative ideology” (p. 23

In terms of overall conclusions and findings, were they obvious from the beginning? The potential solutions seem straightforward. First Nations students need to attend schools, where as soon as they walk in the doors of the school, they are greeted in their language, and the walls and corridors are filled with symbols of their identity. The school curricula content and programs need to be respectful of them as First Nations people and instill in them self-worth. The focus of the school must be to strengthen and build their identity. The lessons taught need to honor their values and their close connection to the land. Simpson (2014) tells the story of Kwezens, which means little girl in Nishnaabeg (Ojibwe), and relates what it

means for her to be taught in a traditional way where the learning is land-based, where she gets to learn from and with the land. She describes this kind of learning as taking place in the milieu of family, community, and relations and not within the institutionalized schooling system. She states:

Nishnaabeg must stop looking for legitimacy with the colonizer's education system and return to valuing and recognizing our individual and collective intelligence on its own merits and on our own terms. (p. 22)

The participants in this study mention frequently the idea of more culturally relevant curricula in our First Nations schools. The culturally relevant curricula is usually articulated as land-based, and many of their stories make the connection of traditional ways being linked to the land. They infer that it is a transformative way of education, and most say that this could be done without discarding the provincial curricula. They agree that there has to be a balance, so the students gain both the knowledge acquired through the mainstream curricula and at the same time they receive affirmation of their language, culture, and worldviews, and pride in their identity as First Nations persons.

The rich data collected in this study was gained through semi-structured in-depth interviews which were audiotaped and transcribed. The participants in this study were honest, open, and willing to talk. Specific interview questions that were asked challenged them to think about their responses, as they may not have necessarily have been asked the question before. The interviews elicited some soul searching as they thought about their responses to the questions. Did the data answer all the following research questions? I would say that the answers were there, but with the realization that the more you know, the more you realize that there is more to know. The specific research questions were:

1. What is the role of the Director of Education in a First Nations school system?
2. What specific knowledge and skills are required to effectively perform their duties?
3. How are they prepared for their role?
4. What is effective and appropriate leadership for First Nations education that will reflect a First Nations leadership paradigm that will potentially bring about long sought after transformation of First Nations education?

It was not always an easy task to find the complex, often hidden ideologies and nuances that are there in the words and the written transcripts. Sometime they are subtle but, once found, powerful and offering profound insight. Through the use of story, unturned stones, once turned, revealed the message that brought about more clarity. The question that was the most thought provoking was the question: What life experiences or work experience has helped you most in this position? The question elicited the stories as participants were asked to relate their life experiences that impacted on them as individuals and how these experiences influence the way that they do their work and the way they lead. They talked about their background, and for some of the participants it was an opportunity to review the variety of positions they have held in their long illustrious careers. They talked about the challenges and rewarding aspects of their work, how they lead, and why they lead in the way that they do. They were reflective in relating their life experiences that have brought them to where they are now. Of course, it is obvious that our life experiences shape our life direction and make us the kind of person that we are, and the deeper question is how do those life experiences shape how we lead? This study gave the opportunity to these leaders to reflect on their work and to articulate why and how they do the things that they do as part of their work.

In more recent years in my career in First Nations education, I have gained a more critical eye and have become more reflective in the work that I do. The combination of qualitative research methodology, postcolonial theory, and Indigenous research lends itself to doing research and scholarship from that critical perspective. I chose to use postcolonial theory as a theoretical framework as defined in Chapter Two so that we can question First Nations schooling as it exists. King (2003) asserts that postcolonial studies is not a panacea for much of anything and that it does not promise to make the world a better place for colonized peoples. However, postcolonialism carries with it “the implicit expectation that, through exposure to new literatures and cultures and challenges to hegemonic assumptions and power structures, lives would be made better” (p. 58). This is particularly applicable to First Nations schooling where the constructs of hegemony, power, and knowledge underpin its very foundation. Kobayashi (2001) comments on the use of qualitative research methodology from a critical perspective as: “scholarship that conveys the social consequences of the situations that we study, and that attempts to uncover the tensions and contradictions faced by the people in those situations” (p. 55). It was through the stories embedded in the conversations and question-answer interactions that unique perspectives and insights were discovered.

As a First Nations person who was taught valuable life lessons through stories, who was raised to listen to the stories of elders and to be respectful of the words, it was difficult to “dissect” the stories and to decide what fraction of the content to include and to decipher meaning and to connect them to an academic endeavor. Munn (2014) cautions against committing “epistemological violence” through appropriating and using personal stories shared in academic research and not honouring what is shared. Even though the participants in

the study consented to including the story for the most part, verbatim, it was incumbent upon me to respect what they have shared through the interviews. Choosing not to “tear them apart” too much through analysis and trying to make them fit under a particular research question was a conscious choice. This to me, is Indigenous methodology, albeit my own Cree version, where I did not want to over-analyze but still be able to present evidence-based research. I felt frustration to not to be able to include so much of the “data” from the interview transcripts which contained words of the participants laden with wisdom, knowledge, and insights that need to be shared.

Through the data analysis and coding processes of qualitative research, themes were found and collated and expounded upon in the findings. Each of the participants have a life story that we can learn from to better lead First Nations education and their collective wisdom has much to teach us. Vienna realized later in her career that she was perpetuating a colonized way of leading and teaching, Shan had to search for identity before she could lead with conviction, I felt that the participants were true to themselves and willing to share personal and professional information about their lives. The participants in this study definitely had their story which could be elaborated on and where we could learn valuable life lessons on leadership, resilience of First Nations people, the historical injustices, and insight into how to reconcile the past, present, and future. The motivation to do this study in this way was to seek affirmation for and to search for understanding for myself and for others as to what is wrong with First Nations schooling education and, more importantly, to seek solutions that will bring about positive change at a fundamental level, that will allow us to “educate” more fully the children who attend our schools.

The literature review focused on describing the background and context of First Nations education and its evolution over time, postcolonial theory, and the challenges that face First Nations education such as marginalization and the systematic devaluation of their knowledge. The topic of leadership was also discussed and how leadership and preparation for leadership play a critical role towards the goal of achieving successful outcomes in education. Chapter Two also included some relevant initiatives which relate to the research study, including the OLF, the McKinsey Report, and the FNELS. It is within this background that the study was conducted, which resulted in the findings for this study.

As mentioned earlier, there is often little attention given to this important role; when it comes to educational matters, most attention is given to the school and the school principal. Yet it is the role of the Director of Education that is most influential and most significant in setting the direction for First Nations education. As a collective, historically, Directors of Education in Manitoba were instrumental to changes that were made since the 1970s. As their collective role diminished, did this contribute to the lack of progress in First Nations education? The historical role of the Manitoba Director of Education was part of the story of at least three of the participants, and they insisted I write it down so it is included in Appendix A. The Directors of Education in Manitoba were important contributors to the progress that has been made in First Nations education in Manitoba since the 1970s. They continue to contribute greatly to their respective communities and as a collective, although their role has been diminished, they can continue to be agents of change in bringing about education transformation for First Nations education in Manitoba. There is strength in unity and processes can be established that will help them to regain their voice in setting direction in Manitoba.

The mundane but necessary tasks of administration (otherwise known as administrivia) occupy much of the time of the participants in this study. This is the same for provincial superintendents and school principals, and many educational administrators the world over. It is a common problem and one that cannot be entirely eliminated. Many of the First Nations on-reserve education systems do not have all the required support positions that would help to alleviate some of the tasks. Very few of the communities have a dedicated human resources or transportation person which leaves the work to the Director of Education. The reason is that there is not enough funding or the schools are too small to warrant dedicated departments for these areas. In my experience it helped greatly when there were administrative assistants, clerical positions, or other supervisor positions assigned to manage some of the areas. The area of finance as a managerial role is a time consumer.

The stories and much of the data point to making the First Nations schools on the reserve more “educative,” that graduate educated First Nations people. Coulter, Fenstermacher, and Wiens (2009) state that educated people are curious about the world and can make a difference through their lives and in the lives of others (p. 11). Hamilton and Zufiaurre (2014) define education as “the shared, yet diverse, process whereby animals, including humans, identify, accumulate, refine, conserve and circulate—or recycle—their experience” and that it embraces teaching and learning (p. 3). They further state that public schooling is Eurocentric and the values of schooling are derived from Christian theology (e.g., the regard for schooling as an agency of salvation). They see schools as being associated with the regimes of power and control (p. 138). Hamilton and Zufiaurre (2014) state that the purpose of schooling is the “elimination of human frailty” that relies on “the adoption of bounded educational routines that are assumed not only to have predictable outcomes but also

are repeatable and transferable from setting to setting” (p. 6). They further state that schooling is time-based and eventually we finish but education is never complete (p. 72). The study was about the difference between education and schooling as many of the participants stated that change needed to occur in the way students were experiencing schooling. Too much of students’ experience of schooling is based the mainstream curriculum with predictable outcomes and not so much about what Simpson (2014) refers to as Nishnaabewin in the Ojibwe language. She describes this kind of experience as designed to:

create self-motivated, self-directed, community-minded, inter-dependent, brilliant, loving citizens, who at their core uphold our ideals around family, community and nationhood by valuing their intelligences, their diversity, their desires and gifts and lived experiences. (p. 23)

The findings from this study confirm that the context of First Nations education necessitates a different approach. This study was to examine First Nations education using a postcolonial theoretical framework. Postcolonial theory was the lens through which I viewed the data as it emerged and although, as earlier stated, postcolonial theory is not understood under one single definition and is subject to broad interpretation. Postcolonialism, for the purpose of this study, was defined as an affirmation and acceptance that historical events that occurred as a result of colonialism affect the present and by contesting it, we can potentially, affect the future. The storytelling was a form of decolonization: to be able to critique contemporary schooling structures by allowing for an Indigenous methodology and honouring the oral tradition. Postcolonial theory in this context allowed me to question and critique, to use as a frame in the quest to search for answers, to ask the questions and strive to understand from the data, the answers and potential solutions. The results of the study are a small step

towards helping First Nations move away, through education, from being marginalized and moving into a space that is no longer on the edge and where they can be recognized in their own right. The postcolonial quest for First Nations means that through a new way of educating, we can bring their knowledge and practices back and work towards “reclaiming, recovering, restoring, and renewing Indigenous peoples rights which includes Indigenous knowledges and languages” (Battiste, 2013, p. 163). The impacts of colonialism and the need for a postcolonial system of schooling were articulated in the stories and words of the participants. Is there a point somewhere in the future of First Nations where they can achieve independence from the colonizer institutions? I believe that these findings and the recommendations from the participants in this study point towards that real possibility of an independent First Nations education system becoming a reality.

Conclusions of the Study and Implications for Future Research

Research Question # 1

The first research question asked about the role of the Director of Education in a First Nations school system. The Director of Education supervises the school administrators working in the school and is responsible overall for all aspects of education on the reserve. The findings revealed that the participants spend their time occupied with many tasks and responsibilities and fulfill many roles. The data shows that the role of the Director of Education in a First Nations community is complex. The identified themes and sub-themes were those that were recurring in the data. The participants revealed a number of other challenges, as well as rewarding aspects. There was a certain amount of frustration evident in the interviews on the challenges that they encountered and had to deal with on a regular basis. The list includes: inadequate funding, lack of supports, dealing with the politics, personnel

issues, building enough trust, managing the budget, implementing policy, lack of consistency in maintaining policy, dealing with crisis after crisis, and dealing with parents. The environment in which the participants work is challenging. Each participant works in a unique environment, but yet the data revealed some commonalities that affect the way that they work. They also were remarkably positive and enjoyed their work for the most part, and, although they indicated that the work was difficult at times, the rewarding aspects outweighed the challenges. The rewarding aspects that the participants identified include: knowing that the staff appreciate the support, the students and the community are happy, being able to recognize the accomplishments of projects, seeing the gains that are made from the work being done, when pilot programs and initiatives succeed, seeing students succeed, seeing graduation rates increase, watching students succeed in postsecondary, and knowing that you are contributing to your community. Two participants mentioned that it is, for them, a thankless job and you have to do all this without being recognized and at times not treated well by the community or the political leadership.

Their primary role is the connection with the community, to communicate, to build trust, and to develop a relationship with the community members. I would agree that this is the most important role, because it is the way to get parents and community members more engaged with the schooling of their children. As mentioned earlier, the participants were saying in many ways that that schooling needed to go back to a system of education that encompassed the values and principles that had been part of First Nations life prior to colonization. This kind of education was described in their stories. Lonnie said that if a leader is grounded in their identity, then they are more likely to promote cultural and language programming, which builds positive self-worth in children. Marla said she, as a child, felt

protected, loved, and cared for in an environment where the language was spoken. Jase said that as a leader, you are to be with the people and don't hide from them. Brenda said to treat everyone with respect and be together for one thing and one thing only, which is for the children. Shan said you have to know who you are and accept it and then you will be able to have a stronger vision for education. Cathy said to get your training and knowing the people will help you in your work of leadership. Vienna said that we have to be conscious as educators of what and how we are teaching our children who attend our schools. Rayna and Rena spoke about the values of work and respect for the land and the people that you work with. Glen spoke about leadership and how a leader is only as good as the followers and dictating as a leadership style does not work.

Implications for Further Research Related to Question 1

The findings from this study identified many roles that the Director of Education has in the on-reserve school system. Following are some areas that may be worthy of future research related to the role of the Director of Education:

1. It would be interesting to do a case study of a Director of Education working in a First Nations on-reserve school system. The ethnographic study would include a biography of the participant and following them for a period of time, possibly for an entire school year. The study could include a daily journal that would record experiences and activities related to the role of the Director of Education. Each of the participants in this study have a story and this component can be explored using a case study approach.
2. As Manitoba First Nations are in the process of setting up a First Nations school system, a research study can be conducted to track the experiences of the Directors

- of Education involved in the system; as their role changes and as the system develops to record their subjective experiences and challenges in transitioning into a one-school system into an aggregate of schools.
3. Another research study that can be conducted is related to the role of instructional leadership. The suggested research questions are: What is the relationship between effective instructional leadership at the Director of Education level and student achievement outcomes? What are some of the ways instructional leadership can be improved in First Nations on-reserve schools? These kinds of research studies will be useful in informing the work related to the establishment of a system for the band-operated schools.

Research Question # 2

Participants spoke about their work and identified directly the knowledge and skills that are required for the position. They agreed that university training in education is required and that teaching and school administration experience is important. They identified that a minimum B.Ed. would be a requirement but graduate level university training would help to make stronger leaders. They identified that financial training was needed and training in human resource management would greatly help them in doing a more effective job. Communication and building relationships was an important aspect of their work, and human resource training would help them in working with people that they encounter on a daily basis.

The participants agreed that having the knowledge of the history, culture, traditions, and language was essential. They agreed that it is difficult for a person who does not have this knowledge to be effective in this context. As it is evident in some of the stories, First Nations

people themselves are not knowledgeable about the history of First Nations people and many have not thought about the impacts of colonization and residential schools. It was encouraging to hear about the search for identity and how this made them better leaders. More than one participant indicated that they had not thought of the impacts of colonization and the educational history of First Nations people.

Implications for Further Research Related to Question 2

1. One area of research is to conduct an action research study related to the on-going development of training modules for the First Nations Education Leadership Strategy. The study would include collecting some baseline data through surveys, interviews and/or surveys, deliver the training modules and assess the impact on practice using action research methodology
2. Lonnie said that it is better to have an educational leader who understands the language and knows about the cultural traditions of the people rather than someone who doesn't. Why? Because you understand the First Nations language and what it means for your identity as a person and the connections that it gives you to the history, your teachings, values, relationships, and ceremonies. If you know the value yourself then you are more likely to support the First Nations language programming and promote it and instill in the students the identity that it gives you. Marla believes strongly that the curriculum has to reflect the First Nations way of life, our teachings and our worldviews. She stresses that the content "would be all about us and really build pride in our school and community." She always felt that there was something wrong with the curriculum that was being taught and there was no room in the mainstream education system for the "beautiful teachings

of the elders, our way of life and how to be a proud person.” She believes that we need to build back our community structures and our belief systems the way they used to be. These comments and assertions of the participants can be a focus for a research study. What kind of impacts would a First Nations curriculum framework on improved educational outcomes for First Nations students? How will incorporating a First Nations Language and cultural program result in improved First Nations schools? The research could examine current First Nations language and culture programs in First Nations school to assess their impact and how they can be improved and implemented system wide.

Research Question # 3

The third research question asked about how the participants were prepared for the role of a Director of Education in a First Nations school system. Several of the participants spoke about the importance of mentoring. Having key people in their lives that they could count on for support and advice was important and would be beneficial for all directors. A few of the communities have a structured mentorship program where the aspiring Director of Education worked with an experienced mentor prior to assuming a position. Most of the participants recommended that mentoring would be a good practice and that mentoring needed to be part of the training and orientation for new or aspiring education directors. The role of the mentor and the structure of the mentorship varied but the recommendation was that mentorships would help directors by providing support and guidance. The findings from this study also indicate the university education that the participants received did not adequately prepare them for their work as Directors of Education in the First Nations context.

Implications for Further Research Related to Question 3

The third research question asked participants about the specific knowledge and skills that are required to effectively perform their duties. The following areas are suggestions for future research related to the third research question:

1. Conduct research on the question of how well university education administration programs prepare those who work in the First Nations context. The study could be conducted by gathering data on those who recently completed their Masters in Education degrees and are working in the on-reserve school systems. This would be useful to provide recommendations so that those working in these contexts are better prepared.
2. Another interesting area for further research is to explore in-depth the topic of mentorship as a culturally appropriate method for helping education administrators be better prepared to work in a First Nations context.

Research Question # 4

There has not been enough of a focus on educational leadership in First Nations communities, specific to band-operated schools on the reserve. This research was intended to provide some perspectives on educational leadership in First Nations communities. The fourth research question asked about effective and appropriate leadership for First Nations education that will reflect a First Nations leadership paradigm that will potentially bring about long sought after transformation of First Nations education. While there is a vast amount of mainstream literature on educational leadership and leadership preparation, there is very little existing literature related specifically to educational leadership training for the First Nations context. Much of the literature on education leadership is focused on preparing and training

principals. There is also existing literature on superintendents and district level or system level leaders, which, in some ways, is a closer fit to the training and leadership development for First Nations Directors of Education. At both the school and system level, there is agreement that effective leadership is important if schools are going to be successful in achieving positive learning outcomes for students (Dimmock, 2012; Tucker, Young, & Koschorek, 2012; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). Although this was not a research study on leadership, the participants had much to say about how leadership should be carried out in First Nations communities. This study did not investigate leadership in depth but the participants were clear in what they thought works for them.

Implications for Further Research Related to Question 4

This sample of participants identified in their own ways the importance of a certain kind of leadership that works best in a First Nations context.

1. An area that can be further explored is a more focused study on leadership in a First Nations context. What kind of leadership is a better fit in this context? The participants in this study had a more distributive or facilitative leadership style. Is this a more culturally appropriate leadership style? This research could also explore the dynamics that influence leadership in the First Nations reserve context such as leadership at the political level (i.e. Chief and Council).
2. Another research study that could be conducted is related to a more culturally relevant curriculum with a focus on land-based education. The study might involve a review of successful land-based programming, the impact on student learning and engagement and how it can be used as a foundation for First Nations student achievement. The study might examine how land-based education can address

both First Nations identity and also prepare them to be able to master the provincial curriculum outcomes.

Recommendations for Practice

The following are the recommendations for First Nations Directors of Education and the on-going improvement of on-reserve education system:

1. First Nations Directors of Education require collective support for training and capacity development. Formal networking mechanisms need to be set up so that there can be opportunity for professional development and professional collegiality such as Professional Learning Communities. Training programs need to be developed for Directors of Education as a group that would include more networking and consistency of credentials required for Directors of Education.
2. A focus on the development and implementation of mentorship programs will lead to more effective leadership practices and provide support to new or aspiring Director of Education. On-going leadership development training is recommended including in-service training and university courses.
3. The current system of school for First Nations requires transformative change. There is agreement that the current system is not working so there needs to be a concerted and strategic effort to change the established systems.
4. The support structure within the communities for First Nations Director of Education and schools needs to be more stable. This will potentially allow for the Director of Education to focus more on instructional leadership.

Concluding Comments

“Education for First Nations is moving forward with new ways of thinking, new ways of believing, that our children were born with awesome gifts especially the gift of being Anishinaabe. We need to nurture that and not to let them be ashamed” (Marla1.1.434-438). Jase’s kind of leadership is to communicate and build relationships with the people, to be visible, and to be accessible to the people—not to just have an open door policy, but to go where the people are. He spoke about “connection knowledge,” which means knowing the background of the families, the kinship connections, and how that helps you to be a more credible and accepted leader in the community. Brenda’s view of leadership is one of humility that you are not higher than anyone, that we are all equal. She says that she is upfront always in a fair manner in dealing with people, not being negative, and never puts herself over them. Her leadership is about her followership and taking care of them. She states that her main focus when she steps into the hallways of the school are the students and making sure that there are good people and effective teachers and educators to train them (the students). Cathy believes that leaders need to be engaging, cooperating, accountable, and “basically a well-rounded individual work with many facets and many ways.” As a leader you need to help students develop their identity and know who cares for them. Students have to know that the teacher understands what they are going through. Leadership is about making sure that the school respects their identity, and if that doesn’t happen, then they are still “lost souls” (Cathy2.1.360-364). For Glen, educational leadership is about best practices and ensuring that you hold on to the vision and mission. He says that, if you are going to be a leader in a First Nations school, you have to have knowledge of the culture. He is Cree and his thinking is Cree, so he is going to make sure that he incorporates those teachings and language into

programming and deal with the clash between the traditional and Christian values in the best way he can (Glen2.1.180-185). Shan says that educational leaders should not be confused about having First Nations languages taught in the schools, and it is only if they are clear in their identity and know their history that they will make the school a good place for First Nations students to discover their own. Cathy realized that she could not do an effective job as an educational leader if she did not have the education background, and it was only through her journey of learning that she realized the importance of education and was able to see the priorities for education. She too realizes the importance of knowing your language, your culture, and your community if you are going to be an effective leader. Glen talks about shared leadership, that different people can lead at different times depending on the expertise and knowledge that they have. Dictating or authoritarian leadership style does not work and a leader is only as good as his/her followers. Rena's leadership style requires her to lead with a soft heart and that her intent is not to make her staff feel bad but to be gentle with them to a point. She realizes that there is a point where she has to give directives that staff members have to follow. She does not agree that the staff under her are subordinates, but colleagues and people that she works with. Vienna asserts the leaders in the First Nations context have to know their history and know about colonization. She states that community members have to have ownership of their own community. She agrees that leaders have to work closely with the grassroots people and empower them to run their education system and provide their services and to consult with them about education.

Many of these participants were closely connected to their traditional ways of life and had grown up with a close connection to the land. Many spoke of a process or a journey of discovery where they realized what needed to happen for First Nations education. They had

an opportunity to get into leadership, and many were only beginning to articulate their leadership style and determine what the best approach for leadership. They had clear beliefs and values, that came about from the way that they grew up and the life experiences that they had that impacted on their personal and professional development as leaders.

In summary, the research study shed some light on the work of education directors, how they were prepared for the role, what kind of knowledge and skills are needed, and what constitutes effective leadership for First Nations education. The findings for this study are:

- a. The role of the Director of Education has changed over the years and some of the veteran directors feel that their role has diminished as education leaders who can influence the direction of First Nations education in Manitoba. Their role is complex and multi-faceted. Their main roles are to develop trusting relationship with the community, and their role is primarily managerial in terms of their daily work. They have a wide scope of work and are constrained in their work by under-resourced systems and often operate in isolation.
- b. The Director of Education needs a minimum Bachelor of Education degree to be an effective director, and additional graduate qualifications are beneficial. They need some experience in teaching, and experience in school administration is beneficial. Mentoring is an important component for their professional growth. University training is required, and the university preparation programs need to be adapted to meet the needs of those working or who aspire to work in the First Nations education context.

- c. The preparation for the role needs to include the prior experience mentioned above, as well as training about the history, languages, traditions, and the culture of First Nations people.
- d. Effective and appropriate leadership for First Nations education requires humility and a collaborative approach to leadership. Dictatorial or authoritarian leadership style will not work in this context. Education leaders need to be cognizant of the history of First Nations people and the impacts of colonialism and the past educational experiences of First Nations people. The languages of the First Nations need to be taught in the school through a curriculum that is land-based and incorporates the values, worldviews, and perspectives of the First Nation. Leadership in the First Nations on-reserve environment is challenging, as there is still residual impacts of the residential schools, the influence of Christianity, and the oppressive and assimilationist approaches of past and present governments. These continue to impact the schools and communities in significant ways.

I have always been interested in bringing about transformational change for First Nations education in Manitoba. Someone once told me, early in the process of doing a dissertation, to do research on something that I am passionate about and on something that I want to genuinely find out about. While there is certainly much opportunity to do other research in First Nations education, my heart and passion was to do this study. My work experience has been primarily in First Nations on-reserve education systems, but I also did two-year stints of working for a provincial school division and working overseas. These experiences always brought me back to seeking answers about First Nations on-reserve

education and particularly on the what we need to do to improve the schooling experience of First Nations students in Manitoba. This thesis was the culmination of these experiences.

The best and perhaps the only way that we can achieve postcoloniality in First Nations schooling is to continue to work towards getting a clearer understanding and articulation of our traditional knowledges, languages, and values that were stripped from so many of us from the colonial process. We have these in our memory and within ourselves, and collectively we can be confident and assertive in reviving them. Postcolonialism in First Nations education is about knowing who we are, being confident in asserting ourselves personally and collectively, protecting our rights, and not to give in. Looking at First Nations education from a critical perspective is to look beyond the surface and to initiate change at a foundational level. A central theme in this research is how transforming First Nations schooling can lead to better outcomes for First Nations students, and it is about changing how we educate so that we are not complicit in perpetuating wrongs. As First Nations in Manitoba work collectively to establish a system: a school division for band-operated schools, it is critically important to take the opportunity to transform education for First Nations students who live on the reserves and attend the band-operated schools, to seize the opportunity to work on new ways to educate First Nations students.

References

- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. (2004). *Words first and evolving terminology relating to Aboriginal peoples in Canada*. Retrieved from: www.collectionscanada.gc.ca.
- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. (2012). *Summative Evaluation of the Elementary/Secondary Education Program on Reserve Final Report*.
- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. (2012). Statistical Data.
- Absolon, K., & Willett, C. (2005). Putting ourselves forward: Location in Aboriginal research. In L. Brown & S. Strega (Eds.), *Research as resistance: Critical, indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches* (pp. 97-126). Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.
- Absolon, K. (2011). *Kaandosowin: How we come to know*. Winnipeg: Fernwood Press.
- Agee, J. (2009). Developing qualitative research questions: A reflective process. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 22(4), 431-447.
- Agbo, S. (2002). Decentralization of First Nations education in Canada: Perspectives on ideals and realities of Indian control of Indian education. *Interchange*, 33(3), 281-302.
- Ah Nee-Benham, M.K.P., & Napier, L.A. (2002). An alternative perspective of educational leadership for change: Reflections on native/indigenous ways of knowing. In Leithwood, K. & Hallinger, P. (Eds.). *Second international handbook of educational leadership and administration* (pp. 133-165). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.
- Alfred, T. (2009). *Peace, power, and righteousness*. 2nd Ed. Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press.
- Andreotti, V. (2011). *Actionable postcolonial theory in education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Assembly of First Nations. (1988). *Tradition and Education; Towards a vision of our future*.

- A declaration of First Nations jurisdiction over education Vol.1.* Ottawa, Ont: National Indian Brotherhood.
- Assembly of First Nations. (2005). *Action plan*. Ottawa: AFN.
- Assembly of First Nations. (2012). *Nurturing the Learning Spirit of First Nations Students – National Panel Final Report*. Ottawa: AFN.
- Auditor General of Canada. (2004). *Report of the auditor general to the house of commons*. Chapter 4: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada – Elementary and Secondary Education. Ottawa.
- Auditor General of Canada. (2011). Chapter 4—Programs for First Nations on Reserve. *Status report of the Auditor General of Canada*. Retrieved from http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201106_04_e_35372.html
- Barman, J., Hebert, Y., & McCaskill, D. (1986). *Indian education in Canada:– Vol. 1, The legacy*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education nourishing the learning spirit*. Saskatoon: Purich.
- Battiste, M., & Barman, J. (Eds.). (1995). *First nations education in Canada: The circle unfolds*. Vancouver: UBC press.
- Battiste, M. (2000). *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Battiste, M., & Henderson, J. Y. S. (2000). *Protecting indigenous knowledge and heritage a global challenge*. Saskatoon: Purich.
- Bhabba, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.
- Bogdan, R. C., Biklen, S. K. (2006). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (4th Ed.). New York: A and B Press.

- Bogdan, R. C., Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education an introduction to theories and methods* (5th Edition). Boston: Pearson.
- Brown, L., & Strega, S. (2005). *Research as resistance: Critical, indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.
- Burney, S. (2012). *Pedagogy of the other: Edward Said, postcolonial theory, and strategies for critique*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Bush, T., (2009). Leadership development and school improvement: Issues in leadership development. *Educational Review*, 61(4), 375-389.
- Cajete, G. (2001). Finding face, finding heart, finding foundation: The making of an Indigenous teacher. Paper presented at The Banff Centre Aboriginal Leadership Symposium, Banff, Alberta.
- Canada. (2015). *Honouring the truth reconciling for the future Summary of the final report of the truth and reconciliation commission of Canada*. Canada.
- Canada (2009). *The Funding Requirement for First Nations Schools in Canada*. Parliamentary Budget Officer's Report. www.parl.gc.ca/pbo-dpb
- Canada. (2011). *Reforming First Nations education: From crisis to hope*. Report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples.
- Canada (2006). *A study of educational cost drivers*. Band-operated Funding Formula Final Report
- Canada. (1969). *Statement of the government of Canada on Indian Policy*. Ottawa, Ontario.
- Canadian Council on Learning. (2009). *The state of Aboriginal learning in Canada: A holistic approach to measuring success*. Retrieved from www.ccl-cca.ca.

- Carr-Stewart, S. (2006). First Nations education: Financial accountability and educational attainment. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 29(4), 998-1018.
- Carr-Stewart, S. (2006) The changing educational governance of First Nations schools in Canada: Towards local control and educational equity, *MiE*, 20(5). 6-12.
- Carr-Stewart, S. & Steeves, L. (2009). First Nations educational governance: a fractured mirror. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, (97). 1-16.
- Carr-Stewart, S., Marshall, J., & Steeves, L. (2011). Inequity of education financial resources: A case study of First Nations school funding compared to provincial school funding in Saskatchewan. *McGill Journal of Education*, 46(3), 363-378.
- Carspecken, P. F. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research a theoretical and practical guide*. New York: Routledge.
- Castellano, M. (2004). Ethics of Aboriginal research. *Journal of Aboriginal Health*, 1(1), 98-114
- Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous research methodologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chrisjohn, R. D., Young, S. L., & Maraun, M. (1997). *The circle game: Shadows and substance in the Indian residential school experience in Canada*. Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books.
- Conroy, M. (1974). *Education as cultural imperialism*. New York: David McKay.
- Coulter, D. L., Fenstermacher, G. D., & Wiens, J. R. (2009) *Why do we educate? Renewing the conversation*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage.

- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39, 124-130.
- Crippen, C., & Wallin, D. (2008). Manitoba superintendents mentoring and leadership. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, 36(4), 547-566.
- Cuban, L. (1988). *Managerial imperative and the practice of leadership in school*. New York: State University of New York Press .
- D'Warte, J., & Somerville, Mt. (2014). Language mapping: Researching marginalized students' everyday language and literacy practices. In S. Gannon & W. Sawyer (Eds), *Contemporary issues of equity in education*. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars.
- Deloria, V., Jr. (1999). *Spirit and reason*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum.
- Denscombe, M. (2010). *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects* (4th Ed.). Maidenhead, England: McGraw Hill–Open University Press.
- Dimmock, C. (2012). *Leadership, capacity building and school improvement concepts, themes and impact*. New York: Routledge–Taylor and Frances.
- Drummond, D., & Rosenbluth, E. K. (2013). *The debate on first nations education funding: Mind the gap* (Working paper 49). Queen's University, School of Policy Studies.
- Duran, E., Firehammer, J., & Gonzalez, J. (2008). Toward healing cultural soul wounds. *Journal of Counselling and Development*, 86(3), special issue on multicultural counselling.
- Ermine, W. (2000). *Critical examination of the ethics in research involving Indigenous peoples*. Masters Thesis. University of Saskatchewan
- First Nations Education Council. (2009). *Funding study final report*.

- Foster, R. Y., & Goddard, J. T. (2002). Adapting to diversity: Where cultures collide-educational issues in Northern Alberta. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 27(1), 1-20
- Gandhi, L. (1998). *Postcolonial theory a critical introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Gooden, M. A., & Dantley, M. (2012). Centering race in a framework for leadership preparation [Electronic version]. *Journal of Research on Leadership education*, 7(2), 237-253.
- Goss, J. (1996). Postcolonialism: Subverting whose empire? *Third World Quarterly*, 17(2), 239-250.
- Graveline, F. J. (1998). *Circle works: Transforming Eurocentric consciousness*. Halifax: Fernwood.
- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Haldane, S., Lafond, G., & Krause, C. (2011). *Nurturing the learning spirit of First Nation students: Report of the National Panel on First Nation Elementary and Secondary Education for Students on Reserve*. Ottawa: Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.
- Hallinger, P. (2008): Leading educational change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 33(3), 329-352
- Hallinger, P., & Leithwood, K. (1998). Unseen forces: The impact of social culture on school leadership. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 73(2), 126-151.

- Hamilton, D. (2015). The beginning of schooling as we know it. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 47(5), 577-593.
- Hamilton, D., & Zufiaurre, B. (2014). *Blackboards and Bootstraps: revisioning education and schooling*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Hare, Jan, (2011). Learning from indigenous knowledge in education. In D. Long & O. P. Dickason (Eds.), *Visions of the heart Canadian Aboriginal Issues* 3rd ed.). Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.
- Hingley, I. (2000). Transforming the realities of colonialism: voyages of self-discovery. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- hooks, b. (1995). *Killing rage. Ending racism*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Indian Tribes of Manitoba. (1971). *Wahbung, our tomorrows*. Winnipeg: Manitoba Indian Brotherhood.
- Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada/Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. (2012). Statistical Data.
- Jackson, Brad. (2005). The enduring romance of leadership studies. *Journal of Management Studies* 42:6 September 2005
- Kellerman, B. (2008). *Followership: How followers are creating change and changing leaders*. Harvard Business Press, Boston Massachusetts.
- Keslar, L. (2009). *Aboriginal identity and terminology*. Indigenous Foundations—University of British Columbia. Retrieved from indigenousfoundations.art.ubc.ca/home-identity-terminology.html.
- King, T. (2003). *The truth about stories: A native narrative*. Toronto: House of Anansi.

- Kirkness, V. J. (1999). Aboriginal education in Canada: A retrospective and a prospective. *Journal of American Indian Education, 31*(1), 14-30.
- Kobayashi, A. (2001). Negotiating the personal and the political in critical qualitative research. In M. Limb & C. Dwyer (Eds.), *Qualitative methodologies for geographers issues and debates*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kohn, M., & McBride, K. (2011). *Political theories of decolonization postcolonialism and the problem of foundations*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies—Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press
- Kumar, M. P. (2009). *Aboriginal education in Canada a postcolonial analysis*. University of Saskatchewan.
- Leithwood, K. (2011). *Characteristics of high performing school systems in Ontario*. Toronto: Final report of research to the Institute for Educational Leadership.
- Leithwood, K. (2013). *Strong districts and their leadership*. A paper commissioned by the Council of Ontario Directors of Education and the Institute for Education Leadership.
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School Leadership and Management, 28*(1), 27-42.
- Leithwood, K., & Riehl, C. (2005). What we know about successful school leadership. In W. Firestone & C. Riehl (Eds), *A new agenda: Directions for research on educational leadership* (pp. 22 – 47). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris, A., and Hopkins, D. (2007). *Seven strong claims about successful school leadership*. London: Department for Education and Skills. Retrieved from www.ncsl.org.uk

- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2008). Linking leadership to student learning: The contributions of leader efficacy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(4), 496-528.
- Lightening, E. (1997). *First Nations control of First Nations education: An issue of power and knowledge*. PhD. Thesis. University of Toronto.
- Little Bear, L., (2009). *Naturalizing indigenous knowledge synthesis paper*. Canadian Council on Learning Report, University of Saskatchewan.
- Little Bear, L. (2000). Jagged worldviews colliding. In Marie Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Long, D., & Dickason, O. P. (2011). *Visions of the heart Canadian Aboriginal Issues* (3rd ed.). Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.
- Loomba, A. (2005). *Colonialism/postcolonialism*. New York: Routledge Taylor and Frances.
- Ma Rhea, Z. (2015). *Leading and managing Indigenous education in the postcolonial world*. New York: Routledge Taylor and Frances.
- Malott, C. S. (2010). *Policy and research in education a critical pedagogy for educational leadership*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Marcus, J. (2001). Orientalism. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, & L. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of ethnography* (pp. 109-118). London, England: SAGE.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org.proxy2.lib.umanitoba.ca/10.4135/9781848608337.n7>
- McConaghy, C. (2000). *Rethinking indigenous education: Culturalism, colonialism, and the politics of knowing*. Flaxton, Australia: Post Pressed.
- McLeod, N. (2005). *Exploring Cree Narrative Memory*. PhD. Thesis .University of Regina.

- McMillan, J. H., (2004). *Educational research: Fundamentals for the Consumer* (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education.
- McClintock, A. (1994). The angel of progress: Pitfalls of the term “post-colonialism.” In P. Williams & L. Chrisman (Eds.), *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: A reader*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mendelson, M. (2006). *Aboriginal people and postsecondary education in Canada*. Ottawa: Caledon Institute of Social Policy.
- Meyer, M. (2001). Our own liberation: Reflections on Hawaiian epistemology. *The Contemporary Pacific: A Journal of Island Affairs*, 13(1), 124-148.
- Miller, J. R. (1996). *Shingwauk’s vision: A history of Native residential schools*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Morton, S. (2010). Marginality: Representations of subalternity, aboriginality and race. In S. Chew & D. Richards (Eds.), *A concise companion to postcolonial literatures*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Mourshed M., Chijioke C., & Barber, M. (2010), *How the worlds most improved school systems keep getting better*. Retrieved from <http://mckinseysociety.com/how-the-worlds-most-improved-school-systems-keep-getting-better/#sthash.nedk66W2.dpuf>
- Munn, M. (2014). Epistemological violence, psychological whips, and other moments of angst Reflections on PhD research. In J. Kilty, M. Felices-Luna & S. Fabian (Eds.), *Demarginalizing voices commitment, emotion, and action in qualitative research*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Murphy, J. (Ed.) (2002). *The educational leadership challenge: Redefining leadership for the 21st century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Murphy, J. (2007). Questioning the core of university-based programs for preparing school leaders. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88(8), 582-585.
- National Indian Brotherhood. (1972). *Indian control of Indian education; Policy paper presented to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development*. Ottawa.
- Ormiston, N. T. (2010). Re-conceptualizing research: An Indigenous perspective. *First People Child and Family Review*, 5(1), 50-56.
- Osborne, K. (2008). Education and schooling: A relationship that can never be taken for granted. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, 107, 21–41.
- Paquette, J., & Fallon, G. (2010). *First Nations education policy in Canada: Progress or gridlock?* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Peterson, G. (2002). Singing the same tune: Principals' and school board members' perceptions of the superintendent's role as instructional leader. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 40(2), 158- 171.
- Richards, J. (2008). *Explaining the Aboriginal–non-Aboriginal gap in student performance in BC schools*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Economics Association, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.
- Rigney, L.-I. (1999). Internationalization of an Indigenous anticolonial cultural critique of research methodologies: A guide to Indigenist research methodology and its principles. *Wicazo Sa Review*, 14(2). Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1409555> .
- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1996). *People to people, nation to nation—Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. Canada.
- Said, E. (1976). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.

- Said, E. (1985, autumn). Orientalism reconsidered. *Cultural Critique*, 1, 89-107.
- Sheppard, B., Galway, G., & Wiens, J. (2013). *School boards matter: Report of the pan-Canadian study of school district governance*. Canadian School Boards Association.
- Simpson, L. B. (2014). Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, 3(3), 1-25.
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books.
- Statistics Canada. (2011). *The educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada*. National Household Survey (NHS). Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs->
- Tierney, W. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). At the forefront: Teaching qualitative methods in higher education. *Review of Higher Education*, 17(2), 107-124.
- Tucker, P. D., Young, M. D., & Koschoreck, J. W. (2012). Leading research-based change in educational leadership preparation: An introduction [Electronic version]. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 7(2), 155-171.
- Tully, J. (2000). The struggles of Indigenous peoples for and of freedom. In D. Ivison, P. Patton & W. Sanders (Eds.), *Political theory and the rights of Indigenous peoples*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Turner, D. (2006). *This is not a peace pipe: Towards a critical Indigenous philosophy*. Totonto: University of Toronto Press.
- United nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples

(UNDRIP). (2007). Retrieved from

www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf (accessed March 2014).

United Nations. (2014). *Teaching and learning for sustainability project*.

Wallace, M., & Poulson, L. (2003). (Eds.). *Learning to read critically in educational leadership and management*. London: Sage.

Yazzie, R. (2000). Indigenous peoples and postcolonialism. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Young, J., Levin, B., & Wallin, D. (2007). *Understanding Canadian schools: An introduction to educational administration*(4th ed.). Nelson.

Youngblood Henderson, J. S. (2002). Postcolonial Indigenous legal consciousness. *Indigenous Law Journal, 1*, 1-56.

Youngblood Henderson, J. S. (2000). Ayukpachi: Empowering Aboriginal thought. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

APPENDIX A: The Evolution of the Role of the Director of Education

I have worked as a Director of Education in a Manitoba First Nation since 2004. I have always advocated for giving more recognition to the Directors of Education in Manitoba and I felt that they have not been given credit for the work they have done in advancing First Nations education in Manitoba. It was the Directors of Education in Manitoba who helped First Nations acquire control of education in their communities. I have advocated that the past and current Directors of Education have individual and collective wisdom and knowledge that is drawn from living in their respective First Nations and being immersed in the daily life on the reserves. It is them who should be providing direction for First Nations in Manitoba. The directors who are actively working and who have worked in the First Nations communities know best the needs and priorities that need to be addressed.

The Directors of Education in the communities who were the first to take over their education beginning in 1972 need to have their stories told as they were very strong, and continue to be, dynamic educators and caring, committed and wise leaders, who have contributed to Manitoba First Nations Education. They initiated the Education Framework Agreement process which they hoped would bring about needed educational change. Even after 20 years of local control the directors realized that the vision for local control was not being fulfilled because students were not being successful and many of the old structures of Indian Affairs run schools had not changed. The Directors of Education at the time were requested by the Chiefs to come up with a proposal for change and the EFA was the result. Unfortunately, the work of the EFA was stalled and the consultation recommendations were not followed through for the most part. However, the extensive consultations and workshops that were developed by the Directors of Education at the time were very valuable in

identifying priorities and potential models that have been used to guide the work for the development of an education system for Manitoba. The same group of directors was also instrumental in establishing MFNERC. During these years from the early 1990s, they worked closely with the Chief's Committee on Education (CCOE), which was a group of appointed Chiefs who dealt with First Nations education issues in Manitoba. The directors provided them with the technical expertise and the necessary support and information to assist with negotiations and lobbying for education reform. They were also directly involved in the negotiations and meetings with the federal government. They have been instrumental in many of the initiatives that have helped Manitoba First Nations be the leaders nationally in First Nations education. I was not directly involved in these developments but came to know more about the historical developments after I became a director in 2004. I have been very involved in various committees and working groups, at the regional and national level and have seen much progress since local control began in 1972 as I was involved as a principal when the First Nation that I was working in assumed local control in 1986.

The Directors of Education in this study sample are educational leaders who have played a major role in helping First Nations education progress. There are also many other directors who played key roles in the historical development of education in Manitoba. Some of the participants mention the role of MFNERC. I was involved with MFNERC as I was the Board of Directors chairperson for six years. Although a more detailed study on the historical development of First Nations education is needed I felt it was important to include this section as it relates significantly to the research topic of exploring the role of the Director of Education in Manitoba.

In 1998, the federal government provided Manitoba region with \$1.6 million from the Gathering Strength – Education Reform Initiative. The Directors of Education in Manitoba recommended to the CCOE that the funding be used for the establishment of the MFNERC “to improve the quality and standards of education for First Nations students” (Briefing Sheet, MFNERC Archives, January, 1999). The Directors of Education held meetings with the CCOE and AANDC officials and eventually the funding of \$400,000 was allocated to establish the MFNERC in the 1998-1999 fiscal year.

The Directors of Education represent the voice of the grassroots community people and they brought forward to political leaders and the government what the First Nations wanted for the education of their children. With the expansion of MFNERC over the years, the staff of MFNERC began to take more responsibility with setting the direction for education in Manitoba First Nations and working with AMC and the national committees. MFNERC is governed by an elected board made up of Directors of Education. Even with the current governance structure, some participants indicated that because of the creation of MFNERC and its current role, that the power and authority has been taken away from the directors. Shan states that MFNERC as an organization has “down-graded the role of education directors ” and is emphatic in saying that in the early days of local control the director played a more significant role in leadership and the directors were clear on their role in education and it should go back to the way it was:

It was local leadership, Manitoba and national leadership. They (education directors) were in the forefront and Manitoba was the leader of Canada in many ways for First Nations education. With MFNERC, that involvement started going down because they did not share the national agenda. I would tell them “You can’t represent us because

we are the education directors. You cannot go to Ottawa and speak on our behalf; you don't have the authority to do that".

Shan feels that this changing role is a loss and a detriment to the progress of First Nations education in Manitoba. Directors no longer have the influential role that they once had to set the direction in education. The consequence of this is that the collective voice of the grassroots community people has been silenced to some extent. She feels that this has also resulted in the loss of the original vision in ICIE which was to ensure that education is community-driven and advocated for the existence of school boards as school boards would guarantee that decision on education would be from community people. Shan feels that MFNERC as an organization has over-emphasized its role in taking over the agenda for First Nations education in Manitoba:

When you take that away from the leadership at the community level, there is significant loss because it was the community that drove so many things that happened in the development of education, through *Wahbung* and *Indian Control of Indian Education*. We were able to influence the universities and many people to do things differently.

We used to be involved in Ottawa meetings. AMC would take us and they wanted education directors to be visible on national issues. I saw a significant change when MFNERC took over and MFNERC leadership took the role of representing us in Ottawa. They claimed it as their territory and don't always share that information with directors.

When asked about the role of the Director of Education Carol expressed her views as well on the historical role of the position in Manitoba:

To me that is really important, to understand the role, to understand what am I supposed to be doing here (as a director)? That is an important teaching or knowledge base they should have. The other part of it is that if they are going to be involved in the political aspect then they have to learn their issues. One of the presentations done by MFNERC staff talked about the mandate we were given, to provide second and third level services but that was not all of it, a very significant chunk of that was to develop a First Nations education system. How many of the other education directors have that knowledge of the history to know that that is not entirely accurate. So it is important to know the history of your development if you are going to be involved. It is the same as the kids you have to know where you are coming from to know where you are going so you have to know your educational development I think directors need to know this. When we had the CCOE, I would say that they had more power and authority as far as education went. I couldn't take a decision to the chief's assembly without getting asked, "Did you take this to the education directors? Call a meeting with the directors". If I said, "This just came to the table now". They would say, "Well take it back to the education directors" (Carol2. 1.244-263).

Directors of Education, over the years have met regularly, sometimes, monthly or bi-monthly and currently they meet on a quarterly basis. The meetings were previously organized by the education department at AMC for several years before their funding was reduced and are now organized by MFNERC staff. Shan points out:

I am really, really concerned about the role of the directors because there is no role for First Nations education directors in First Nations education right now. No significant role! Yes, they meet but is it the directors that set that agenda? It's MFNERC that sets

the agenda for the Directors. When you take that away from the leadership at the community level, there is something that is lost. Someone has taken this (the role of the directors) and moved it over here and left this vacant, a vacuum. We are deliberately creating a passive group. The directors are pushed off way to the side. Previously they sat on the national committees they set the direction for education for Manitoba and they were the direct link with AMC and the Executive Council of Chiefs. They used to have the Chief's Committee on Education. They used to work closely with them. MFNERC is the block between the education directors and anything else (Shan2. 1. 386-396).

APPENDIX B - Summary of OLF, McKinsey Study and FNELS

Ontario Leadership Framework

Successful Practices unique to system level leadership

1. Shared mission, vision and goals
2. Coherent instructional guidance system
3. Multiple sources of evidence to inform decisions
4. Learning-oriented organizational improvement
5. Job-embedded professional learning
6. Resources and structures aligned with mission
7. Comprehensive leadership development
8. Policy-oriented board of trustees
9. Productive working relationships

Core practices of successful leaders:

1. Setting direction;
2. Building relationships; and,
3. Developing people.

Personal leadership resources:

1. Systems thinking
2. Proactivity.

Four domains that make positive contributions to student learning and well-being are:

1. Core processes (includes system directions, curriculum and instruction and uses of evidence);
2. Supporting conditions (includes professional development, organizational improvement processes, and alignment);
3. Approaches to leadership development (includes professional leadership development, development of elected leaders); and
4. Relationships (includes internal and school systems relationships, relationships with community groups, relationships with parents, relationships external organizations).

McKinsey Study - How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better

Six interventions common across all the improvement journeys:

1. Revising curriculum and standards;
2. Reviewing reward and remunerations structure;
3. Building technical skills of teachers and principals;
4. Assessing student learning;
5. Utilizing student data to guide delivery, and;
6. Establishing policy documents and education laws.

Improvements need to be integrated into the very fabric of the system pedagogy by:

1. Establishing collaborative practices,
2. Developing a mediating layer between the schools and the center, and,
3. Architecting tomorrow's leadership.

To determine effective interventions, systems need to:

1. Know where they are in terms of students outcomes, what is the status quo?
2. Determine the set of interventions needed: and,
3. Adapt the set of interventions into the current context taking into account the history, culture and politics and structure of the school system.

Two factors necessary for improvement:

1. Sustaining
2. Ignition.

First Nations Education Leadership Strategy – Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Center

Training modules identified:

1. Traditions and Culture, Language, Knowledge, Self
2. Organizational Management of School Programs/Support
3. Supervision /Management of Teachers
4. Education Governance
5. Policy Development
6. Education Finance
7. Post-Secondary Education
8. Operation and Maintenance
9. Transportation

10. Historical Background of First Nation Education and Current Issues
11. Legal Context of Education

Purpose of the Training:

1. To provide the opportunity for experienced directors to engage in professional leadership training and to be leaders in the training
2. To engage in capacity building of First Nation educators to strengthen First nation education leadership and to motivate directors to assume a strong leadership role in First Nation Education at the provincial and national levels
3. To provide the opportunity for experienced directors to share their knowledge, skills and information
4. To identify and to develop best practices in the management of First Nation Education systems
5. To promote the retention of education leadership
6. To promote wellness and healing for the Education Leadership:
7. To provide an orientation for new directors

Principles of learning to be utilized in the training:

1. Building on prior knowledge;
2. Problem and Workplace Centered
3. Promotion of self-development
4. Showing Respect for the Learner
5. Opportunity For Choice And Self Direction
6. Capacity Building & Transferring Knowledge

Teaching and Learning Strategies

1. Problem based
2. Sharing of information
3. Collaboration
4. Direct Teaching
5. Discussion
6. Experiential learning
7. Project based

APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol

FIRST INTERVIEW

Part 1 - Background Information

1. How long have you been an education director?
2. Explain to me how you came to be an education director?
3. What was your work experience prior to becoming an education director?
4. What positions did you have before becoming an education director?
5. What is the extent of your training?
6. What life experiences or work experience has helped you most in this position?
7. How have these experiences helped you?

Part 2 - Nature of the Work of an Education Director

8. What do you see as your role in this position?
9. What are your main responsibilities as an education director?
10. What do you see as the most important responsibility or role as an education director?
11. What is the most challenging aspect of your work?
12. What is the most rewarding aspect of your work?
13. What are the supports that you rely on in doing your work?
14. What kind of supports do you wish you could have that you do not currently have?

SECOND INTERVIEW

Part 1 – Preparation

15. What are the skills needed to be able to do an effective job?
16. What kind of knowledge is most useful to have?

Part 2 - Training

17. Do you believe it is important for an education director to have the background knowledge of the history, traditions, language, and culture of the community in which they work? Why or why not?
18. How should the context of the community (the language and culture) influence the way education is carried out in the reserve school?
19. What training would you recommend be given to people who aspire or who are already working as education directors in First Nations communities?
20. What kind of training do you wish you could have had prior to taking this position?

PART 3 – THIRD INTERVIEW (This may change depending on “how the conversation goes” in the first two interviews. It may be questions related to clarification or further information gathered from the first and second interviews.)

21. Tell me what you think is the best way to prepare our First Nations students who attend on reserve schools for success?
22. What kind of advice would you give to current or aspiring education directors?
23. What do you recommend for improving First Nations on-reserve education?

APPENDIX D - Letters to Participate and Informed Consent

Letter to Participate and Informed Consent

UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Department of Educational Administration, Foundation and Psychology
University of Manitoba
R3T 2N2

Date

Dear Participant,

My name is _____-and I am a Ph.D. student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba in Department of Educational Administration, Foundation and Psychology. I am writing to invite you to be part of a research study that is looking at the work of First Nations Directors of Education in Manitoba. My thesis advisor is Dr. Jon Young in the Faculty of Education. I have received permission from your employer to contact you but your participation in this research study is voluntary and your employer will not be told if you participated or decided not to participate.

The title of my dissertation is: Exploring the Work of First Nations Directors of Education in Manitoba.

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.

I am asking you to participate in this research so that we can have a better understanding of the work of Directors of Education. I am inviting you to participate in two or three interview sessions which would take approximately an hour of your time for each interview. The interviews will be audio-taped with a digital recorder. The interview questions are related to your work as a Director of Education, your experiences, training and perspectives overall on First Nations education. You have the right to answer those questions that you feel comfortable answering and you can withdraw from the study at any time, by telling ***** in person, by telephone or by email that you wish to withdraw, and should you choose to do so, your interview data will be destroyed. The benefits from participating in this study include: helping in adding to the research on First Nations education; providing information that may lead to First Nations Directors of Education leadership training programs; helping in the creation of better on-reserve systems of education.

I will arrange an interview at a time and place that is mutually agreeable, in order to ensure that you are comfortable and to protect the privacy of our conversation. You will receive a copy of the interview questions via email before the interview so that you can consider your responses to the questions and decide what you would like to share. Your responses will be kept confidential. Your name will not appear anywhere in the results. You will be designated with a pseudonym. Your taped transcript will be returned to you so that you can add, delete, or change your responses to ensure that all identifying information has been omitted. You will have two weeks to revise the transcripts and if I do not hear from you, I will contact you once more to ask if you would like to make changes. This will occur before the analysis of the data begins. The data of the study will be analyzed and collated for the purposes of generalization into themes that will be used to identify patterns in the data related to the research questions. Only aggregate data will be reported to further protect the confidentiality of all participants. Should any data allow for the identifying of any individual, it will simply not be used in the results. All data will be kept by me in a locked file cabinet and/or password protected on my computer in my office or in my home (as required by University of Manitoba guidelines) and will not allow for the identification of any individual. Data will be destroyed after five years. The location of my office is at 2-1100 Waverly Avenue in Winnipeg. The hard copies of the data will be confidentially shredded and the tapes will be erased.

Should you wish to participate, please sign the consent on the bottom of this page. 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 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.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

The interview findings will be a part of my dissertation. I will discuss the emerging findings, and will make myself available for further discussion after analysis is complete. A summary of the overall findings will be sent to you upon request. Once the dissertation is complete, the findings may be presented at conferences and workshops in final form. In advance, I thank you for your cooperation.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints, you may contact my advisor [Dr. Jon Young at Jon.Young@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Dr.Jon.Young@umanitoba.ca) or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or email margaret.bowman@umanitoba.ca. You may also contact me at ***** or *****

If you would like to receive a summary of the findings of this study, please indicate this at the end of this letter.

Sincerely,

.....

I have read the consent form and consent to participate in the interview and research being conducted by _____, Ph.d. candidate , University of Manitoba.

Signature of Participant

Date

Phone number is:_____

I wish to receive a summary of the findings.

Yes

No



Request for Consent for Participation of
Director of Education in the
Research Study
Educational Administration, Foundation and Psychology
UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

Date

Dear

My name is _____ and I am a Ph.D. student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba in Department of Educational Administration, Foundation and Psychology working on my dissertation. My thesis advisor is Dr. Jon Young in the Faculty of Education. I am writing to request permission from you to contact the Director of education and ask for his/her participation in a research study that is looking at the work of First Nations Directors of Education in Manitoba.

The title of my dissertation is: Exploring the Work of First Nations Directors of Education in Manitoba.

I am asking for access to the Director of Education to participate in this research so that we can have a better understanding of the work of Directors of Education. The Director will be asked to participate in two or three interview sessions which would take approximately an hour for each interview. The interviews will be audio-taped with a digital recorder. The interview questions are related to the work of a Director of Education, their experiences, training and perspectives overall on First Nations education. The benefits from participating in this study include: helping in adding to the research on First Nations education; providing information that may lead to First Nations Directors of Education leadership training programs; helping in the creation of better on-reserve systems of education.

The interviews will be arranged at a time and place that is mutually agreeable, in order to ensure that the Director is comfortable and to protect the privacy of the conversation. The Director will receive a copy of the interview questions via email before the interview so that they can consider responses to the questions and decide what he/she would like to share. The responses will be kept confidential. Names will not appear anywhere in the results. Pseudonyms will be used for names of people and places. The taped transcript will be returned to the Director so that he/she can add, delete, or change responses to ensure that all identifying information has been omitted. This will occur before the analysis of the data begins. The data of the study will be analyzed and collated for the purposes of generalization into themes that will be used to identify patterns in the data related to the research questions. Only aggregate data will be reported to further protect the confidentiality of all participants. Should any data allow for the identifying of any individual, it will not be used in the results. All data will be kept by me in a locked file cabinet and/or password protected on my computer in my office or in my home (as required by University of Manitoba guidelines) and will not allow for the identification of any individual. Data will be destroyed after five years.

Should you give your permission for me to contact the Director of Education to participate, please sign at the bottom of this page and return a copy of this letter with signature to me or contact me by email indicating your permission. Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree that I may contact the Director of Education. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities.

The University of Manitoba may look at research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

The interview findings will be a part of my dissertation. A summary of the overall findings will be sent to you upon request. Once the dissertation is complete, the findings may be presented at conferences and workshops in final form. In advance, I thank you for your cooperation.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints, you may contact my advisor Dr. Jon Young at Jon.Young@umanitoba.ca or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or email margaret.bowman@umanitoba.ca. You may also contact me at ***** or *****

If you would like to receive a summary of the findings of this study, please indicate this at the end of this letter.

Sincerely,

I have read this letter and I give permission for you to contact the Director of Education to request participation in the interviews and research being done by _____, PhD candidate, University of Manitoba. I understand that his/her participation is voluntary.

Signature

Date

Title

Contact Information:

Phone _____

Email _____

I wish to receive a summary of the findings. Yes No