

How Can Non-Native Teachers Develop Culturally Responsive Programs in Remote
First Nations Communities? Learning From the Experts

By

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Abstract

There are a growing number of scholars who argue that statistics alone do not provide an accurate depiction of Aboriginal education and instead focus on successful education practices in Aboriginal communities and schools. I add to this discussion by focusing on the teaching practices of experienced First Nations educators and non-Native allies who have successfully created lessons and programs that have developed First Nations students' academic skills while remaining culturally relevant. The main question within this thesis is: What do experienced educators (First Nations and allies) believe that non-Native teachers should know about planning and teaching First Nations students in remote communities in northern Ontario? Results gathered through semi-structured interviews are presented in four sections that connect student success with: *who* the teacher is; cultural integration through language and land; professional characteristics and willingness to learn; and the development of culturally responsive lessons and evaluation practices. The findings encourage educators to re-evaluate their pedagogical framework to create a learning environment that places First Nations epistemology in the forefront for successful education to develop.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter I begin by sharing my personal story with a disclosure of who I am, and a reflection of my personal motives for conducting this study in order to develop a respectful research project within the field of Aboriginal education (Kovach, 2009; Max, 2005). As part of the process of sharing my story I situate myself as it outlines the privilege attached to my skin colour and even my “complicity in the colonial system” (Max, 2005, p. 86). In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Smith (1999) provides a series of guiding questions to aid cross-cultural research; these questions are:

Who defined the research problem? For whom is this study worthy and relevant? Who says so? What knowledge will the community gain from this study? What knowledge will the researcher gain from this study? What are some likely positive outcomes from this study? What are some possible negative outcomes? How can the negative outcomes be eliminated? To whom is the researcher accountable? What processes are in place to support the research, the researched and the researcher? (p. 173)

The first three sections reflect upon Smith’s (1999) guiding questions while providing an overview of the study, terminology and significance of this research.

1.1 Situating myself

I am a Euro-Canadian woman, originally from a small village in a farming district in Southern Ontario. My partner is an Ojibwa man originally from a fly-in community in northern Ontario; together we have three boys. In my personal life, my family has influenced this research through their support, their examples of success, and their difficulties transitioning from a First Nations school in a remote northern community to the education system in an urban community.

In 2005 I was hired as a teacher in a fly-in community in northern Ontario. I prepared myself for teaching in an isolated First Nations community by taking courses in

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the education program that were reflective of this goal, such as *Aboriginal education* and *Teaching in an isolated community*. I learned a great deal from these courses; however, I did not realize how much more training was needed until I began teaching. The first critical issue I learned when I prepared to work in a First Nations community was that when a community assumed ‘control’ of education through band-run schools their teachers lost job security and employment benefits enjoyed by their counterparts in the provincial school system (Bell, 2004). It was disappointing to know that my work as a teacher would not count toward teacher seniority or transfers in workplace, and did not include union protection. Despite these factors, it did not turn me away because it was my goal to work in a northern First Nations community.

Once I arrived, I was immediately told by the principal to prepare my lessons for students who work below their grade levels. It was not until more recently that I learned to recognize the harm that educators inflict upon the advancement of Aboriginal education when they attribute their students’ educational difficulties to their culture or community. Orłowski (2008) refers to “the cultural-deficit discourse” which is often heard when non-Native educators “describe an attitudinal flaw in Aboriginal cultures toward education” (p. 119). When I began to prepare the classroom for the beginning of the school year I came upon a letter from a teacher who had taught in that classroom a few years before I arrived. The letter was addressed to the new teacher of the classroom, and was filled with tips and ideas to help in the transition to teaching in the community. What I remember most about finding that letter was the care that this teacher had for his previous students and future students of the school; he felt the need to share his

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experience with any new teacher in order to continue quality education in the turnover of teachers.

Within the first week, I came to the realization that almost everything I knew about education was not working: I realized that a one-size-fits-all attitude toward education was not going to work. The students were struggling and I had the sinking feeling that I was failing as a teacher if I could not provide quality instruction. Reflecting on this experience, I recognize that I was fortunate to be surrounded by numerous co-workers who guided me, supported me and helped me to connect the content of my lessons with culturally relevant material, and to connect the events of the community with the day to day instruction and expectations. I was very fortunate to be surrounded by Native and non-Native educators with extensive knowledge and experience in First Nations education. These educators did not have to help me, nor was it within their job description; they took it upon themselves to be of service to me and others who needed it and would accept it. I realized that I needed to learn from my mistakes, learn from those around me, and most importantly recognize that my learning journey was just beginning.

One of my co-workers, a local community member, was more aware than me of the rhythm and ups and downs of the events within the community and the effect they had on her students in the classroom. She always knew how to navigate her instruction and learning activities based upon the feelings and capabilities of her students throughout the year. As an outsider I often did not know the happenings of the community until after a co-worker let me know. After reading many scholars and organizations who discuss the importance of holistic education in Aboriginal education (e.g., Canadian Council on Learning [CCL], 2009; Corbiere, 2000; Gay, 2002; Swanson, 2003; Watt-Cloutier, 2000),

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I realize that many of my co-workers naturally integrated a holistic approach to their teaching without formally announcing their intentions. They knew how all aspects of a person's day to day life affected their education and recognized the need to adjust their day based upon the needs of the students.

When teaching occurred *in* the school, I felt frustrated when students repeatedly came to class late, were unprepared to work, and forgot or lost their school work. It was not until I began taking students out onto the land and into the community for different learning activities that I immediately noticed a significant difference. Not one single student missed these classes, nobody was ever late, and everybody was prepared for the excursion with all proper resources. I also noticed that every student fully participated in the activities, was engaged with the lessons, and were teaching me a thing or two as well. I noticed that students enjoyed these lessons, were excited to participate and felt more comfortable as the learning experiences were relatable to their personal life experiences; perhaps because they could relate to the school activities, academic skills came more naturally.

Through these experiences I began to recognize that the blame for student difficulties could not solely rest on the students; instead, I had to question my own teaching, and evaluate the activities and instruction that worked well and determine what did not work well. I began to question why there was a lack of interest in some of the school subjects, and why there was a lack of engagement with class activities along with general difficulties in school preparations. Most importantly, I began to look at myself and attempt to find out how I could ensure that I was developing quality lessons on a day

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to day basis. How could I encourage students to demonstrate their abilities, intelligence, creativity, and personal strengths?

It was these questions, experiences and realizations that stayed with me when I made my decision to begin my Master's of Education. Within my courses, I had the opportunity to learn how colonization and worldviews have a direct influence on education and research. I am a non-Native woman from Southern Ontario raised with a Eurocentric worldview, working, in part, on exploring and understanding an Anishnawbe worldview. I set out to build a research framework that is authentic, respectful and truthful to First Nations education and I am not the first to struggle with this challenge; Max (2005) unveils her concerns while conducting research:

Although I may learn about Aboriginal worldviews and perspectives, I know that I still view the world through a Eurocentric lens. Any research that I conduct in Aboriginal communities would be influenced by my different values, cultural beliefs, language, structures of power, and a different conceptualization of things such as time, space, and subjectivity. (p. 86)

I share my story not as an example of 'success' but rather as a necessary reflection on my journey to decolonization and openness. I share my own continued journey of listening and learning as it is my hope to support successful education practices for the benefit of First Nations children including my own sons. It was this realization and experience that has guided me to my research topic within this thesis.

1.2 Aboriginal education and non-Native teachers

In 1996, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP, Vol. 3] recommended that Aboriginal education become rooted in Aboriginal cultures, community and traditional values. It states that "Aboriginal children are entitled to learn and achieve in an environment that supports their development as whole individuals" and

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that “Aboriginal people should expect equity of results from education in Canada” (p. 442). There is no doubt that the concerted efforts to improve education for First Nations students have brought about many changes including “ongoing development of alternative teaching and administrative strategies” (Harper, 2000, p. 144), the increase of First Nations community controlled schools, the increase of qualified First Nation educators, as well as the sincere efforts to encourage holistic improvements for First Nation students living on reserve (Bell, 2004). These changes are not without evident challenges such as the large percentage of Aboriginal students not graduating, lack of funding, difficulties in obtaining culturally appropriate resources, and a high turnover rate of educators (Bell, 2004; Mendelson, 2008).

While there are increasing numbers of First Nation educators in northern remote communities, there continues to be a large percentage of non-Native teachers who teach in these communities as well (Anderson, Horton, & Orwick, 2004; Harper, 2000; RCAP Vol. 3, 1996; Taylor, 1995). As First Nation communities assert ownership over curriculum and implement their vision of education, the role of non-Native teachers needs to be clearly defined and followed in order to be in sync with First Nations educators and communities. This partnership will help eliminate potentially damaging education practices (Tompkins, 1998) and will ensure that students will no longer have to face the choice of assimilation or dropping out (Kanu, 2011). Teacher education programs are an important part of the process of preparing non-Native teachers to be culturally responsive and to be willing to become partners with First Nations schools; they are only one part of the process.

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A teacher's values, capacity, and interaction in and out of a school affect a student's comfort, self-image and academic achievement (Kanu, 2011; RCAP vol. 3, 1996; Taylor, 1995) as well as affect a school's atmosphere, vitality and level of community support (Taylor, 1995). When non-Native teachers understand their role in the community it will help to increase successful practices in their teaching. If teachers view the community as only a temporary home it may influence them not to interact socially with community members and vice-versa (Taylor, 1995; Tompkins, 1998).

To be successful in forging a partnership, non-Native teachers will be faced with opportunities for learning and growth throughout their career in First Nations education. It cannot be assumed that all First Nations people and communities have the same values, lifestyle, cultural norms and practices; however, teachers can be aware of the widespread values of community involvement, and the benefits of holistic teaching. Teachers can also learn about culture shock and the rewards of encountering new and different ways of living (Taylor, 1995; Tompkins, 1998).

First Nations communities in northern Ontario continue to be impacted by colonialism resulting in deplorable social-economic conditions, with high rates of poverty, suicide, and violence (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008; Bopp, Bopp & Lane, 2003). Though the social-economic context of a community impacts education achievement¹, my focus in this research is on the role of non-Native teachers in First Nations communities and what is achievable through the development of culturally responsive lessons. In this research I do not want to contribute to erroneous generalizations about First Nations communities;

¹ For more information on some of the challenges within First Nations education in northern Ontario refer to Nishnawbe Aski Nation's report on the challenges and needs of kikinahamaagewin (education) by Nishnawbe Aski Nation (2012). For information on poverty's impact on education refer to Levin, B. (1995) Educational responses to poverty.

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rather, to encourage teachers to recognize that learning, resources and continued training can and must occur within each community guided by experienced educators - local community members who have been working in their community and want the best for the children in their community.

1.3 Background of remote First Nation communities in northern Ontario

Northern Ontario is defined as the 350,000 square miles that lie “north of a line drawn from the confluence of the Mattawa and Ottawa rivers (at the Quebec border, east of Lake Nipissing) southwest to the mouth of the French River, on Georgian Bay” (Northern Ontario, 2011). In this research, the focus is on preparing non-Aboriginal teachers to teach in the remote northern First Nation communities of northern Ontario. According to Statistics Canada (2006) there are 615 government recognized First Nations communities in Canada, 126 of these in Ontario. The First Nation communities within Treaties 9 and 5, also known as Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN), consist of 49 communities with a total population of 45,000 people (including community members living outside the communities). The traditional language is Cree in the east, Oji-Cree in the west, and Ojibway in the central-south area (Nishnawbe Aski Nation, 2011).

Many of the communities do not have year round road access; most are fly-in communities with limited road use except for the two to three months that a winter road may be available with weather dictating road conditions, and length of availability. I found the winter road to be unlike any road that I have travelled on in Ontario. Depending on the road conditions and weather a 200 km trip can take 10-12 hours. Air travel can also be limiting as flights cost between CAD\$300 to CAD\$1000 per person for a one way trip to Thunder Bay, Ontario (Wasaya Airways, 2011).

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1.4 Overview of the study

The purpose of this study is to present information that can help non-Native teachers to learn from experienced educators and to become successful educators in remote First Nations communities. This study reviews the teaching practices of educators who have successfully created lessons and programs that have developed First Nations students' academic skills while remaining culturally relevant – and to discover how they learned to do this. In this study, I had conversations with First Nations and allied² educators who are experienced in their field, who have worked in remote First Nations communities in northern Ontario (including northern Manitoba) and have mentored (formally or informally) non-Native educators. I have given the participants the title of 'expert' in this topic to emphasize the knowledge and expertise that exists in First Nations communities in northern Ontario; it is important that I make it clear that the participants did not make this assertion themselves. I spoke with participants in person or by telephone, using open-ended questions in order to allow participants to respond in the form that was most comfortable to them. By using a semi-structured method (i.e. having a conversation with the interviewees) I attempted to provide “space, time, and an environment for participants to share their story in a manner that they can direct” (Kovach, 2009, p. 124).

This thesis is separated into 5 chapters as follows: Chapter 1: Introduction and Background: Here I introduce myself and how I came to this topic. I briefly discuss the current state of Aboriginal education and the role of non-Native educators within First Nations education today. Chapter 2: Literature Review: Here I examine the history of

² Allies are people who recognize the unearned privilege they receive from society's patterns of injustice and take responsibility for changing these patterns (retrieved from www.becominganally.ca).

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Aboriginal education and its relevance to current practices. I review the current trends in research as well as highlight the successful practices already in place in many schools across Canada. I conclude this chapter with a focus on non-Native educators' experience in Aboriginal education to argue for the need for the current research. Chapter 3: Methodology: Here I describe my research approach and how Indigenous Methodologies influenced my research. Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion: Here I present the narratives from conversations within the semi-structured interviews and discuss emerging themes as I present them. Chapter 5: Conclusion: I conclude with a summary of my findings and discuss further recommendations related to the issues within this study.

1.5 Terminology

Aboriginal peoples in Canada are specifically referred to as First Nations, Inuit, and Métis - these are the “three main groups recognized by the Constitution Act of 1982” (Kanu, 2011, p. 28). In this thesis, the words Indigenous, Native, Aboriginal, Anishnawbe and First Nations are all used by various scholars in the materials cited and where appropriate will be used interchangeably. The use of such words is not done without the awareness that these words are the colonial creation that “collectivizes distinct groups of peoples” (Iseke-Barnes, 2008, p. 124). I will identify a distinct culture and/or community when possible in order to be respectful and eliminate generalizations of cultural groups across Canada. Hampton (1995) says that:

No name encompasses a people, and none is truly accurate. Correctness is not nearly so important to me as accuracy in feeling as well as in fact. But many of my words and thoughts were first spoken by my many teachers, and I cannot disentangle those words that I now hear in my own voice. (p. 6)

I began this research using the word Aboriginal to describe all First Nations people but have come to realize the importance of being specific and referring to

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individuals as First Nation or Anishnawbe when discussing communities or individuals in northern Ontario.

1.6 Research Statement

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the teaching practices of educators who have been successful in creating programs, resources and lessons that encourage success amongst First Nations students in northern remote communities with the intent of communicating this knowledge. The main research question is: What do experienced educators (First Nations and allies) believe that non-Native teachers should know about planning and teaching First Nations students in remote communities in northern Ontario? It is in part a response to previous research that identified some of the challenges of teaching addressed by non-Native teachers in remote Aboriginal communities (Agbo, 2006, 2007; Berger & Epp, 2007; Harper, 2000). I interviewed First Nations educators, non-Native educators identified as allies, and First Nations community members who have provided mentorship to new teachers. Hampton (1995) describes the connection between memory and learning; he encourages researchers to recognize that “memory comes before knowledge” (p. 50) and that “research is about learning” (p. 48) and a way of finding things out. My memory of those who were influential in my teaching experience is connected to my desire to pursue this topic.

1.7 Expected positive outcomes from this study

I believe that several positive outcomes will derive from this research. Participants’ reflection on this topic may help enhance their future mentorship of non-Native teachers working in an Anishnawbe context (though I believe they are already excellent). The findings may help to guide non-Native teachers to learn from experienced

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educators in this specific context, and perhaps in other cross-cultural contexts. This work demonstrates the value of First Nations educators' experience in education, and highlights how listening to the experiences of successful educators helps other educators to learn about culturally responsive education (Goulet, 2001).

1.8 Limitations

My beliefs, opinions, prejudices, biases, background knowledge and comfort level may have influenced the questions and answers during conversations and in the narratives. Given the time and resource constraints inherent in this master's research, it was not possible to build an ideally open and trusting relationship, especially in a cross-cultural context, with each of the research participants.

1.9 How can the limitations be addressed?

I began by interviewing participants who I have known personally and where an established relationship and trust had already been developed. Participants that I recently met I attempted to establish trust with by conducting semi-structured interviews – allowing room for conversation and for participants to influence the direction of the interview. I provided the background information about my research along with the research questions to participants prior to the conversations to provide time to reflect on what they would like to share. I also sent a copy of the transcript by email back to participants to review and to make changes and/or additions to their responses. I then made the necessary changes from their feedback. These steps are important as it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that accurate voice and representation is presented (Castellano, 2004; Kovach, 2009; Sefa Dei, 2005).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Research within Aboriginal education is often focused on the decade long gap in graduation rates for Aboriginal learners in Canada. According to Statistics Canada (2006), 33 percent of Aboriginal people between the ages of 25 - 54 do not have a high school education. This is significant more than the 13 percent of non-Aboriginal people within the same age range who do not have a high school education. Many researchers have undertaken the task of uncovering credible reasons for the lack of advancement in the graduation rate for Aboriginal learners (e.g., Friderez & Gadacz, 2008; Kirkness, 1998; Mendelson, 2008; Throner & Frohn-Nielsen, 2010). Within this task there are also a growing number of scholars who argue that statistics do not provide an accurate depiction of Aboriginal education and instead focus on Aboriginal communities, schools, and resources that have demonstrated success in academic achievement and cultural preservation (e.g., Anuik, Battiste & George, 2010; Bell, 2004; Fulford, 2007; Tompkins, 1998). I add to this discussion by focusing on the needs of non-Native educators who teach in isolated communities in northern Ontario and thus have a role to play in the advancement of First Nations education. Non-Native teachers need guidance, role models, and resources to help guide them into providing culturally responsive programs (Gay, 2002; Tompkins, 1998). This literature review examines the history of Aboriginal education and its connection to current Aboriginal education practices. It explores the initiatives of scholars and educators in Aboriginal education highlighting the progress achieved in some of the Aboriginal communities and schools across Canada. It concludes with a look at the existing research about non-Native educators in these settings, along with a discussion of how my research will extend the knowledge in this area.

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2.1 History

In this section I briefly review the history of Aboriginal education in Canada, making connections to the current state of Aboriginal education. I explore two key points:

1) that despite the policy changes that have occurred in Aboriginal education there has been, and remains a continual prevention of Aboriginal control of education (White & Peters, 2009); and 2) That the re-examination of the history of Aboriginal education is a key part of non-Native teachers' much needed re-education and personal decolonization (Strong-Wilson, 2007). Non-Aboriginal teachers are responsible for their own contributions to the advancement of Aboriginal education and must work in partnership with Aboriginal communities to stop education from being "an instrument of oppression" or a weapon against "First Nations' culture and language" (Mendelson, 2008, p. 3).

Non-Aboriginal teachers are advised to go through their own personal decolonization process (Costello, 2011; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Strong-Wilson, 2007). A re-examination of Aboriginal education can aid non-Aboriginal teachers in reducing their own personal biases, can improve Euro-Canadians' views of Aboriginal culture and communities, and can help provide an understanding of the changes in Aboriginal education. Smith (1999) also advocates for the process of re-visiting history. She explains that examining history is important for understanding the present and colonization. Smith (1999) argues that Indigenous people need to know that:

The past has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization. To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges. The pedagogical implication of this access to alternative knowledges is that they can form the basis of alternative ways of doing things. Transforming our colonized views of our own history...requires us to revisit, site by site, our history under Western eyes. (p. 34)

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Non-Native teachers can benefit from this process of recognizing alternative histories as a means of understanding alternative ways of learning and teaching. For these reasons it is important to present here a version of this history that I believe is truthful.

2.11 The beginnings. The Euro-inspired education system forced upon Aboriginal peoples in what is now Canada was intertwined with the colonization process by British and French settlers, with some scholars pointing to first contact as its beginning. Frideres & Gadacz (2008) state that Aboriginal people became victims of colonization from the very first contact; they break historical relations into seven sections with the first contact beginning the colonization process. They view both the English and French fur traders and subsequently all settlers who followed as groups who forced themselves into North America taking land and resources from the Aboriginal people with the sole intent of keeping it for their own uses. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996, Vol. 1) agrees with this interpretation, stating that both British and French explorers made contact with Aboriginal peoples living in North America in the 16th century with the primary purpose of finding viable resources and claiming new land as their own. The report describes the initial interactions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples as a mixture of apprehension and curiosity on both sides. The struggle to understand one another's behaviours, motives, and cultural traditions was the root of misunderstandings that eventually became worse as Europeans increased their numbers.

Another perspective of initial contact and historical relations is brought by Miller (2010) who breaks Aboriginal history into a process of four phases of treaty making. He

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describes the initial interactions as an informal treaty called “commercial compacts” (p. 3) that were solely based on British and French fur traders utilizing the knowledge of Aboriginal people in order to be successful in their venture in lucrative resources. White and Peters (2009) agree with this view, stating that “prior to the war of 1812, the British were not concerned with assimilating Indigenous peoples, as their knowledge and skills were useful to the British in their roles as military allies and as essential partners in the fur trade” (p. 15). They state that it was not until after 1830 that civilian authority began to take an interest in “civilizing” the Indigenous peoples through the medium of “education” (p. 15).

Despite the varying views of initial contact, there remains a consensus that events swiftly worsened for Aboriginal people as new settlers continued to advance bringing new diseases such as “smallpox, yellow fever, measles, cholera, influenza, [and] tuberculosis” (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008, p. 2) causing a severe decline in Aboriginal populations. Dickason (2002) says that “what was clear to Europeans from the start was that Amerindians did not have the cohesion to prevent the invasion and takeover of their lands” (p. 64). As Europeans manoeuvred themselves to dominate North America there began a paternalistic tone towards Aboriginal people that remained throughout all negotiations (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008; McKnight, 2010; Thorner & Frohn-Nielsen, 2010).

2.12 Residential schools. According to Thorner and Frohn-Nielsen (2010) the root of Residential Schools began in 1842-44 with the Bagot Commission Report. The report advised Upper Canada that the method to “assimilate Native children into mainstream culture [was] by removing them from their homes and placing them into

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Eurocentric environments where they would learn to become white” (cited in Thorner & Frohn-Nielsen, pp. 378-379). The Bagot Commission also advised the government to use boarding schools as a means of teaching Christian values and practical skills that were to help them live in the “White man’s world” (White & Peter, 2009, p. 16). A partnership between the Church and government arose forming schools for Aboriginal children funded by the government but run by Christian missionaries.

Residential schools became mandatory in 1920 with the Church and missionaries in charge of educational practices up until the 1970s (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008, p. 112). Sadly, those groups focused on training Aboriginal children to be “civilized” did not recognize the established education system already in place within Aboriginal communities. Kirkness (1998) explains that Aboriginal education prior to Euro-interference was “an informal process that provided the young people with specific skills, attitudes, and knowledge they needed to function in everyday life in the context of a spiritual world view” (p. 10). She continues to explain that the community and land was used as their classroom and adults from the community were their teachers. Community members believed in raising children to be moral and to live a good life. It can easily be argued that the main goal of the Euro-education system was not centered on academic training but was instead focused on eliminating “habits and feelings of [Aboriginal] ancestors” in order to replace them with “the acquirements of the language, arts and customs of a civilized life” (Thorner & Frohn-Nielsen, 2010, p. 379).

Even before Residential schools became mandatory there were clear signs of problems with student health and safety (White & Peter, 2009; Thorner & Frohn-Nielsen, 2010). In 1907, the Canadian Press (Thorner & Frohn-Nielson, 2010) and a report from

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the Department's Chief Medical Officer (White & Peter, 2009) reported a high death rate within the Residential Schools. White & Peter (2009) revealed that Duncan Campbell Scott, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs admitted that almost half of the children who attended the schools did not live to gain any "benefit" from the educational institutes. The devastation of Residential Schools has been compared to death camps and referred to as a Canadian Holocaust since "one-half of all aboriginal children sent there by law died, or disappeared, according to the government's own statistics" (Thorner & Frohn-Nielson, 2010, p. 381). The 50,000 children who died at Residential Schools were not the only ones to suffer. The children who survived suffered as well: their current social condition "has been described by United Nations human rights groups as that of a colonized people barely on the edge of survival, with all the trappings of a third-world society" (Thorner & Frohn-Nielson, 2010, p. 382).

Non-Aboriginal teachers need to recognize that Aboriginal education has had a long and painful history with education being the main method of oppression, assimilation and even genocide. It was not until the early 1970's that Residential Schools began to close and the idea of Aboriginal people having control of their education came into prominence. The National Indian Brotherhood's 1972 paper titled *Indian control of Indian education* spearheaded the movement for change (Mendelson, 2008; White & Peter, 2009). Responding to the Liberal Government's "White paper"³, Aboriginal people across Canada began banding together to respond and education was one of the key points that needed changing. Residential schools diminished and Aboriginal 'controlled' schools began forming across Canada. The RCAP (1996, Vol. 3) acknowledges that there

³ The White paper was a proposal by the government that "did not recognize Aboriginal rights and, in effect, treaties would be cancelled. When the government announced the new policy, it hit a solid wall of opposition" (Dickason, 2006, p. 232).

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has been an increase in Aboriginal teachers, Native classes and cultural representation within schools in Aboriginal communities; however, the report also recognizes that there remains a variety of restrictions including the pressure to conform to provincial curriculum and to follow the provincial school year calendar. Mendelson (2008) explains that these restrictions limit culturally based activities, creativity and hinder the development of school calendars that are in unison with a community's seasonal flow.

2.13 Connecting history with the non-Native teachers' decolonization process. When non-Native teachers re-examine the history of Aboriginal education it can begin a personal process of decolonization in which they seek to re-evaluate their own cultural values and worldviews in order to connect their beliefs with their teaching (Dion, 2009). Strong-Wilson (2007) explains that the decolonization process for "white teachers involves 'bringing forward' the storied history presently subsumed within their teaching but in relation to post-colonial or counter-stories for the purpose of provoking a different story that can open and shift their horizon" (p. 119). The internal shift allows non-Native teachers to recognize how colonization has affected their worldview, beliefs, and cultural norms. From this point non-Native teachers will recognize how their previous beliefs can create barriers and prevent the shift towards respecting other worldviews, beliefs and cultural norms in their personal life and in the classroom (Tompkins, 1998).

In the previous sections I have shown how Aboriginal education in Canada has been used as a weapon against First Nations and how Aboriginal education continues to transform itself from colonial oppression.

Indigenous peoples have also mounted a critique of the way history is told from the perspective of the colonizers. At the same time, Indigenous groups have argued that history is important for understanding the present and that

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reclaiming history is a critical and essential aspect of decolonization. (Smith, 1999, p. 30)

I have begun the discussion on the role non-Native teachers have within First Nations education, beginning with the process of decolonization as a means of working against oppressing Indigenous knowledge and worldview.

2.2 Progress and change

In this section I review some of the recommendations provided by scholars who are advocates for change in Aboriginal education and provide examples from scholars who have highlighted successful practices in Aboriginal schools across Canada. The recommendations and practices of success centre on three main areas:

- a) The need to provide a respectful place for Aboriginal culture and language that values Indigenous knowledge within the school (Anuik, 2008; Bell, 2004; Fulford, 2007; Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007; Neganegijig & Breunig, 2000; Watt-Coultier, 2000);
- b) The integration of a holistic teaching approach (Corbiere, 2000; Gay, 2002; Swanson, 2003) with measurements that are inclusive to holistic teaching (Canadian Council on Learning [CCL], 2010); and
- c) The advancement of Aboriginal identity (Battiste, 2000; Curwen Doige, 2003) through the use of appropriate resources, literature and images within the school (Gay, 2002; McKeough, Bird, Tourigny, Romaine, Graham, Ottmann, & Jeary, 2008; Wolfe & DePasquale, 2008).

Gay (2002) challenges educators to go “beyond mere awareness of, respect for, and general recognition” (Gay, 2002, p. 107) of ethnic groups (in this case First Nations culture), but to develop a knowledge base that allows the development of culturally

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responsive programming (Gay, 2002; Goddard, 2003; Tompkins, 1998). Mendelson (2008) points out that over a decade ago the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples asked “Why, with so many sincere efforts to change the quality of Aboriginal education, have the overall results been so disappointing” (cited in Mendelson, p. 3)? Kirkness (1998) believes that Aboriginal education has not seen different results because schools are “band-aiding”, “adapting”, and “supplementing” (p. 11) culture into the provincial curriculum and until Aboriginal education develops a curriculum that places Indigenous knowledge, values and everyday living at the centre of its program the results will remain the same.

2.21 The importance of language and culture. There is a consensus amongst researchers that Aboriginal language and cultural instruction are under-resourced, under-valued, and given short time frames within the school day (Goddard, 2002; Kirkness, 1998; Neganegijig & Breunig, 2007). Neganegijig and Breunig (2007) encourage First Nations schools to take Native Language classes outside of the classrooms and onto the land that surrounds them, and to do so in partnership with Elders. They explain that the land has multiple resources because it is the classroom, the teacher, and a source for valuable lessons. Greenwood and de Leeuw (2007) agree with this idea, adding that the connection to the land will do more than teach students, it will promote health and well being for the students as well.

Taking students outside of the classroom is not enough, students need to be challenged and respected for their capabilities and educators must be willing to make a pedagogical and epistemological shift in order to genuinely demonstrate that a student’s culture and language has value in school and society (Corbiere, 2000; Kirkness, 1998).

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Watt-Cloutier (2000) warns educators that “no matter the intent or culture slant, if programs are designed and delivered without respecting and challenging the full creative potential and intelligence of children, then they will crush rather than liberate” (p. 118).

Goddard (2002) discovered a division in northern schools between Indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge. The division placed the Indigenous knowledge into short periods taught by unqualified teacher aides while Western knowledge was taught by the certified teachers; this divide sends the message that Indigenous knowledge does not have the same value within the schools as Western knowledge. Researchers have observed the integration of culture into the schools in various ways, from naming classrooms after the clan system, to projects that connect with community activities such as the project of making “snow goose decoys for the upcoming fall hunt” (Fulford, 2007, p. 115). Both Anuik (2008) and Bell (2004) perceived that the development and implementation of cultural camps taught students practical skills and traditional teachings and brought success to students in the form of nurturing healthier life choices, a change in attitude and respect for oneself and one’s relationships.

Non-Native educators are encouraged to recognize that Indigenous knowledge is part of the whole student, their relationship to themselves and their communities. Antone (2003) explains that Aboriginal literacy and cultural identity are connected to a student’s “healing; self-determination; and reclamation of identity” (p. 10). They are also identified as key to a student’s well-being, sense of pride, and motivation to learn (CCL, 2009; Corbiere, 2000; Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007; Neganegijig & Breunig, 2007; Swanson, 2003). Bell (2004) noted that within successful schools the local language was heard throughout the school, from the “teacher assistants, counsellors, the school secretary and

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other support staff members” (p. 87), thus modelling language on an everyday basis and ensuring a welcoming environment for all family members within the community.

Aboriginal immersion programs continue to be scrutinized for their possible benefits.

Researchers point to a need for more research on immersion programs for Aboriginal learners and their long term effect for achieving student success (Bell, 2004).

Bell (2004) argues that language is not the source of school difficulties. Tompkins (1998), a principal in an Inuit community, observed that increasing Inuit educators in the classrooms increased instruction in Inuktitut and also led to “improved competence and confidence in English” (p. 39) while other noteworthy changes included increased attendance and a strong “cultural and linguistic presence in the school, [which] had great impact on the program and the morale in the school” (Tompkins, 1998, p. 43). The absence of students’ home culture and language sends a harmful message that Indigenous knowledge is not as important as, or is inferior to, Western knowledge (Corbiere, 2000). Curwen Doige (2003) states that non-Aboriginal educators are obligated to provide a learning environment that “promotes and celebrates how students come to understand information as basic to their learning” (p. 149). She identifies the difference between the Western approach to learning and the Aboriginal approach to learning: “The Aboriginal approaches to learning are spiritual, holistic, experiential/subjective, and transformative. In contrast, mainstream approaches to learning are secular, fragmented, neutral/objective, and seek to discover definitive truth” (Curwen Doige, 2003, p. 147). Once non-Native educators have recognized and respected the differences they can begin to adjust their strategies for developing a successful culturally responsive learning program.

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2.22 Holistic education. Holistic education has been described as an ideal method for teaching Aboriginal students (CCL, 2009; Corbiere, 2000; Gay, 2002; Swanson, 2003; Watt-Cloutier, 2000). Holistic education, simply put, promotes the development of a student “intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically” (Corbiere, 2000, p. 114). Bell (2004) and Fulford (2007) highly recommended holistic teaching as a means of developing success in Aboriginal education. They reported some examples of holistic education, though it is evident that the move towards holistic education faces many obstacles due to the prevalent Western knowledge and pedagogy within schools in Aboriginal communities across Canada. As steps toward holistic education, Bell (2004) highlighted extra-curricular activities run by the school and community to provide more balanced programming and Fulford (2007) described a crime preventive elementary program called EMPATHIC (Emotional Maturity Problem-solving & Awareness Targeting Higher Impulse Control) which helps children ages 5 to 11 years “to develop emotional awareness, self-control, and interpersonal problem solving” (p. 136).

One of the obstacles preventing the inclusion of holistic teaching is the lack of holistic measurements. The Canadian Council on Learning (2009) have developed a ‘Holistic Lifelong Learning Measurement Framework’ as a means of assessing Aboriginal success from a holistic perspective. The measurement framework recognizes that Aboriginal learners gain knowledge from “people (family, Elders, community), languages, traditions and ceremonies, spirituality, and the natural world” (p. 14) and that learning opportunities include both formal and informal settings that are directly

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connected to the community's well-being. They developed a model of holistic learning to guide educators in incorporating all aspects of a student's development (see figure 1).

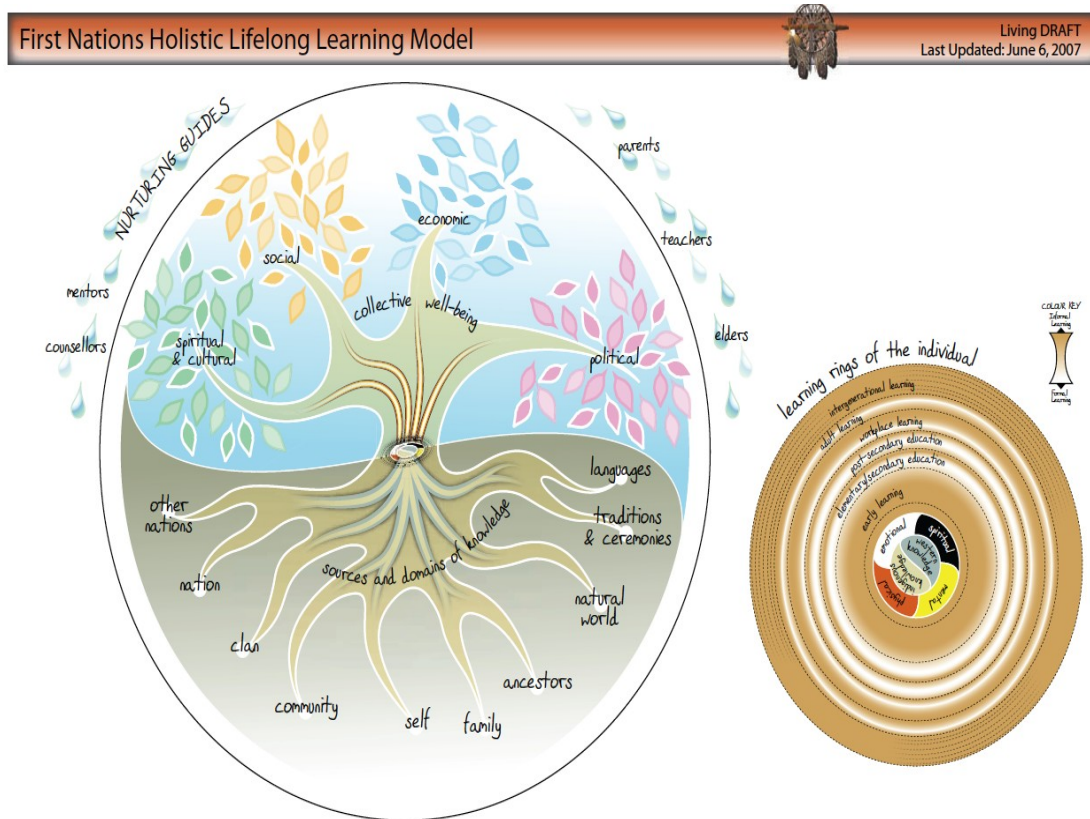


Figure 1. First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009, p. 12)

The challenge to integrate all aspects of a student's development has begun to be met by some teachers through the invitation of families and community members to be part of the school (Bell, 2004; Fulford, 2007; Tompkins 1998). Often schools make efforts to improve parental relations through parents' committees, newsletters in home languages, breakfast programs and regular communication throughout the school year (Agbo, 2006; Bell, 2004; Fulford, 2007). However, Tompkins (1998) makes two important points on this topic. First, increasing parental and community involvement "is a two-way street-getting the community more into the school and getting the school and

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teachers more out into the community” (p. 74). Second, the most important way to increase parental and community involvement is the sincere demonstration of care for students and their families. The different activities become “manifestations of the caring” (p. 76); therefore, it is necessary to understand that it is not the activity alone that is the catalyst for parental involvement; rather, the intentions and motive behind the activities.

2.23 Aboriginal identity in education. Aboriginal identity is a key component of creating an appropriate learning environment (Battiste, 2000; Curwen Doige, 2003) and is essential to students’ pride in self, culture and community (Gay, 2002; Swanson, 2003). Non-Native educators need to be aware of the school materials (books, textbooks, classroom decorations) used in their classroom (Gay, 2002). They must take a critical look at these resources and make sure that they convey an accurate and positive view of Aboriginal culture, family and community (McKeough *et al.*, 2008; Wolfe & DePasquale, 2008).

Literature used with the class needs to provide an accurate representation of everyday life in the culture depicted, “it must not distort or misrepresent the culture it reflects” (Cullinan & Galda, 1994, p. 344). Previous images of Aboriginal people have often been negative or inaccurate, often both. Consider what Corbiere (2000) points to as a misrepresentation of Aboriginal people: “Even when the image is a positive stereotype, it is usually positive in relation to the purposes of the dominant society, that is, good Indians help white people, such as Pocahontas and Squanto” (p. 114). There are a growing number of books (picture books, novels and texts) written by Aboriginal authors that fit into the model of positive representation. These books do two things; first, they are a part of the Indigenous reclamation of Indigenous histories and realities (Wolfe &

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DePasquale, 2008), and second they are part of the process of young readers shaping their worldview and how they fit into that world (Cullinan & Galda, 1994). Lysaker (2006) explains that when children never see themselves in books or only see an incorrect representation it affects their sense of self and importance. Regardless if stories come in the form of books or are told orally, they are key components in education and in Indigenous identity. As Greenwood and de Leeuw (2007) state, “stories are educational, and in education exists the possibility of building healthy Indigenous children and (associatively) healthier Indigenous communities” (p. 53). Non-Native teachers must remember that the content of school resources is just as important as what is absent from the resources and images within the school (Gay, 2002): for example, “if children never see themselves in books, then their absence subtly tells them: ‘You are not important enough to appear in books’” (Cullinan & Galda, 1994, p. 345). Finding resources that depict Aboriginal people and culture accurately does not come without its challenges. Strong-Wilson (2007) noted that “despite the ostensible wealth of stories, much of the stories that have been, and are still being made, available to children are the same; the same in reproducing whiteness” (p. 121). Even though educators face a challenge in finding appropriate material and images to use in their classrooms, it is essential to building a culturally responsive learning environment.

Gay (2002) refers to images in the classroom as “symbolic curriculum” (p. 108), and she makes it clear that culturally responsive educators are “critically conscious of the power of the symbolic curriculum as an instrument of teaching and use it to help convey important information, values, and actions” (p. 108). Bell (2004) and Fulford (2007) both observed the use of cultural and pedagogical supervisors to help aid and mentor new staff

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in order to ensure the quality of education in each classroom. These supervisors “assist, support and give guidance” to their co-workers but are not placed in a position of evaluating performances. It is important to note that not all schools will have these distinct positions and it cannot be assumed that formal assistance will be in place.

In this section, I have reviewed the recommendations advocated by scholars and educators who argue that the advancement of Aboriginal education must be rooted in culture, language, land use and inclusion of Elders (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007; Kirkness, 1998; Neganegig & Breunig, 2007; Tompkins, 1998). Also encouraged is the improvement of literacy resources in Native languages and English that portray an accurate view of Aboriginal language, culture and community (Battiste 2000; Curwen-Doige 2003; Wolfe & DePasquale, 2008). These improvements are argued to improve Aboriginal identity, community health and personal well-being (Corbiere, 2000; Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007). I have also compared these recommendations with some of the progress achieved within Aboriginal schools and communities.

2.3 Non-Native teachers in northern remote communities

In this section I review research that has centred on the experiences of non-Native educators in isolated northern First Nation and Inuit communities (e.g., Agbo, 2006; Berger & Epp, 2007; Harper, 2000). The challenges addressed in these articles included lack of training, lack of appropriate resources and isolation that occurs within the community. I will juxtapose the challenges addressed with examples of success in Goulet’s (2001) article which provides insight into the practice of teaching First Nations learners academic skills through the use of culturally appropriate content from two experienced educators (one First Nations and one non-Native) who also work in an

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isolated northern First Nation community. Within this discussion I connect the experiences of the non-Native educators with the process of acknowledging oppression, or in other words the process of decolonization (Bishop, 2002; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Root, 2009). I conclude this section with an explanation of how my research will add to the literature on this topic.

Harper (2000) interviewed 10 teachers (9 non-Native and one First Nations) who were teaching in remote First Nations communities in northern Ontario. She noted that the teachers expressed the need for more training in Aboriginal culture, English as a Second Language and special education before they had arrived in the community. Agbo (2006) conducted a year long participatory research project in a remote First Nation community in northern Ontario which explored the ongoing relationship between community and school. In his research he too found educators stating their need for more training prior to as well as after their arrival. Within the study a non-Native teacher expressed her desire for direct training from local community members in order to learn more about the local culture and lifestyle. Berger & Epp (2007) also discovered the same call for help during interviews with 20 educators in five communities across Nunavut, in which numerous non-Inuit teachers expressed their wish for support and aid in learning how to teach Inuit students. In Bell's (2004) study of 10 examples of successful Aboriginal schools across the western part of Canada, he points to teacher training as a critical aspect of non-Aboriginal preparedness. Despite the improvement to teacher education programs that "provide increased recognition of Aboriginal languages...and student teacher placements in Aboriginal communities" (Bell, 2004, p. 318), there remains a feeling that the teacher education program left teachers unprepared for teaching

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in the north or did not provide enough knowledge to understand the “cultural aspects of teaching Aboriginal children” (Bell, 2004, p. 318).

In addition to expressing the need for more training, educators expressed their frustration at the lack of culturally relevant curriculum and resources (Berger & Epp, 2007; Harper, 2000). Their expressed frustration is evidence that many of the non-Native educators wanted to see their students succeed academically and by identifying their lack of training and the culturally irrelevant materials they began the process of recognizing Eurocentrism in Aboriginal education and its connection to oppression.

Strong-Wilson (2007) explains that it is a teacher’s duty to “transmit, critique and interpret” society’s important knowledge (p. 115). However, when educators do not feel confident in their understanding of Indigenous knowledge it creates obstacles for transmitting accurate knowledge, values and norms. Harper (2000) found that non-Native educators expressed confusion in regards to teaching literacy skills. Teachers were unsure as to what they were preparing their students for: “was it to prepare students for life on the reserve or off the reserve” (p. 146)? She explains that the confusion often stems from a lack of understanding of the political and historical knowledge of the community they teach in. In comparison, the experienced teachers interviewed by Goulet (2001) were able to incorporate the culture and language of the community while teaching ‘academic’ skills. The teachers used content that was appropriate and familiar, for example, “integrating community activities like berry picking in the fall, preparation for trapping during freeze-up, and trapping and fishing in the winter” (p. 71). These examples demonstrated that valuing First Nation culture and knowledge is not a separate process to providing quality education. By honouring Indigenous knowledge within schools,

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teachers are then able to provide quality instruction that promotes success. First Nation language and culture became the centre of education in which students were given the opportunity to engage in cultural activities that served a purpose culturally and academically.

In Anne Bishop's (2002) book *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the cycle of oppression in people*, she makes it clear that "ignorance is part of the oppression" (p. 117) and it is not uncommon for educators to struggle with personal challenges and painful feelings in their process of becoming an ally. Root (2009) describes the challenges that "white educators feel" as "part of the decolonizing process" (p. 81). Listening and learning are seen to be key factors in the process of decolonization and becoming an ally (Bishop, 2002; Root, 2009); by taking the time to learn about the community's culture a teacher can incorporate appropriate literature, resources, and demonstrate respect for the community's ways of being.

In Harper's (2000) article, teachers revealed the discomfort of being an outsider. The status of an outsider created feelings of isolation (Harper, 2000; Tompkins, 1998) and a disinterest in engaging in meaningful discussions for change. Tompkins (1998) noted that when White teachers felt there was no place for their ideas or opinions they isolated themselves and closed the door on team building: "people react differently when they are working in a cross-cultural situation where they were the minority" (Tompkins, 1998, p. 103). They may also have difficulties understanding life in the north when they come from "middle-class, white, southern urban" homes (Tompkins, 2000, p. 102). Root (2009) explains that learning to recognize one's own privilege is part of the process of decolonization. She provides an example of this, as she recounts a non-Native person

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recognizing her ability to speak up against injustice because of her lack of fear of repercussions due to her privilege of being a White Euro-Canadian (p. 79).

Non-Native educators undergo a heightened awareness of being White and “what that has meant historically in these communities” (Harper, 2000, p.150). Their awareness of their skin colour can bring difficult feelings of: “shame, guilt, anger or paralysis” (Strong-Wilson, 2007, p. 118) which has the potential of interfering with their teaching practice. Both Bishop (2002) and Iseke-Barnes (2008) agree that guilt can arise from recognizing oppression; however, it is important to not let these difficult feelings paralyze their growth, but rather for non-Native teachers to use their new knowledge and become ‘learners’ or ‘allies’. Bishop (2002) explains that an ally uses “any opportunity to learn more and then act on what they learn” (p. 109). Though the process of decolonization can bring about painful feelings and personal challenges, Iseke-Barnes (2008) assures that once “they recognize that decolonizing can be a strategy of disrupting oppressive ideologies” they can also begin to see how “local acts and small gestures” (Iseke-Barnes, 2008, p. 137) are important in ensuring change occurs. Goulet (2001) noted that when teaching activities recognize how colonization has affected and continues to affect First Nations communities, students are able to “develop confidence, and engender pride that builds positive self-esteem” (p. 76).

The new awareness of skin colour can lead non-Native teachers to withdraw from community involvement (Bishop, 2002; Harper, 2000; Tompkins, 1998), whereas in the examples provided by Goulet (2001) the experienced teachers were able to develop equitable relationships with their students by eliminating the hierarchy of teacher and student or teacher and community member. When working with students they used a

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“nonconfrontational approach to classroom management” and humour to laugh at themselves and to laugh with the students (Goulet, 2001, p. 74). A challenge to non-Native educators, she wrote, is to “initiate relationships with students, parents and grandparents that develop relationships outside the formal relationships of teaching with its inherent or assumed hierarchical structure” (p. 75).

Harper (2000) concludes her thesis with two important questions pertinent to my own research; first, “Is it really possible to prepare teachers from elsewhere for work and life in the North?” and second, “If it is possible, how do we best prepare teachers for careers in remote, northern, band-controlled schools” (p. 154)? In my research, I will challenge the idea that only preparation from outside of the community will lead to the development of culturally relevant programming’s, and I will direct the attention of non-Native educators to look to the educators, Elders and community members within the communities they work in as valuable resources for developing culturally relevant programs in their process of becoming an ally. It is impossible for an educational institute to adequately prepare educators for every possible situation and experience that could occur in Aboriginal education (Goulet, 2001; Harper, 2000); therefore, my research will look at the importance of teachers finding “mentors” or “experts”, formally or informally, who can assist their development of culturally responsive programming in order to ensure quality education for their students.

Most current research which focuses on the statistics of low graduation rates is based on a deficit theory⁴ and does “not truly tell Canadian educators and their supporters what the state of learning for Aboriginal communities is” (Anuik, 2008, p. 167).

⁴ “Most research on Aboriginal learning is oriented toward the educational deficits of Aboriginal people, overlooks positive learning outcomes and does not account for the unique political, social and economic realities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis” (CCL, 2007, p. 2).

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Research that highlights the successes within Aboriginal education has the benefit of demonstrating success for others to emulate (Mendelson, 2008), as well as identifying “effective strategies to reverse” the low graduation trend (Fulford, 2007, p. 14). Anuik (2008) states that there is a great need for more research that empowers First Nations education and more research is needed on Aboriginal learning and the kind of “programs, curriculum, pedagogy, environment, policies, and practices that contribute to that learning and to Aboriginal peoples’ progress” (p. 64). My aim is to contribute to this much needed research through this exploration of what non-Native educators can learn about success from experts within First Nations education.

Tompkins (1998), in her role as principal in an Inuit community, created special planning meetings to facilitate sharing and mentorship between Inuit and non-Inuit staff. Finding time for this took great flexibility and commitment. Bell (2004) highlighted the development of *Pedagogical Supervisors* in a specific Aboriginal school that developed this position as a method of ensuring quality instruction despite the high turnover rate of teaching staff. The Pedagogical Supervisors were considered to be experienced, and seen by their colleagues as “master teachers, mentors and guides” (p. 86). These formal positions are not commonly found in Aboriginal schools and communities; therefore, in my research I look specifically at how non-Native educators can learn to develop programs that are resonant with the community they work in by learning informally from master teachers, mentors and guides in the school and in the community. Both Bell (2004) and Tompkins (1998) address the success of mentorship and educators working together: however, there remains a need for more research in this area.

2.4 Conclusion

Non-Native teachers who travel to remote First Nation communities are likely to realize that their training was not enough, nor could it have possibly anticipated every possible scenario in a teacher's career. These teachers are also likely to find themselves in an unexpected struggle to recognize how colonization affects education and the relationship between teacher and student and possibly school and community. Not all teachers will have formal mentors or resources and further professional development readily available. However, teachers can initiate their own training and learning process in the community they work in by recognizing the knowledge and experience of their co-workers and community members who can become their sources of knowledge. My research explores this idea by providing space for the voices of experienced First Nation and non-Native educators at the centre of the knowledge of this research. I provide practical recommendations to non-Native teachers meant to impact student learning and student success.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter I identify the methodological approach that I used in my research, the method that I used to collect narratives and the analysis procedure that I followed. I discuss how knowledge and language are a critical aspect of Indigenous research that was given careful thought and reflection while conducting this study.

3.1 Indigenous research

This research was influenced by an Indigenous Methodology approach which is a “body of indigenous and theoretical approaches and methods, rules and postulates employed by indigenous research in the study of indigenous peoples” (Porsanger, 2004, pp. 107-108). Indigenous Methodology has grown from researchers wanting to transform the current practice in research to include Indigenous knowledge and worldview. My aim in this research was to reflect carefully on the narratives that I did with Indigenous issues and to attempt to minimize the influence of Eurocentric bias on the process and outcomes of the research. Porsanger (2004) explains that Indigenous Methodologies require researchers to situate Indigenous knowledge, interests, and experiences at the centre of the research. It also has a clear agenda, which according to Smith (1999) includes individual and community healing, mobilization, transformation, and decolonization.

Understanding the agenda of Indigenous methodology encourages the researcher to stay on the path of respecting all participants’ experiences, knowledge, and worldview in a manner that does not objectify but rather places them at the centre of the research. Indigenous Methodology seeks to achieve ethical research; ethical research attempts to be anti-racist. Smith (1999) argues that no researcher can escape racism since it is systemic in universities and academic knowledge. Sefa Dei (2005) describes anti-racist research as

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research that renegotiates “discursive power, control, and interpretive authority in research” (p. 3). In this research, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed for partial participant control over the interview. By attempting to eliminate the rigidity of structured interviews I was able to have conversations with participants, renegotiating ‘discursive power’ and ‘control’.

3.2 Research and colonialism

For as long as there has been research on Indigenous people and communities there has been the destructive force of colonialism. Kovach (2009) accurately asks: “Why are Indigenous methodologies missing from the buffet table of qualitative methodologies available to researchers” (p. 25)? Smith (1999) illustrates a view of research held by some Indigenous people by stating that the word ‘research’ is viewed as one of the dirtiest words for Indigenous people, due to damaging Eurocentric research over many years. Porsanger (2004), Smith (1999) and Castellano (2004) want to put an end to research being used as a tool of colonization and a means of controlling the perceptions of Indigenous people and the issues involved. Castellano (2004) states that: “research acquired a bad name among Aboriginal peoples because the purposes and meanings associated with its practice by academics and government agents were usually alien to the people themselves and the outcomes were as often as not, misguided and harmful” (p. 98). The harmful effects are often due to the unequal relationship between the researcher and participant. Traditionally, a researchers’ role is to gather data from participants and take the data to create a story or disclose a new idea or solution to an existing problem. Often the researcher will work on her own or with other like-minded colleagues to interpret the data. This places all of the power and control with the researcher who gets to determine

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the outcome of any research. The participant is left in the dark, unable to ensure that his or her words, actions or experiences are interpreted or represented accurately.

There is no doubt that Western academic research has a history of approaching research on Indigenous issues from a paternalistic view that placed the researcher as the one to solve the ‘Indigenous problem’, implying that Indigenous people were unable to provide solutions for themselves. Kovach (2009) warns researchers that “decolonizing research is not enough to erase the history between western research and Indigenous communities” (p. 24). Focus should be on building a new relationship between researcher and participant that is based on equality, shared power and shared control. In this study I aspired to conduct research that resonated with Indigenous Methodology by working primarily with participants who were my teaching mentors and who confidently directed our conversations within the semi-structured interviews.

3.3 Indigenous knowledge

In the search to understand Indigenous knowledge, researchers are faced with dilemmas outlined by Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008): “Not only must they avoid essentialism and its accompanying romanticization of the indigene, but they must also sidestep the traps that transform their attempts at facilitation into further marginalization” (p. 141). Battiste (2008) asks researchers to avoid disconnecting Indigenous knowledge and its meaning from the “immediate ecology, experiences, perceptions, thoughts and memory” (p. 499). Indigenous knowledge does not separate nature from knowledge or from experiences. I found this especially true in the knowledge shared by the participants in this study as everyone’s responses were inseparable from their experiences, memories, and connection to the land. Wilson (2001) explains that some “western scholars and

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researchers rely on the belief that knowledge is an individual entity that can be gained, and owned by one person” (p. 176), whereas Indigenous views of knowledge do not recognize knowledge as an entity to be owned by only one individual. Wilson (2001) is confident that Indigenous knowledge will no longer be “objectified when researchers fulfill their role in the research relationship through methodology” (p. 177). In my research I strived to fulfill my role in the research relationship by ensuring credit was given to each participant who shared their knowledge and experience. I did this by sharing the identity of those who wanted their names used and always stating when a statement or idea came from a participant.

Battiste (2008) warns of the loss of knowledge that occurs when Indigenous knowledge is written in English. Like any translations, the true meaning can become twisted when translated into another language. Therefore, in this research I asked all participants to review completed transcripts and to make any changes that they felt were as necessary. Four of the seven participants suggested changes and I discussed grammatical changes, translated words, and main ideas in follow up conversations through emails and/or phone calls.

3.4 Indigenous language

Some researchers argue that understanding Indigenous language is crucial to Indigenous research (e.g., Battiste, 2008). Grande (2008) describes Indigenous languages as filled with “metaphors of existence that implicitly convey notions of multiplicity, hybridity, dialectics, contingency, and a sense of the imaginary” (p. 241). Despite the use of both Ojibwa and English used within my home by family members, I recognize that I primarily function in the English and Western form of communication, and that these

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differences can affect my research. Battiste (2008) is a strong defender of research being conducted in the language of the people and community. She states that when researchers rely solely on English or any other colonial language, they will not understand Indigenous reality and worldview. Battiste & Henderson (2000) explain that “language includes ways of knowing, ways of socializing, and non-verbal communication” (p. 133). They describe Indigenous knowledge that is written in a colonial language as an assault on Indigenous people. To mitigate this as much as possible I sought assistance from participants to not misinterpret their words and was mindful of my limitations in this regard due to my lack of fluency in an Indigenous language. Some of the participants in this research speak an Indigenous language as their mother tongue; however, all participants are comfortable speaking English due to their academic and career achievements in education. The conversations were primarily in English, some of the words used were in Ojibwa, Cree, and Oji-Cree to express key concepts or to be specific in teaching examples.

3.5 Methods

The dominant methodologies within Western academia prescribe a certain set of methods; Indigenous Methodologies also refer to a specific set of methods that follow the agenda mentioned previously. Wilson (2001) explains that the research methods chosen allow for the formation of relationships between researcher and the research topic with all participants fully involved. Wilson (2001) refers to the methods of “storytelling and personal narrative” (p. 178) as commonly used methods in Indigenous Methodology, whereas Steinhauer (2002) provides a longer list of methods, such as, “interviews, talking circles, sharing through music, dance, art and drama, dream works, and revelations

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through connections to nature” (pp. 78-79). The method must be relevant to the type of data being collected as well as it needs to be comfortable and respectful for both the researcher and the participants.

In this research I focus on the method of listening to story or personal narrative that arises from the semi-structured interviews (conversations). Though I had pre-set questions (appendix A) given to participants before the conversations, I did not focus on the questions; rather, I used them as prompts to conversation and story. This form of semi-structured interview follows the advice of Kovach (2009) who explains that “this gives research participants an opportunity to share their story on a specific topic without the periodic disruptions involved in adhering to a structured approach” (p. 124). Grande (2008) describes research methods in Indigenous research as tools for researchers to engage with their participants and to build relationships, trust and reciprocity. Stories are referred to as a “holistic quality of Indigenous methodologies” (Kovach, 2009, p. 94), they are grounded within a “relationship-based approach” (Kovach, 2009, p. 98) and are known for sharing teachings, teaching consequences and promoting cohesion.

3.6 Site description

The conversations took place in Thunder Bay, Ontario; however, many participants were primarily located in northern Ontario with two currently working in northern Manitoba. I contacted 5 participants by telephone from Thunder Bay and met 2 participants on site in Thunder Bay.

3.7 Conversations

I spoke with seven participants for approximately one hour in length; the length of time was determined by each participant and when they felt they were finished sharing

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their story. I began by asking those who know me and with whom I have an established relationship. I continued the recruitment of participants by a snowball sampling form; therefore, I asked participants for recommendations of other possible participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Knapik, 2006). I asked participants if I could audio record the conversations. The goal of the conversations was to listen to the personal narratives of the participants involved, to be an active listener, and to learn from the participants about what they value on this topic. I did not conduct formal interviews as the rigidity of following questions would have interfered with the purpose of continual growth and understanding.

3.8 Narrative analysis

In the first phase of the analysis I began by transcribing the audio files from the conversations. The second phase of analysis consisted of a follow up session with participants to confirm that I accurately represented their knowledge and information. Four of the participants responded with additional comments and ideas. The time and space between the conversation and the follow up session allowed the opportunity for each participant to think about their responses, and make any adjustments as they saw fit. In the third phase I entered all of the transcripts and notes into Atlas.-ti, a qualitative coding software. In the last phase of the analysis I reviewed all of the narratives to identify emerging themes. Bogden & Biklen (2006) explain that during the process of reading data “certain words, phrases, patterns of behaviour, subjects’ ways of thinking, and events repeat and stand out” (p. 173). This process guided me into developing a coding system along with coding categories based on words and phrases that I recognized as themes from the literature, or that were new and seemed relevant.

3.9 Participant profiles

I spoke with seven individuals who have worked in northern Ontario or Manitoba in a remote First Nations community. Three educators wanted to remain anonymous and out of respect for their anonymity I share only general background information on their experiences. The first educator that I spoke with was a non-Native teacher who spent within the range of 5 - 10 years teaching in a Cree community. While working in the community he immersed himself in the history and language of the community and quickly became a mentor to other non-Native teachers who came to the community. Though assisting new teachers was not in his job description, he found that non-Native teachers arrived with many questions and in need of more learning.

The second educator I spoke with was a First Nation educator who taught in her own community within the range of 1 - 5 years. I found her knowledge and experience came from her position as both a teacher and a community member. She found that non-Native teachers needed mentoring, no matter their age, with guidance in classroom management and letting go of past pedagogy.

The third educator that I spoke with was Mary Oskineegish, my partner's mother, a First Nation educator who has taught for 25 years in her community in northern Ontario along with teaching 3 years in another community. Her experience in education includes kindergarten teacher, classroom teacher, principal and Native Language teacher. She has also worked as a secretary and school board member in her community. Mary has always made herself available to educators who seek assistance in teaching and living in the community.

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The fourth educator that I spoke with was Brenda Firman, a non-Native educator who has worked in remote First Nations schools for more than 15 years. She has taught as a teacher, special education teacher and a principal. She currently teaches in a teacher education program in northern Manitoba. Brenda has also made herself available to assisting any teachers who have sought help.

The fifth educator that I spoke with was A. Jane Tuesday, a First Nation educator who has worked in Aboriginal education for 35 years. She has taught at the high school level for 20 years and in administration (Principal, School Director) for 15 years. Jane encourages all educators to learn from each other and has experience mentoring educators, both formally and informally.

The sixth educator that I spoke with is a First Nation educator who has worked in her community in the range of 5-10 years in northern Ontario. She began as a teacher's aid and then taught kindergarten and grade 3/4. She shares her knowledge and experience as an educator, community member and parent.

The last educator that I spoke with was Audrey Smith, a non-Native teacher who has 30 years teaching background in Newfoundland, and just over 5 years' experience teaching in First Nations communities in northern Manitoba and northern Ontario. In her teaching experience she remembered being a young teacher and learning from colleagues, and encourages the attitude of reciprocity, learning and sharing.

The ideas shared by the participants in this research are a small representation of the knowledge and resources available in education from First Nations educators and non-Native allies. Though each participant discussed personal narratives and ideas based on their own experience, I am confident that the advice provided in this research is

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relevant to successful teaching practices in First Nations communities beyond the experiences of the seven participants interviewed. I found their contribution and ongoing dedication to improve education for First Nation students invaluable; I am confident that the advice to listen and learn from educators, parents, and students within each community is beneficial to educators in variety of educational contexts.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

In this chapter I highlight the themes that emerged from the interviews and conversations with experienced educators. The knowledge shared regarding successful education in remote First Nations communities comes from First Nations educators from a variety of positions, such as community members, parents, teachers, and principals, and from non-Native educators whose knowledge and experiences place them in the position of ally. I have placed the information gathered into 4 sections: the first section explores who the teacher is, the importance of building reciprocal relationships, the role of the visitor, and how all three are connected to successful teaching. The second section discusses the importance of cultural integration in education and its effects on motivation, identity and overall well-being: specific discussions of language and land are explored in connection to student success. The third section looks at non-Native teachers willingness to learn and professional characteristics needed to be a successful teacher. The fourth section focuses on developing culturally responsive lessons, evaluation practices, and working with the curriculum expectations. Throughout these sections, the ‘definition of student success’ refers to holistic learning and growth which includes the spiritual, mental, intellectual, and physical development of the child. The discussion of ‘successful teaching practices’ refers to the promotion of culturally inclusive learning environments for First Nations students and does not include practices that contribute to assimilation into the Western education system.

4.1 The non-Native teacher

In this section I discuss how the foundation for creating a successful learning environment is connected to who a teacher is – her or his teaching practices, willingness

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to build reciprocal relationships, and role as a visitor. Successful education cannot arise solely from changes in policies or curriculum expectations. These elements need responsive educators willing to enact change. Stairs (1995) says that “it has been curriculum more often than teachers themselves that has changed” (p. 146) and that is not enough. The following discussion encourages teachers to be at the forefront of change for increased success for First Nations students. I placed the three subsections of who the teacher is, building reciprocal relationships, and the role of the visitor together as all three focus on the non-Native teacher as a person and their effect on a student’s experience in education.

4.11 It is the ‘who you are’ that counts. In the search to find successful teaching practices it became clear that before examining *how* to teach, the focus must be on *who* is teaching. Brenda Firman, a non-Native educator, said, “it’s not so much what the teacher is doing; it’s who the teacher is being.” An educator’s sincerity towards their work in a remote Native community directly affects their ability to connect with students and the community itself. A First Nations educator and community member who has seen educators use their job for only a paycheck explains that:

If you want to go and teach in a First Nations community, then be honest about why you are going there. I know there are a lot of people who go there because they know its good money, and that’s the only reason, or they’re going there just to gain experience.

Unfortunately there are many non-Native educators whose sole intention is to make money or gain the necessary experience to work elsewhere (Taylor, 1995). These educators are a reality for many schools and can have a negative effect on the students. I found that the reference to teachers’ intentions did not imply that financial goals or personal goals are wrong, rather, to discuss the problems that arise from educators who

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work purely for their own interests. Students recognize a teacher's lack of sincerity and will often withdraw from them, consequently withdrawing from their own education; this action may become misinterpreted by non-Native teachers as having a lack of interest in learning. A non-Native teacher who taught in a remote Cree community for many years described how educators cannot fake their intentions. He said:

They're going to know if you are there for good intentions or not; if you're faking it they're going to know and the kids are going to know. The kids are going to know if you have good intentions or not, if you are there just collecting a cheque.

A. Jane Tuesday shared a similar point:

People will pick up exactly who you are, within a month of being here. They all know you, what kind of person you are. You can't fool people, especially kids. You can't fool kids - they are a lot smarter than we are, they can read us so much more quickly.

Mary Oskineegish said that "when [students] know you are interested in their lifestyle they become interested in you as a teacher." Non-Native teachers must become aware of how their personal intentions are connected to their abilities to teach. Taylor (1995) explains that:

If a non-Native teacher harbours negative or, at best, neutral feelings towards the community, it is difficult for the teacher to keep them from students. The students either consciously or subconsciously detect the teacher's willingness to participate in reserve life.... The students are less likely to respond to this type of teacher. There is little basis for trust between teacher and student and therefore a weak basis for teaching. (p. 235)

The 'who you are' becomes the foundation for successful teaching and therefore crucial to student success, "the classroom should provide a social environment where personal interaction takes place" (Swanson, 2003, p. 67) - therefore the social environment can easily become tainted when the teacher does not have a sincere desire to be there. An educator can develop what they perceive to be a brilliant lesson but without

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the sincerity of wanting to be there and wanting to develop relationships the teacher – student connection becomes lost. Brenda Firman explained this further:

Remember it's the who you are. Trust will happen, and if who you are is a kind, honest, caring person in that classroom, then you can make mistakes and learn from them without it being something dramatic from it in terms of you and your class.

Non-Native teachers will be in the role of teacher and learner - their capacity for being a good teacher will depend on their willingness to learn. Non-Native teachers will be faced with a variety of challenges, and without a willingness to learn, negative outcomes are almost assured. Educators “need to become open and work towards cultural competency, which is about who you are as a person, not what other people are” (Brenda Firman).

Another part of this idea is to avoid assuming the identity of First Nations people. An experienced First Nations educator pointed out that “the best way for a non-Aboriginal teacher to be respectful is to not take on the wannabe status. - ... Be who you are. You don't have to assume an identity as an Aboriginal⁵ person.” Nor, she said, are educators expected to “know it all” or take on the role of a saviour, “they're not expected to help a community.” Being who you are means being aware of your own cultural background and the privileges connected to it. Working towards cultural competency does not require educators to mimic a First Nations person; it requires genuine respect and sharing of everybody's knowledge and skills.

⁵ Many of the educators responded with the same terminology (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) that I used in my questions, most likely out of consideration but these may not be the words they would use elsewhere. To me this is a lesson on how the researcher affects the research and a reflection of the participants' impact on my growth.

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Educators who are honest with themselves and are open in working towards cultural competency will then become open to building relationships which is the next essential step to successful teaching in a First Nations community.

4.12 Building relationships. Almost all educators expressed the importance of building relationships with students, parents, co-workers and community members. This resonates with the literature, for example Taylor (1995), states that “the relationship they develop with students, other teachers, parents, and the community will greatly influence how they are perceived, and this will alter their effectiveness as teachers” (p. 225). Brenda Firman believes that building relationships comes before best teaching practices and is tied into the “awareness of who you are.” She also strongly advised that relationship building goes beyond the classroom: “if you are going to establish relationships, first of all you can’t just establish with the students, you have to establish with the parents; the parents are the kids’ first teachers.” It is also advised that non-Native teachers do not develop relationships with only each other. Harper (2000) explains that the support system that non-Natives develop can “become a little too insular” (p. 147) if it does not include all colleagues and community members. Taylor (1995) explains that some non-Native teachers will react to culture shock by developing close connections to other non-Native teachers in the community, disregarding everyone else.

In my experience I found that educators had numerous opportunities to connect with families and community members, going to the store, local events, or even just going for walks around the community. As non-Native educators open themselves to building relationships it will assist their teaching practices, especially when developing culturally appropriate activities. Mary Oskineegish highly encouraged continuous

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communication, she advised educators to “communicate with parents and Elders in the community” especially when they “are planning a cultural activity.” She added that “it’s very good to talk to those in the school who work with you, to help you in any way.”

Audrey Smith, a non-Native educator, said that relationship building is a “two way street”, and that teachers must be willing to share their knowledge with colleagues. She went on to say that if “you have knowledge that would be helpful to others then you help them.”

Educators who are open and willing to build relationships will find more resources, knowledge, and learning opportunities through co-workers, community members and even their students. Resources in isolated communities may appear more limited compared to urban schools, however if educators are able to recognize that “everybody has knowledge, has skills that they can share with everybody else” (A. Jane Tuesday) then their educational resources will expand. One educator had great help from his Education Assistant: “we became really good friends. We are still friends today; yeah, if it wasn’t for him I wouldn’t have got a lot of things. He took me under his wings so to speak.” His interest in staying in the community during vacations may have aided his friendships as well. “I spent my Christmas’s there and my vacations there, my spring break there; not always, but not always going home, sometimes I would stay there.”

Relationships promote and develop reciprocity and cooperation; this is seen as an important point in Harper’s (2000) research. She states that “the need to create productive rather than contentious working relationships between Aboriginal communities and their non-Aboriginal teachers – ultimately to the benefit of teachers and, most important, the students – would seem critical” (p. 149). In Harper’s (2000) research, the non-Native

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female teachers felt there was a division between teachers and the community and also believed “that male teachers, single or otherwise, were more easily integrated into the community for cultural and social reasons. Men were more likely to be involved in outdoor sports” (Harper, 2000, p. 147). Although I did not address this specific point in my conversations, I did not notice any differences between female and male non-Native teachers’ experiences in developing relationships. A possible reason for this different point of view could be that in Harper’s (2000) research she found that “all of the teachers indicated that they were not intending to stay. Most expected to leave their community soon, particularly if more jobs became available in the south” (p. 148), whereas the non-Native educators I interviewed had worked, or continue to work, in communities for many years and made friendships and connections within the community.

Educators who do not build relationships or isolate themselves from the community ultimately hurt student success. Taylor (1995) explains that students “want their teacher to like and respect the community. Obvious isolation is interpreted by students as rejection of the community and, indirectly of themselves” (p. 226). It is important for non-Native educators to recognize that school and community are not two isolated places, they are connected, and how an educator interacts in either place will directly affect their relationships outside of the school as well as their instructional abilities within the classroom.

4.13 You are the visitor. Bell (2004), Harper (2000) and Taylor (1995) have referred to the importance of teachers making meaningful connections in the community in which they reside. Adding to the literature, I found that many of the educators interviewed expressed the importance of non-Native teachers recognizing their “visitor’

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status out of respect. One non-Native educator explained that “to be respectful realize that you are in another community you’re in their town and their community and they’re doing things their way and they’ve been doing it for many years.” A similar point is made by Audrey Smith, who said: “Remember that you are a visitor in this community, and you need to respect the values and beliefs of the community even if it’s different than yours.” A. Jane Tuesday said:

I always tell teachers, you are a visitor here, we are all visitors here, and as visitors we have to be respectful of what goes on around here. I always say just keep your mouth shut for the first six months and just listen, then you’ll learn what’s going on around you.

It is disrespectful for non-Native educators to assume they are community members who can state their opinions, beliefs, and recommendations on community matters upon arrival. Non-Native educators must take the role of learner in order to understand what is best for the students. This does not take away from the ideas and suggestions they may have in the school or classroom; for example, a teacher may have a wonderful idea to try and should seek advice from local community members on how to proceed. The difference is in attitude - assuming to know what is best or acting as a saviour versus being open to learn and showing respect.

Part of accepting the ‘visitor’ status is to follow community rules. A First Nations educator who teaches in her own community said that when you are considered an ‘outsider’ or ‘visitor’ “you always have to be professional, same with after school and the hours after school, you have to be careful who you let inside your home too, who you become friends with.” Educators must be cautious about allowing their home to be a place for drinking or inappropriate partying. Mary Oskineegish said that “you also have to be aware of negative things happening, like drugs and alcohol here in the community.

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You have to know the community by-laws.” Taylor (1995) also cautions teachers from socially drinking as they normally would outside of the community. He explains that when alcohol is viewed as a problem, those who casually drink are associated with the problem. Students need to trust their teachers and view them as a safe person to connect with and to learn from.

Taking the steps to connect with colleagues, parents, and students is essential to successful education, and yet understanding the role of the visitor will help teachers from overstepping their place in the community. The visitor status is not to keep non-Native educators from building relationships or contributing their knowledge and experience; it is an aid to help non-Native educators to understand the distinction between sharing and directing. Being an educator who wants to learn how to be an effective teacher in a remote First Nations community opens the door to learning about cultural inclusion, language and land.

4.2 Cultural inclusion

Schooling for First Nations students has undergone changes and improvements with the intention of reducing the student dropout rate (Bell, 2004; Fulford, 2007; RCAP V 3, 1996). The school environment must be inclusive towards First Nation students’ epistemology which includes their values, knowledge and identity in order to eliminate assimilative practices and the division between school and community. The experienced educators that I spoke with unanimously supported cultural inclusion in First Nations education - advocating that cultural inclusion, which includes community values, language, and land based education, supports student development, affects student motivation and, identity, and bridges the gap between school and home learning.

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In this section I share the knowledge and experiences of the educators whose teaching practices follow the values and knowledge of their students. I begin with an exploration of the word *culture* and continue with teaching examples and a discussion about the ideas that support the inclusion of culture, language and land based education.

4.21 Culture. Before I can highlight the opinions and examples of cultural inclusion provided, I feel it is important to first discuss the word *culture* and how my understanding has changed throughout my conversations. When I began this discussion I knew that I did not want to perpetuate generalizations or stereotypes of First Nations culture. I shared my definition of culture to include the values, norms and lifestyle of each community. I have since learned that my definition needed refinement and that using the word culture can be problematic, leading to misunderstandings. Brenda Firman explained that “culture is such a complex word to use; it has so many translations and understandings.” She suggested that:

Perhaps it would be good to talk about aspects of culture, not culture as if it’s one whole thing that you can pick up and have. So, thinking about what aspects of culture can be included? And what do we mean by *include*?

Changing the discussion from how to include culture into what aspects of culture can be included encourages educators to recognize the learning process that occurs within the community that they teach in. I also want to make it clear that cultural inclusion is more than including token cultural practices into the classroom; it involves an entire epistemological shift that supports student learning. This knowledge is vital to successful teaching practices and cannot be learned from training institutes alone; the experts in successful teaching practices come from within the community. Learning about the culture of a community takes time and effort. Brenda Firman explained that:

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Culture is like the tip of the iceberg. So the obvious stuff, that is the tip of the iceberg, but it is the deeper stuff underneath that is not easy to bring into the classroom. The first step is for non-Aboriginal teachers to realize that their way is a culture - not just the way it is supposed to be - that there are differing views and differences in practices.

Hampton (1995) points out that Western education practices are “actively hostile to Native culture” (p. 36) and it is the educators who are unwilling to change that prolong the harmful practices that impede student success. He describes these educators as having a perverse ignorance. He explains:

The educator who sees education as culturally neutral is similar to the spouse of an alcoholic who denies the alcoholism. There are implications for practice, self-concept, and feelings that both are unable to face. Perverse ignorance is a particular form of the defence mechanism of denial. (p. 36)

He continues:

It is understandable that the educator with a self-concept tied to the ideal of helping children, with preparation that does not include multicultural competence, with a curriculum that ignores or systematically distorts the culture of his or her students, and with unresolved personal issues of racism and ethnocentrism could not recognize the extent to which education is both culturally bound and actively hostile to Native culture. (p. 36)

When educators recognize that the school culture directly affects a student’s identity, pride, and educational motivation, they in turn become cultural allies for inclusive education. Haig-Brown & Hodson (2008) state that “remembering the past, resisting assimilationist schooling, taking responsibility for ourselves and the education of all our relations, those committed to Aboriginal education in Canada today are creating sites for regeneration of Indigenous thought and all that it implies” (p. 181). The following are examples and ideas that contribute to this shift to support First Nation students in their education journey.

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A First Nations teacher who taught grade 7/8 in her community shared her opinion on including aspects of culture. She said, “to me it is of utmost importance.” She developed “a curriculum resource on [her] community’s history that teachers could pick up and develop lesson plans around. It’s very important.” She shared her experience of including accurate literature for a novel study while teaching a grade 7/8 class.

Dissatisfied with the selection of books available to the students, she instead brought in novels by Ruby Slipperjack⁶ entitled *Honour the Sun*, *Weesquachak* and *the Lost Ones* and *Little Voice*. She chose novels that provided students with an accurate representation of culture, family and everyday living in northern Ontario. She encouraged student success by providing school material that improved student interest, increased relatability, and encouraged a positive sense of self. She noticed the reaction of her students while reading these novels:

The students did not want to stop reading them because they could relate to it. The stories and the characters and the setting and all of that, they were excited. To see them excited about something was great. They were hungry for their stories.

A First Nations teacher who currently teaches primary grades in her community connected the importance of cultural inclusion with her own educational experience, said, “I think it is very important for a teacher to use their background, because when I was younger and going to school, I didn’t know my own identity and I felt lost for a long time.” She explained that when teachers seek to include and value a student’s ways of knowing it allows the student “to see who they are, and to see how important it is to be who you are.” She connected inclusion to students’ identity and self-esteem. As a teacher

⁶ Ruby Slipperjack is an author from Eabametoong First Nation, “Her first novel, *Honour the Sun*, is about a young girl growing up in a tiny Ojibwa community in northern Ontario” (retrieved from: www.indigenouslearning.lakeheadu.ca).

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in the primary grades, she shared examples of how she has included traditional foods and games in her classroom:

The kids in the school back home, they like cooking, they like bannock making. Same with the kindergartens, we did that a long time ago with them. They really liked the bannock making. With the other ones, I guess it depends the age level too. Like with the older ones, the kids were taught how to prepare a goose. That's for older kids, not for younger ones. The younger ones probably would be more the games, the traditional games.

The experience of losing oneself in education is echoed in A. Jane Tuesday's experience:

I really promote that the Aboriginal way of teaching is so important because that's part of their culture. It's hard to separate that. But I think being Aboriginal I understand that really well because that is where I come from too. I went through that system; I went up to grade 12 with 5 years of university, but a price I had to pay for it was a lot, I paid a huge price to get an education.

A. Jane Tuesday therefore highly recommended the integration of students' culture into the education experience. She said: "It is vital to integrate into teaching the cultural background of students. It is a part of who they are" and "if you don't include the culture of the students they will gradually feel like their culture is not as important and eventually the culture could get lost." She shared an example of connecting land with language arts for a grade 5/6 class:

There is a connection, when teachers know what's happening and they turn that knowledge into ELA [English Language Arts]; they have them writing about it, talking about it. Cameras. We got tons of kids taking pictures out there, and everybody will come back and do a picture book. The grade 5/6 will have a picture of them out there and they'll write about it so you're integrating language arts in there too. It's an integration of that, whatever is happening out there, to bring it into the school.

Mary Oskineegish explained why teachers need to become culturally competent; she said that when students know that their teacher genuinely wants to learn about them "they become interested in you as a teacher; teachers should be aware of that wherever

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they go when they go into the communities.” She continued to say that “when you communicate with students or the community you have to be open to the questions they ask. They are really open these students when they want to get to know you or when you want to know them.” Brenda Firman views the integration of cultural inclusion as “critical”; she explained that “if the children don’t see who they are represented in their school, in their classroom, and in their education, then how can we ever expect them to engage with that education?”

Reinforcing the point made in the previous section on the necessity of finding educators who want more than personal experience and financial gain, it is not hard to imagine that educators with only personal goals would not invest themselves in the effort to re-learn their teaching practices and learn how to create a culturally conducive learning environment. A successful educator wants students to ‘engage’ in education without paying the price of losing their identity. It is imperative that the teacher make efforts to become culturally competent to be able to integrate aspects of a student’s culture and provide positive accurate representations in the school.

When teachers become culturally competent and include appropriate aspects of their students’ culture they will see a difference in motivation, interest, and self-esteem. “Cultural awareness is critical to influencing motivation and essential to delivering a successful literacy program in an Aboriginal community” (Swanson, 2003, p. 62). A Native teacher noticed improvement in student engagement after including Ruby Slipperjack’s novels in her Language Arts lessons. She said, “their interest increases, [and] their attention, because a lot of times they will get side tracked, fooling around and whatever, but they were on task so, I found that really neat.” Audrey Smith observed the

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increased interest and motivation of her students in a grade 3/4 class when she actively included topics that students understood in all of the subjects. She said:

They participate more in the discussion because they understand what you are talking about. They talk about it in their own language and things like that. It gives them the feeling that their way of life is important, like when you are talking about hunting or fishing then they'll know what you are talking about but if you start talking about something like a subway or an apartment complex some of them will have no idea what you are talking about, so they are not interested, they are not motivated. If you talk about things that they will understand then you got them interested and motivated.

A. Jane Tuesday shared her thoughts on cultural inclusion and the effect on student self-esteem:

I have seen students' self-esteem increase when a teacher knows the language and includes First Nation culture in the classroom. I think a lot of them, well there's not much for kids to hang their hats on so to speak. You turn on television and it's all about white people, you go to the cities, every store, every bank, there really isn't any visible Aboriginal people in management positions, so I think they need to have that sense of pride. When somebody comes along and includes culture as part of their teaching it really uplifts them to see that they are of value, because even in our books and our teaching there's really nothing about Aboriginal values in the school system.

It is clear that it is critical for all educators to develop culturally inclusive teaching practices. A crucial step toward cultural competency is to learn and value the language of a community, and "to define and understand Native literacy in order to move away from the situation of Aboriginal students being measured by Euro-Western definitions and move into a balanced, non-competitive relationship between the cultures" (Paulsen, 2003, p. 27). One of the ways of learning and supporting culturally inclusive practices is through language.

4.22 Language. Language was the most encouraged aspect of cultural inclusion by First Nations and non-Native educators. Many educators speak from their own experience in witnessing the benefits of language immersion, especially in the younger

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grades. Mary Oskineegish, who currently teaches in her own community, witnessed the benefits of an immersion program while teaching in another community. She said:

I was teaching in kindergarten to grade 1, and the students were only learning in their language, with syllabics. Later on in life I saw these students in grade 8 and they were doing very well in English, and I feel very proud that I got to see these students. Even one student invited me to her grade 12 graduation from that other community, because she really saw her own identity as a First Nations person, and she is really proud that she is a First Nations person.

Mary believes that “students don’t lose their identity when they teach their language at the beginning of their school years.” She is a strong advocate for language immersion in her own community. Another example of a language instruction program was described by Brenda Firman, who shared a creative example of providing equal space for both languages:

We had a language instruction program going and so the rooms at the school, in the classrooms in the primary, were totally in the language; well they weren’t really, but we were working towards it. All the visuals around the room were in syllabics; it was a lot more of who the kids are. Then we had a room that was English, which kind of made it really good because we had lots of different kinds of resources in there; we had different picture dictionaries and other resources. So then the students would go and have their English class in their English room, and they loved it - they loved learning English. So now we were turning it on its heels and so, okay this is you, and now we are going to learn this and it was fun to learn and we could talk about the differences too. Well, this is how we do it in English and this is how we do it in your community. It’s not *the* way but is a new way to learn - but you still have your way and that’s okay. They were really doing well in both places and in their own classrooms they were starting to do the kinds of things we are used to kids doing as they are learning. They just loved to read and write and they’re running around putting little booklets together and writing little things on it but they were doing this in their own language and in syllabics just independently, you know those natural development things, and they were also learning their English and it wasn’t a pain. They loved going there - they were so excited, and we just split them.

Each community will have its own ideas and methods of language inclusion that a non-Native educator can support. A big step in demonstrating support is to learn the language. Learning a language reveals the history and values of a community. A non-

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Native educator can learn words and their translation and they can also take a closer look at what the pieces of the words mean to begin to understand the history of the language and the community. For example:

When you bring that language in and choose to learn more about the language, particularly getting away from a translation approach to the language, then you start to learn more as a non-Aboriginal person about the values and norms because it is embedded in the language. (Brenda Firman)

To understand the values and norms of a culture it takes more than translation of the words from one language to another, you have to look at:

What are the pieces of the word that make up that word and what do those pieces mean and when you put them together, what is the thought that comes across as you use that word? I always say don't translate the words translate the idea. Translate the feelings, translate the connections, don't give me a word for word translation but it really does go deeper when it is taken apart so it was something that was part of mentoring or part of training non-Aboriginal teachers to come to understand some of that, and that might be a gift that they actually take to a community when they start asking people to help bring some of the language into the classroom. And it certainly is a way to learn more about the essence of what a culture is. (Brenda Firman)

An example of this is a direct translation of an Ojibwa word for milk, *jo jo sha bo*, which means *mothers' breast milk*. The value and history of a community can be seen in the language. Mary Oskineegish shared another example in the Ojibwa word for bacon, which is *ko koosh*. Because bacon is considered a modern word, *ko koosh*, which actually means pig, is used for bacon as well.

Non-Native educators must not feel overwhelmed by a new language since anyone can bring language into their classroom. If the students speak fluently then, allow them the space to speak it freely, to let them be the teacher and help the educator learn from them, or, if the students are struggling to learn, then both teacher and students can learn together. Audrey Smith recommended inviting Elders into the classroom: "have

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them visit, get the children to play some games or something where they are using their language and you know they could point to certain things and get the Elders to say it in their language then have the children repeat it.” It’s all about making the time throughout the day: “They would certainly have to make time in their schedule to bring in the Elders, parents or whoever and get them to talk to the children” (Audrey Smith). Neganegijig & Breunig (2007) describe the importance of looking to the Elders for language restoration; “Elders are the cultural, spiritual, and language experts, and increasingly their epistemologies are being revived and their role as rich sources of knowledge for language and cultural transmission is being restored” (p. 310). The inclusion of Elders and community members in a student’s educational experience demonstrates respect and recognition that home, school and community are equal places in a student’s learning - “traditionally, education for Aboriginal children was rarely separated from everyday life” (Haig-Brown & Hodson, 2008, p. 174) and language was never placed as a singular subject separate from all other learning. Battiste (2000) encourages educators to bring Elders into the classroom in order to raise Aboriginal consciousness and “enrich knowledge of students and teachers” (p. 201). The inclusion of Elders affirms Aboriginality as explained by Paulsen (2003):

When teachings are passed from the Elders to the younger generations, literacy takes on the traditional form and is being lived out in contemporary society. Thereby literacy becomes the active form of learning, evident in one’s development of knowledge, values, and way of being. Literacy is brought back into the everyday lives of Native peoples – reconnecting intergenerational ties and being infused into the lifelong process of affirming Aboriginality. (p. 26)

Actively learning the language makes a huge difference. It models respect, it models the value of learning the language and it aids a teacher’s cultural competency as mentioned earlier. A non-Native teacher shared his experience learning Cree:

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As a teacher I tried to learn the language, I would sit in during their Cree classes. It was a Cree community and so I would sit in them and try to practice and experience that. Actually, my first few years I would put the Cree word of the week, simple things like “niskak” for geese, and I would practice it and put it on the wall.

Though non-Native educators are highly encouraged to bring the language into the school, it is important to remember that language instruction “needs to move beyond the classroom setting by including Elders and the outdoor environment” (Neganegijig & Breunig, 2007, p. 312).

4.23 Land. Haig-Brown & Hodson (2008) describe the land as the first teacher.

They state that:

Education in Canada, broadly defined, begins, and always has begun, in relation to the land and Aboriginal peoples. Since time immemorial, Aboriginal peoples have integrated lifelong teachings and learning into the everyday worlds of their communities. Always reinforcing the relations of all beings to one another, the land becomes the first teacher, the primary relationship. (p. 168)

Language and land are intertwined and inseparable. Though I have placed it into two separate discussions, they actually flow together as one. Mary Oskineegish said that “whenever we try to bring cultural activities into the school it doesn’t really work, we have to take the students out into the land and the teacher has to be willing to go to these activities too.” In her experience teaching in her community she has noticed that “when the teacher really wants to teach the students he or she goes along with the class.” At times it may not be possible for teachers to go on outdoor excursions; for example, if only some of the students leave for cultural activities the teacher may be responsible for teaching students who attend school. A non-Native educator shared his experience in this situation. He connected the student’s land activities with their classroom learning by asking them to share their experience through writing or speaking or by example: “they

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would show me what they did and show me how they do their traps.” When students left for hunting, fishing, or trapping they “were accommodated, they were allowed to leave, they weren’t punished for it and whatever work I could get for them when they got back then that is how we worked things out.” The more knowledge and experience teachers have of their students’ experiences the easier it is to blend all activities as one learning experience. In this case, the non-Native teacher engaged in hunting activities. He said, “Geese was the big hunting that would be in the fall and spring, and I would join them before classes. I would join the men and the kids and be up at 5 or 6 and go to 8:30 or 9.” It is critical that the teacher view cultural activities as part of the school curriculum and look to find ways to blend the students’ experiences with their learning goals at school.

Another idea shared by a non-Native teacher was to turn the tables on the students and ask them to become the teacher. “We would get them out into the land, and we go outside and get into the land and say, ‘okay, show me how to build a hut’, ‘do a teepee⁷’ or something like that, so we spent a few days doing that.” When an activity required an expert to teach both teacher and students, he asked community members if they would come and share their knowledge with the class: “I asked them if you get a caribou can you bring it into the school for me or if you get a moose or a bunch of geese.” To do this requires the teacher to be flexible throughout the school year. He would tell students to bring caribou, moose, and geese to school and would move the desks and books “cause you never know when someone is going to shoot a moose or caribou” and he asked the students to show him what to do with the animal.

⁷ The outdoor land activities must be based on the traditions and history of the community. It cannot be assumed that the activity of building a teepee will be appropriate or respectful in every community.

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A First Nations educator explains that land based education requires educators “to be able to step outside of the box. For example, when you are in the classroom and you’re having a good lesson, maybe you’re learning something in science about trees”, the teachers can take the initiative of taking students outside to be with the trees. As much as educators need to be organized and have well planned school activities, it also helps to be able to take advantage of good opportunities when they arise. Taking the opportunity to bring the lesson outdoors as often as possible, a First Nations teacher shares similar advice from her experience teaching primary grades, saying, “the younger grades really like the outdoors. You can incorporate any kind of lesson, just take them out more.” Some schools will incorporate cultural days and or land activities into the school calendar; for example, Mary Oskineegish shared some of these activities:

There’s a lot of activities in our community. We have our cultural days; in one week we go moose hunting in September, most of the First Nation teachers in this community go out hunting with their families and with students.... The non-Native teachers, some of them go out, but a lot them get left behind, because they don’t really like being out in the land. In April we also do geese hunting – that is another cultural activity - we also have to go out into the land for that too.

Another example of cultural activities incorporated within the school day comes from A. Jane Tuesday, who said that: “each classroom has half a day so Monday would be grade 9 the whole afternoon, Tuesday is grade 7/8, even up to kindergarten has an hour and a half of Native culture every day.” She explained that this is done with communication from Elders:

Some of the Elders have told us ‘we want our kids to know how to snare, how to hunt, how to fish, how to set up traps, we want our kids to know those things’, so that’s why we do that here, it’s the parents asking, or telling us this is what they want.

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Land based education, language instruction, Elders, and community members should be part of a student's everyday learning experience. It is also how non-Native educators can learn about the values of the community, incorporate them into the school and become culturally competent. A. Jane Tuesday shared an example of a program that includes Elders and land based education:

What we've done here at our school is that we bring in Elders, Once a week we bring in somebody. We do a lot of storytelling because that is one of the main ways of learning is storytelling. We have a program with INAC - it's a proposal that we send in every year. All schools in Manitoba do that. With that money we pay honorariums. We do the protocol where you invite an Elder and ... you have to give them something - sometimes it's an article, or something I purchased when I go to Winnipeg. So you know we have Elders that are sharing our stories with us, community people coming into our classrooms, talking about the old days, and they take kids out on the land. We have a program here called Native culture where we have a Native culture teacher but he has helpers from the community and they take kids out on the land and we teach kids how to trap, how to snare rabbits, going out to identify different herbs, different medicinal plants, we have all that going on here.

All of these examples encourage educators to become culturally competent.

Brenda Firman explained that:

With the cultural competency, then you are open and aware, and then bringing the language in, and searching out people who will do that, making the spaces open for them so that they can do it in their own way and in a good way, going on the land and connecting the language and the land there as well. This is where the students can begin to re-learn who they are as well. Particularly with technology, assimilation is on fast-track.

The multitude of examples reveals the efforts successful educators make to conduct teaching practices and prepare lessons that are best for their students' learning needs. These examples do not always follow curriculum guidelines and are not necessarily taught in teacher education programs, but are just an example of what non-Native teachers can learn if they are open and willing to learn.

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4.3 Learning

Non-Native educators in previous research have expressed their concerns over inadequate teacher training and preparation for working in remote Aboriginal communities (e.g., Agbo, 2006; 2007; Berger & Epp, 2007; Harper, 2000). Non-Native educators in these studies felt deprived of formal training, resources and professional development opportunities in comparison to the resources available in urban communities. The educators I interviewed revealed numerous learning opportunities and resources available in remote First Nations communities. Non-Native educators must arrive with a willingness to learn, flexibility in their teaching practices and must have an open-mind towards other ways of teaching and learning. In this section I share stories of meaningful growth and learning opportunities available to educators in remote communities as well as review characteristics most commonly seen in successful educators. Professional development in education institutions is not the only resource available to teachers; some of the educators interviewed expressed concern regarding the training provided in education institutions. For example, a non-Native teacher explained that “what you learn in university in terms of classroom management and what the students are doing that’s almost - I don’t want to say out the window - but I mean a lot of it is not going to be practical.” Instead he found an abundance of learning opportunities:

I wanted to learn everything, I wanted to absorb everything I could - ... they have a lot of resources; ask them, because a lot of times you’ll teach something and you could be wrong in the teaching of it, so it’s better to ask advice.

Non-Native teachers may notice that education programs outside of First Nations communities may not prepare them for every situation, but with a willingness to learn, and continued learning, success is possible.

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4.31 Willingness to learn. From the stories shared, I found three distinct places for educators to develop further learning and resources. Learning arises from personal reflection, the school (colleagues and students) and the community itself. The first opportunity for growth comes from personal reflection; a non-Native educator shared his experience:

For me it was a lot of late nights and a lot of preparing for these lessons and whether or not they worked. I just had to do trial and error - things would work one day and other things wouldn't.

He continued by sharing the challenges of failed lessons: "I would sit and be like, this lesson plan is brilliant, this is awesome and this is brilliant, I'm so happy I got a good night's sleep. I'm ready to go in the morning. I get there and it didn't work." As difficult as those moments are for educators, they can also be meaningful experiences for growth. He explained that, "you have to re-evaluate and assess - okay why didn't this work? - and maybe this was a little too tough for them to comprehend, so whatever the reason you have to figure it out."

Audrey Smith also encouraged reflection and re-evaluation in personal teaching practices, advising educators to "try a teaching practice and see if it works. If it doesn't, try something else." Brenda Firman suggested modifying lessons and ideas based on the needs of the students:

You don't just bring something in straight away, you have lots of lesson plans, lots of samples, lots of ideas, lots of things to do, and then you check in to your local environment to see how you need to modify it.

She added to this idea by providing self-reflective questions non-Native educators can ask themselves, which are: "Are you providing an educational experience that is worth caring about? In what ways are you? And in what ways aren't you? What do you

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have impact on?” I found these ideas to be insightful as they ask educators to look at their impact on student success. When the educational outcomes of students do not meet the expectations of the educator they may judge and place blame on the students, their parents, and their cultural affiliation, also known as the cultural-deficit discourse (Orlowski, 2008). Brenda Firman said that, “making judgements on other people, pointing those fingers coming from a position of power” is not right. She asks non-Native educators to “never forget, that simply by the colour of your skin you are in a superior power position, that’s without adding the fact that you are a teacher and have all this control, never forget that.” Reflecting on teaching practices that are damaging to First Nation students can help identify them so they can be eliminated and replaced with teaching practices, lessons and school materials that respect student knowledge and values. Anderson (2002) writes:

The role of the teacher is vitally important. The first task of the teacher is to plan a variety of learning opportunities for students. This requires a great deal of thought about materials and goals for the activities. It requires cooperation with colleagues in a rich community of educators in the Anishinaabe ways. (p. 303)

Anderson (2002) continues to explain that when the education system “does not honour” Anishinawbe students, they will “remove themselves from that system. They do this by dropping out of school, but also by behaving in ways that stop their own learning” (p. 297). Teaching practices and student success have a direct cor-relation and educators must be willing to reflect on their own role and contribution towards student success. This act of reflection and self-awareness can be part of the de-colonizing process to aid non-Native educator’s abilities to eliminate oppressive practices (Bishop, 2000; Dion, 2009; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Strong-Wilson, 2007). Tompkins (2002) points to the denial of racism in education as problematic. She says that she has rarely heard the problem of

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underachievement of students being discussed as a result of racism. Instead it is denied, even “when statistical proof shows the problem of underachievement to be, in fact, tied to racial and cultural affiliation it is framed as an individual, family, community or cultural problem” (p. 406). A. Jane Tuesday shared her experience with racism in Canada:

Sometimes people don't realize that they are being racist ... One time I was taking a course in the University of Winnipeg. It was an evening course and I was taking a Black history course and this professor says, “they had to import millions of Black people to work in the Americas, these plantations, and yet there were millions of Native people here and why didn't they put them to work?” And one lady puts up her hand and says, “Because they didn't want to work, they're very lazy.” You should have seen the professor's face, he didn't know what to say. You see that all the time, but this lady would never call herself a racist - she never would because that's just a part of who she is, and she doesn't recognize that. She wouldn't recognize that if you told her that. She just thought, ‘well this is the facts’ you know.

On the theme of not recognizing racism, Tompkins (2002) wrote: “Part of the challenge of doing anti-racist work with white educators is the task of leading people to see what they have, up to this point in their lives, been unable to see” (p. 409). And Dion (2009) explains that:

Canadians ‘refuse to know’ that the racism that fuelled colonization sprang from a system that benefits all non-Aboriginal people, not just the European settlers of long ago. This refusal to know is comforting: it supports an understanding of racism as an act of individuals, not of a system. It creates a barrier allowing Canadians to resist confronting the country's racist past and the extent to which that past lives inside its present, deep in the national psyche. The need to deny racism in Canada's past resurfaces again and again in its present. (p. 57)

Personal reflection and self-awareness can be a very powerful source of knowledge for professional growth in education. It can expose hidden racism, assimilationist teaching practices and can lead to critical pedagogy. Dion (2009) says:

Critical pedagogy makes clear the need for an investigation of the extent to which belief systems have become internalized to the point that many teachers unsuspectingly rely on dominant discourses to give structure to their approach to

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teaching without recognizing the inadequacy or questioning the effects of those discourses. (p. 66)

The meaningful growth that arises from personal reflection occurs after experiences in teaching begin. Though personal reflection and self-awareness can begin at any time, the act of trial and error can expose hidden obstacles unknown to the teacher.

Another source of learning can be found within the school. Looking to colleagues, learning about, and from, students are all valuable resources available to educators if they are willing and open to learn. Mary Oskineegish pointed out that it begins with communication:

I would say communication is a big thing when you want to work in an Aboriginal community, because you have to know what is happening in the community and you have to find out from [local] people what's going to work when you are here in this community.

For Audrey Smith, she found colleagues to be a great source to learn about community etiquette:

When I was in a community and they closed the school for 3 days for bereavement ... one of the things I wanted to know was, is it appropriate for me to go to school and work or is it more appropriate for me to stay home? I didn't want to go to school and do work but be looked upon as this is not respectful. So this is one of those things I had to find out.

Audrey advises non-Native educators to turn to local colleagues to find out what is the best thing to do in various situations:

You don't want to do something that is disrespectful, even though it's something you may not agree with or it's different from your culture. You don't want to be disrespectful. Just ask your Aboriginal colleagues. If you're not sure what to do - ask!

As a principal, A. Jane Tuesday encourages all educators to learn from one another. She tells educators "to go sit in on other teachers' [classrooms] when it's your prep time instead of sitting in the coffee room." She recognizes that remote communities

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do not have the same resources as urban communities, but offers the advice of learning from one another as a meaningful source of knowledge. She said, “Everybody has knowledge, has skills that they can share with everybody else.” Learning from those within the school can also include the students; for example, Audrey Smith encourages teachers to learn about their students in school and outside of school, explaining that “being interested in them as a person, not just as a student, and you’ll get a lot more out of them that way.” Swanson (2003) attributes this to improvements in motivation, writing: “Learners are more likely to be motivated when they are engaged in tasks they find interesting. Teachers should strive to learn what students want to know and create learning situations based on their interests” (p. 66). Learning from colleagues and from students is connected to building relationships as discussed previously. Educators cannot expect to learn from those that they are not willing to develop a reciprocal relationship with. Relationships build trust and trust opens the door to learning opportunities.

The third resource available to educators is from within the community itself. A First Nations educator explains that taking the time to get to know the community will benefit educators in numerous ways. A First Nations educator said:

Get to know the community and then while you are doing that you are learning so if you think you’re done you can think again, because your learning is just starting over again, and it’s always like that. Today you are still learning. It doesn’t end.

They continued:

It’s also important to understand where the children are coming from. To be able to know the community that you are going into, to talk to people to try to do some research on the community itself, to be a little bit more knowledgeable about the people you are going to work for and work with.

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Brenda Firman said that, “everybody’s got gifts, there’s always value, and you need to make a connection between the goodness of what home is and what community is and your classroom.” A First Nations educator who is currently teaching in her community said, “There’s a lot of people there that raise their kids differently.” She asks non-Native educators to look at the difference in family structures and the importance of extended family in students’ learning and well-being. Finding values that educators can connect with is a beginning step. Audrey Smith connected a community’s respect for the Seven Grandfather Teachings with her own personal teachings within the Golden Rule. She said:

Some cultures respect the Seven Grandfather Teachings and that’s what they live by, so you get to know those and what they mean. I have one teaching in my culture; my culture says ‘do unto others as you would have them do unto you’ and well what we call the Golden Rule. That Golden Rule can be applied to all Seven Grandfather Teachings, so if you look at it it’s the same thing, your respect, your humility, your wisdom, your knowledge, everything is the same, and the Seven Grandfather Teachings are the same as the Golden Rule. So even though we are from different cultures we are the same in a lot of ways.

While searching for similarities and commonalities is an essential step to building relationships it is important to avoid learning from a patronizing position. Dion (2009) says that, “For Canadians, learning about Aboriginal people, history, and culture from the position of respectful admirer or patronizing helper is easy and familiar. Learning that requires recognition of implication in the relationship and a responsible response is not easily accomplished” (p. 58). She continued to explain that:

Teaching about Aboriginal people that confines itself to Aboriginal interactions with European settlers suggests that the value of Aboriginal people lies in their ability to assist European settlers in the building of a new nation as opposed to the recognition of the existence of fully established, self-reliant, and self-governing nations prior to European invasion. (p. 65)

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As many of these educators have pointed out, learning is key to successful teaching; recognizing that coming into a school willing to learn from others' knowledge as well as willing to share your own knowledge becomes an asset, but coming into a school with the idea that you know better or that you have the answers is disrespectful and unwanted. Audrey Smith said, "be willing to ask for help when needed. Don't think that you know everything, don't assume your way is the right way, if you don't know then ask somebody, never be afraid to ask somebody." Learning from a community is not a passive practice in which an individual simply observes from a distance. A successful learning experience involves active participation in community events. A First Nations educator said:

With regard to the community, it's important to participate in community events, not to just isolate yourself. Get to know the entire community and participate in their event - that is how you learn about the community and the people in it.

An example of full participation is provided by a non-Native educator, who said:

Anytime there were community events I'd try to go to them to participate - and the moose calling and the goose calling, I was awful at it but it made them chuckle and laugh but they'd enjoy it that I'd actually do something. The jigging contest, I don't know how to jig, I still don't, but I mean to show that I am willing to do that, they'd appreciate that.

Mary Oskineegish describes successful teachers as being visible in the community.

She said:

Be ready to help in any situation and be a part of the community, be visible -.... When you are visible you talk to parents, leaders, and other teachers in here, your co-workers. That's the best thing that can happen when you become a teacher over here.

Being visible in a community and being supportive and willing to learn requires a certain attitude. A non-Native teacher explains that having a negative attitude or ideas of changing things is not appropriate: "you're not going to change anything. The way they

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are thinking, you're not going to change. The political system - or it's not going to change - so don't even try to." He continued by saying:

Show respect; it goes back to what I'm saying about changing things. You're not going to go in there and say, 'Ah this is wrong' or 'why do you do this' or just questioning everything that happens. I remember one teacher he used to always complain about bannock. He used to say, 'I don't know why everyone says bannock is so good, all it is is just bread, it's just bread.' I mean this is their traditional food, that they make and eat every single day and you're kind of putting it down by the way you are talking. You know it's not just bread, it's been with them for hundreds of years.... When you ask a question sometimes it will take a long time for them to answer because you got to remember their first language wouldn't be English, and you are asking a question in English and they have to process that in their Cree language and come out with it in English, so it takes a lot. You know, and a lot of people don't get that, and they'll ask a question and they'll answer it for them. And that's a big no no; you got to be patient.

Criticizing and pushing personal agendas does not help students succeed. It comes down to being part of the team, working with your colleagues, students and parents, and not against them. Brenda Firman said, "As a non-Aboriginal educator who is visiting that community, you can't come in and start pushing things around like that. It's just not following the values of respect."

There are endless opportunities for learning and it begins by valuing the knowledge and experience of all of the educators and community members. Each community offers unique knowledge, history, values and way of living. Non-Native teachers can arrive with a willingness to learn, to serve and to work with their students, with their colleagues and with the community on the educational goals of the children. Though the training process of educational institutions provides opportunities for growing and learning, it is not the only resource available, and it could also be a hindrance if it perpetuates assimilation practices. Uncovering the harmful pedagogy and

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ensuring successful education occurs takes certain characteristics in the teacher that will be addressed in the next section.

4.32 Characteristics. In my conversations with experienced educators I asked everyone their opinion on what personal characteristics can assist non-Native teachers in developing successful teaching practices. Though everyone shared their ideas, the most common characteristics were flexibility, humour, open-mindedness, listening and patience.

A non-Native educator first responded by encouraging educators to have an open mind, saying, “you have to go with an open mind ... and you have to realize that even though we are in Canada, this is a different place.” He refers to the fact that in the community itself you may feel like you are in another country, with difference in language, customs, and way of living. He adds that open-mindedness and a good sense of humour can help in the transition. As far as teaching is concerned, his recommendation is to be flexible:

Flexibility is for sure number one. You have to make sure that if you are planning a lesson and using the computer or internet, well, it might be down, okay, because of the weather, so you have to be aware of that and you have to plan alternative lessons and stuff like that. You have to realize that the students are probably going to be a little bit under prepared according to grade numbers; you have to realize that, you’re not going to be teaching the curriculum as it states. You have to have engagement right away, you have to use a lot of humour. I used a lot of teasing, and teasing in a fun way, kind of joking with them.

A common experience for both of us was the use of humour in connecting with students. I learned that humour was a large part of their lives and the jokes from students were not a behaviour issue but a way to connect with their new teacher. The non-Native educator shared his story on this idea:

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I would ask a question and they would raise their hand and I'd go 'okay'... he would go 'kidding'. And I'd go 'you guys are a bunch of kidders up here', so I started to do it to them, 'hey guys you have a test today, put your books away' [the students would say] 'what' [and I would say] 'kidding'. So you use the humour, and put it back on them - you know what I mean, a lot of teachers did not get that.

Goulet (2001) explains how humour is part of the “indirect, non-confrontational approach to classroom management” and that the two examples in her article of successful teachers “used humour and often laughed at themselves and with the students” (p. 73-74). The non-Native teacher quoted above also said that the adjustment takes time and that colleagues noticed a difference in his teaching after the holidays of his first year. Learning can begin immediately, but it still can take time.

A First Nations educator shared her ideas on necessary characteristics, saying that educators need, “patience, understanding, and compassion, but also you have to be flexible and knowledgeable”, then continued:

When you go into that classroom you have to go in with an open mind, you have to be able to be flexible, to be dynamic, to be able to adjust to the rhythm of the classroom, to the students, not to go in and teach just that linear progression that we like to keep track of. To be flexible, to be open to student suggestions too! To be able to step outside of the box.

Listening becomes a key attribute, especially when you are learning from your colleagues, students, parents and community members. Mary Oskineegish encourages educators “to be a good listener, and be easy to talk to, to be understanding of the students' needs”, she also said that a “sense of humour is always good, overall a friend to all.” A First Nations educator views “patience and a lot of listening” as important characteristics, but she also said that “when you are in the school here you are here for the kids not for yourself.” She encourages educators to do what is best for the students and to be positive when speaking to them. She explained that she doesn't use the word

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‘no’ or ‘don’t’ when she is talking to the students in her primary grades, instead she explains to them why certain behaviour is not safe; for example:

When you see a kid running in the hallway, I wouldn’t say ‘don’t be running in the hallways’. I won’t say that, I would say, ‘when you run in the hallways, I’m afraid that you’ll get hurt, and I don’t like seeing kids get hurt’. That’s how I would do it.

A. Jane Tuesday added ‘credibility’ to the list of characteristics needed, and also encourages learning through observation: “Observe the First Nation natural laws. - They are applicable to all Nations.” She then described the importance of credibility:

I had one teacher who used to smoke like a chimney. Come national addiction week and she’s talking about the dangers of smoking and all this. Kids just laugh and look at each other; you got to be credible. If you’re going to teach something you’ve got to be credible, ‘cause kids know you ... you have to be credible if kids are going to connect with you. You have to be credible and you have to be honest and they have to trust you.

Audrey Smith encourages educators to have a positive attitude, saying: “You have to have a positive attitude, you definitely have to have a positive attitude. Don’t think negative before you go there.” She continued to explain how flexibility and organization are practical characteristics for teachers to adopt:

A teacher has to be flexible, understand that your day may not go as you have planned, and be able to change your plans in a moment’s notice, because anything can happen. Maybe a student is very upset that day about something, and because he is upset you’ll have to deal with that and that’s going to change the way things are going to happen that day. You have to be very flexible in your schedule. You have to be organized, have your work organized. I always had at least one week’s of work prepared and that’s all subjects. That way if I’m doing Math and things aren’t going the way I thought then we can switch or if you are doing Math and you get through more than you had prepared for that day then you have your work prepared for the next lesson so you can keep going. If you are not prepared and you lose your students then you can’t get them back on task. But if you are organized then everything will be fine.

Audrey also encouraged humour: “you have to have a sense of humour, bring humour in your classroom, make jokes with the children and try to get them to see the

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positive of some things instead of the negative.” Humour was encouraged by many participants, and it is important to note that humour does not always mean that the teacher must become a clown or be good at telling jokes, it simply refers to the ability to laugh, to smile, to not become angry when things do not go as planned, but to see the humour in life’s ups and downs. I once had a student in grade 8 ask me why White people always get mad when they lose something? I was showing frustration over losing my keys, but his question made me stop and think about why I and others get angry at the small things. It comes back to Audrey’s advice in being able to see the positive instead of the negative. Audrey provides an example of being positive and looking for that positivity in every student:

I taught a little boy in northern Ontario, and he misbehaved every day. He wouldn’t work, he wouldn’t listen, he wouldn’t do this, he wouldn’t do that. So for about 3 weeks every day I had to remove him from my classroom and had to bring him to the principal’s office. I couldn’t have him in my classroom when he is disrupting, he’s not listening, he’s not doing what he is asked to do, so he had to be removed for a period of time. One day I said to myself, this is nonsense; there is nothing wrong with him - he is as smart as anyone that I’ve had in my classroom, he’s just looking for attention, and when you are looking for attention, negative attention is just as good as good attention because all he wants is attention. And I thought I’m going to see what I can do to turn him around. So I started not acknowledging his bad behaviour but acknowledging his good behaviour; every time he behaved good I would praise him up. Every day he had a good day I kept him after school and I would have a little talk with him, and I would say ‘you know, you were really really well behaved today’. I said ‘this is the behaviour we want to see’ and you know that little boy turned right around. Every day he got better, he did more work, he listened more, and even the principal said, ‘I see some difference in this little boy, what did you do?’ and I said ‘I gave him attention, but I didn’t give him bad attention, I gave him attention when he was good’ and he just blossomed. So look for your positives, there is positive in every child.

The characteristics mentioned do not cover all possibilities for successful teaching practices; they merely provide an example of what has worked for these experienced educators or what they have seen in successful educators. The fact that almost everyone

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mentioned flexibility, humour, open-mindedness, listening and patience does point to there being concrete ideas that lead to successful teaching and therefore successful learning for students.

4.4 Culturally Responsive Education

Culturally responsive education is more than a supplementation of the provincial curriculum with cultural activities. It is an active transformation of the education system that places First Nations epistemology at the centre of learning. Kirkness (1998) says that “much time has been lost either emulating the federal or public school systems or merely Band-Aiding, adapting, supplementing when they should have been creating a unique and meaningful education” (pp. 11-12). Everyone is a part of this transformation, and it is important that non-Native educators work alongside community members to support the community’s vision of education for their children. Every community is unique in its ideas and vision which is why it is crucial for non-Native educators to understand that any general knowledge about First Nations education must not be taken as the only way for every school and every community. The following are examples given by participants of culturally responsive lessons, supportive evaluation practices, and a discussion on understanding grade level work. These examples must not be viewed as the only method of teaching - rather as inspirations for inquiring educators.

4.41 Developing culturally responsive lessons. As I listened to the stories and ideas on developing culturally appropriate lessons by experienced educators, I noticed a common theme throughout; all of the examples supported a positive cultural identity for the students. The teaching practices and activities mentioned were in the areas of Language, Land, History, Math, and Science. All centred on engaging students, families,

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and the community with education. Education is not culturally neutral, “culture is deeply embedded in any teaching” (Gay, 2002, p. 112), and directly affects a student’s experience in education. In an American context, Gay (2002) explains that:

Because culture strongly influences the attitudes, values, and behaviors that students and teachers bring to the instructional process, it has to likewise be a major determinant of how the problems of underachievement are solved. This mandate for change is both simple and profound. It is simple because it demands for ethnically different students that which is already being done for many middle-class, European American students—that is, the right to grapple with learning challenges from the point of strength and relevance found in their own cultural frames of reference.... Instead, these students have been expected to divorce themselves from their cultures and learn according to European American cultural norms. This places them in double jeopardy—having to master the academic tasks while functioning under cultural conditions unnatural (and often unfamiliar) to them. Removing this second burden is a significant contribution to improving their academic achievement. This can be done by all teachers’ being culturally responsive to ethnically diverse students throughout their instructional processes. (p. 114)

Non-Native educators must recognize how their own culture will influence their teaching practices and learn to provide a space that is inclusive to all First Nations students. It may take time at first to develop lessons that are inclusive; a First Nations educator said:

You do a lot of that on your own time, so it can be challenging, because you can’t just go on the internet or go to the library or whatever and pull out what you need, like a non-Aboriginal teacher does in a provincial system. There is just so much to choose from it’s like a gold mine of materials and resources, but when you are coming from the Aboriginal side of things it’s more challenging definitely.

Finding resources is connected to building relationships within the school and the community, and building relationships does not always happen instantly. The amount of time it will take depends largely on the educator, however according to those I spoke with, non-Native educators can begin right away through their openness and willingness.

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Mary Oskineegish shared a lesson she developed while teaching a grade 5/6 class. It was a fish netting lesson for Language Arts that incorporated Language Arts with Native Language and land based learning. She said:

I'm going to talk about the fish netting lesson I do in the winter months.... First we had to get a fish net that was 100 yards long, and there was no floaters or sinkers.... It almost took us a week, to do this, to go and set up this net, because we got to start from scratch, the net wasn't set. We put on the floaters and the sinkers, and then after that we went out onto the lake, and then we went out into the land and got some people to go with us, community members, to make holes on the ice for us... and then we were trying to find where it was; there is a tapping sound that you have to hear under the ice and that is where you make another hole, and that's what we did, then we set up the net. I told them all the things in my language, every word that was involved, like when you pull the rope, and they really enjoyed it, that was one day, probably four hours. The next day, we set it up and then 2 days later we went to check it. And all of the words that you use, I have to teach them before we went out. I would tell them what words we were going to use. And I would explain it too in English. 'Cause I was a classroom teacher at that time. And then when we came back, like maybe on the 5th day, we would write stories about it. And I have a book here, they enjoy those things when you teach these students here. They really enjoy those kinds of things.

This lesson is a perfect example of Paulsen's (2003) description of Native literacy. She says, "Native literacy embodies factors of culture, tradition, language, and ways of knowing and being" (p. 24). Mary Oskineegish incorporated all of these factors and noticed students enjoying their learning experience. The success of this lesson is not that it was an outdoor activity; rather, that it was a meaningful outdoor project that encouraged students to learn a skill that is important within the community. Leavitt (1995) explains how meaningful outdoor projects support student learning and success:

Children will also benefit from participating in meaningful projects outside the classroom. School becomes a place where in daily life they become better and better at all the skills required by their community – in the present and in the future. The teacher will think, for example, of the many contexts in which students can learn the history and geography of their community – hikes and canoe trips, map study, readings, oral history, road-building, religious and legal history, archaeology, mythology, hunting and fishing activities, agriculture.

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Non-Native teachers need to learn what skills are required by the community and develop educational learning experiences that support the skills learned in the students' home lives. Non-Native teachers are not expected to become experts in teaching traditional skills but are to support those who will teach them. This may mean that teachers and students are learning at the same time; for example, a non-Native educator shared his experience learning the history of the community from the Elders with his students. He developed a multi-media project for his grade 7/8 class that merged Elders' knowledge, community history, and media and included learning in school and outside of school. He said:

I brought in a book for the students and read what the Elders had said and I said, 'okay lets interview the Elders now', so it would be their grandparents or even their parents in some cases. I wrote a number of grants saying that the students are going to interview these Elders and we got film equipment and we sat down and I said, 'if you can ask any questions about what happened, what would you ask?' The questions started coming out, so I combined them all and sat down with the Elders.... Now I gave an honorarium just to thank them, but I thought they would be a little more apprehensive doing it, 'cause think of a CBC interview if you had lights, cameras, you had the microphones, so a lot were intimidated but then after a while they were okay with it. Then we gave it to the community, gave it to the Elders; that was an awesome project. That was 2 years in the making.... They were archiving their own history, absolutely. I was the moderator or mediator, however you want to put it, but it was their questions, their thoughts that went into it and they guided it, I was just kind of there to facilitate it.

Both the fish net and community history project share an emphasis on developing on-going endeavours. Neither project could be completed in a single class or even a day, but had the students develop the project throughout the school year. Although not all lessons or projects need to be as long, it is important to note that educators can think outside of the box regarding the duration of lessons and projects. A. Jane Tuesday shared an activity for older students in Science:

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What we do is ‘Science Exhibits’, ‘Science Demonstrations’, so I had them doing something on Grassy Narrows with the mercury poison down there in the 70’s, but of course it is still very prevalent today; they have more mercury readings there than ever before. They really took an interest in that... what happened down there and what is going on down there. In a way it is teaching them about their own people across this country; it really makes a big difference in their participation. They were online and downloading stories and pictures, they were really into it. When it’s something about them they can really buy into that.

Friesen & Ezeife (2009) point out their concern for the lack of Aboriginal students in the science fields, strongly arguing for integration of Aboriginal science and Western science. They say, “We believe that integrating Aboriginal science into Western science is particularly important for schools with relatively few Aboriginal students. It is imperative that schools with mainly Aboriginal students do the reverse by integrating Western into Aboriginal science” (p. 25). Transforming Western science into Aboriginal science can be done by:

Incorporating the standards of spirituality, service, diversity, culture, tradition, respect, history, relentlessness, vitality, conflict, and place, we transform the science curriculum from one which is essentially assimilationist to one which honours, respects, and nurtures our traditional beliefs and life-ways, and which presents science and technology in a more authentic way. Such a curriculum transformation could greatly benefit our students. (MacIvor, 1995, p. 90)

A. Jane Tuesday’s view resonated with the transformation of the science curriculum by integrating Western into Aboriginal science, as she mentioned that she encouraged a ‘science demonstration’ and not a ‘science fair’ as a ‘science fair’ promotes competition. When I first started to learn from the experienced educators I often thought of Language Arts lessons when discussing developing culturally responsive projects; however, I have since seen how all subjects need to be examined for their cultural biases.

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Non-Native teachers can do a multitude of changes in their teaching, not just large lesson plans. Audrey Smith shared an example of how she personalized Math for her grade 3/4 students:

When I used to do problem solving I used to always use the students' names in the problems. They would enjoy that. They would be like – okay, well I would say something like 'Jordan and Mathew went fishing; Jordan caught 5 fish and Mathew caught 7 fish. How many fish did they catch all together. They would be more interested and they would say 'I caught more fish than you' and then they would start talking about it and it would get them really motivated by it. So I think like moose hunting, somebody's dad caught 5 moose and somebody else's dad caught 2 moose, then how many more moose did Jordan's dad catch than Mathew's? Use their names and I found that to be really interesting and then they used to even make up their own instead of me making it up. I said 'okay you make it up', 'tell me what you want to say' and they would use their own names and they would make up things and they were really interested and motivated, and that's one of the things I did.

When non-Native teachers have ideas that they would like to implement in their classroom, it is very important that they do so with the permission of the school and parents. Audrey shared an example of a homework policy she implemented in her grade 3/4 class with permission from the school and the parents:

One of my most successful things, I think, that I did was my homework policy. When I went to a northern Ontario community first, I asked them about homework and they told me 'don't give your children homework because they're not going to bring it back it's not going to work and it's going to be a waste of your time'. And I said 'well could I try it first. Can I try my approach first and see what happens?' and they said 'yes, go for it'. So, what I do is I have a homework policy whereby they bring back their homework and they get a sticker on the chart. In term 1, if they bring back at least 80% of their homework then they get a reward. So that could be something like, I think we had an ice cream party, or maybe we would have a banana split party. Those who did not bring back their homework they didn't get the reward. They were taken outside or they were given work to do while we were having our party. I sent home a letter to the parents explaining this homework policy and the parents had to sign a letter coming back to me saying that they read it, they understood what I was saying and that they supported me. So that's what they did. The first term I was there I had about 95% of my homework returned, the second term I had about 90, third term I had about 85 because you know what happens in the last term with it almost being done. I had parents come and knock on my door; if their child was

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home sick they would come and knock on my door and would say look my child is at home sick but here is my child's homework. They told me homework doesn't work here. I say I have parents knocking on my door giving me their child's homework so it can work. So that's the one I'm most proud of.

The ideas and goals of non-Native educators must be supported by the school and the parents. If parents want their children doing homework then teachers should work with them to encourage it. I would also caution that non-Native teachers take time to listen to the parents and First Nation colleagues as I have seen non-Native teachers become passionate in their own agendas and are then unable to hear those who advise them not to proceed. The more educators work with parents the easier their job will be and the better the experience will be for the students. Audrey shared another idea when working with the flow of the community. She said:

Another successful thing to do is if you got any notices that have to go home, give them to the students at lunch time. Because if you don't then they'll never get home, because after school they don't go home, people go here and there and everywhere and the notes don't get home. I always gave out my homework, notices, forms, anything that had to go home I always gave to each of them at lunch time, so that way I knew they would get home.

While developing lessons and providing instructional practices educators need to reflect on what they are trying to achieve. Brenda Firman said:

Check with yourself why you're doing what you're doing? So if you have set an outcome, and you have a learning objective, for your lesson, check where they are spending most of their time, which is usually in the assignment in whatever way you've given it, and are they able to achieve that outcome by doing that assignment? Are they actually related?

Developing successful lessons includes evaluation as a critical element of learning. Just as instructional practices, lessons, and activities must be coherent with community cultural practices, so do the methods of evaluation.

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4.42 Evaluation. While developing lessons, questions regarding student learning must always be asked. How does an educator know that the students are learning? How does an educator evaluate their learning? And how does an educator know that what they are doing is meaningful to the student's lifelong learning? The experienced educators tackle this topic providing a range of ideas that incorporate all elements of learning such as the emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual. Assessments "must be developed from a sociocultural perspective, combining both the social and cultural contexts, as both play an important role in shaping a student's thinking" (Friesen, & Ezeife, 2009, p. 31). A First Nations educator discussed how student engagement is connected to assessment:

During the lesson if they're engaged with things, and are actually working on it, and really want to do it, see that their interested in it, they don't want to put it down and the next day they come in and say "okay can we work on this again?", "when are we going to do it again?", then I know.

She explained that not all learning is easily measured through "typical assessment and evaluations", explaining that "there are other things too that aren't necessarily measurable either that the standard doesn't allow us to measure like their level of interest. You don't get a mark for how interested you are with what's going on in the classroom." A successful teacher keeps an eye out for student responses to their learning and engagement, making adjustments when necessary. She added that she made "adjustments for something that I know that they got but they were just not putting down on paper properly." Verwood, Mitchell, & Machado (2011) wrote that, "Not only does culturally relevant assessment create new opportunities and spaces for learning, but it also helps to create an environment where Aboriginal youth can engage in and take responsibility for their learning" (pp. 62-63). If students struggle to explain their knowledge on paper it is important for the teacher to adjust the methods of evaluation in order to assist the

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students in demonstrating their knowledge, their growth, and their capabilities. A variety of assessment models can be used. Mary Oskineegish described some of the provincial assessment tools that she uses, such as “the rubric, running records and checklists.” She also “assesses them orally, both as a classroom teacher or as a Native language teacher.” Another assessment tool was created by Verwood, Mitchell, and Machado (2011) who developed an assessment model based on the concept of the medicine wheel for a particular course; they did this as they wanted to “create spaces and places where Indigenous youth can reconnect to sources of strength, including their cultures, languages, and spiritualities” (p. 63). A. Jane Tuesday described a similar holistic method of assessment; she explained that she evaluates “students by their participation and expression on their faces. I feel the energy as it emanates from students.” She doesn’t rely on marks solely as she said that:

Marks don’t really tell you much anyways; it’s just a bunch of information. I think I’m more interested in skills and to see if they understood that concept. And if they can demonstrate to me that they understood rather than just, that’s better than just writing it out on paper, or writing exams. Some people don’t like writing exams and I understand that.

Audrey Smith recommended educators ask themselves a series of questions when evaluating student learning:

Do they understand what they have to do? Do they need further explanations? Do they need more help to complete the task? By their performance on assignments and tests that you give, by their performance on one on one conferencing, can they answer questions on materials that were presented? So when you review the next day, do they remember what happened? Do they know what’s going on? Do they remember how to do things? And are they putting forward their best effort.

She highly recommends that teachers, parents and students do not compare students, but focus on the efforts of the student, to help encourage each student to put their best effort forward. Brenda Firman explained that evaluation and assessment “is no

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longer just about can you do it, but becoming more aware that assessment is part of the learning cycle” and educators need to be more conscious and aware of what they are assessing because “assessment is a part of learning and not as a value judgement.”

Friesen & Ezeife (2009) explain that “teachers need to be aware of the potential biases in their assessments and strive to eliminate them from their practice, or risk continuation of the cyclic perpetuation of failure for many Aboriginal students” (p. 32). In assessment, there are a variety of tools to help educators and students understand their learning process. All participants’ encouraged non-Native educators to move away from tests and marks as the only method of assessment and to look at the student’s emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual learning as well.

4.43 Grade level work. A concern for many of the educators that I spoke with was the inability of some students to work at grade level according to standardized testing or provincial curriculum expectations. This topic was not a question that I asked, rather a concern that almost every experienced educator spoke of independently. Based on curriculum testing, many students are not meeting grade level expectations. Before discussing this topic I feel it is important to state that educators must not assume that all students will have academic difficulties, and not all schools have the same testing results. It is also important to think about why students are not working at provincial levels; does the blame fall completely on the students? Does the teacher or the curriculum have an impact? Does the colonial context present many barriers for students? Hampton (1995) suggests that “the failure of non-Native education of Natives can be read as the success of Native resistance to cultural, spiritual, and psychological genocide” (p. 7). Until First Nations education is contextually appropriate to the student’s cultural background,

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students will continue to struggle and appear to be developing below grade level. Being aware without judgement of student capabilities is a key ingredient to successful teaching.

Mary Oskineegish pointed out the delicate balance regarding teaching appropriate grade levels:

You have to know where your students are in the grade level. If you push them too hard, they are not going to learn they just shut down, and it doesn't become a good time for them, and they don't want to come to school. We have to know what level they are, what level of teaching you are going to have them do. Not too low, because all the students have different levels and you have to be aware that there is all different levels, especially when you have a multi-grade classroom.... When [a student's] teacher doesn't know what level they are, I usually see them have lack of attendance, and they just don't want to come to school; even though we try really hard to have them come to school, they just don't want to come.... The teacher has to know what level they are at in each subject.

Mary pointed out that creating school work that is too difficult can cause students to not come to school, and on the other side creating school work that is simple does not help students either. A First Nations educator said:

I did observe on a number of occasions where the teacher was more or less babysitting, having students colour pictures or watch a movie. Killing time, babysitting more or less; students are being supervised sure, but what are they doing? There's too much of that going on.

Educators need to try multiple ways of adjusting their teaching when needed.

Mary Oskineegish has seen this often:

A lot of teachers try to use the Ontario curriculum and a lot of them make changes and make adjustments when they know that the students cannot do the grade level. When you do that, it helps the students - when you do adjustments to your teaching - but when you stick to your curriculum it doesn't work for you up here and they usually quit in the year or during the year.

Adjusting curriculum and adjusting teaching styles are equally important. A. Jane Tuesday warned of the harm of a lecture style approach, she said:

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A lot of teachers will just do lecture style and a worksheet. That's the worst thing you can do with Native kids. That's not how they learn and that's why I think they are so behind in grade level, a lot of them, and why there is such a high drop-out rate because that style of teaching doesn't work, it doesn't work very well.

Brenda Firman shared her ideas for avoiding the “babysitting” trap described earlier, providing an example in a language class:

Let's say you do a phonics lesson, and you spend a few minutes doing 'o, a a a' making all these sounds and showing these pictures but maybe they don't even know what they are anyway, can't pronounce them anyway because they are second language, so there isn't really a connect, and then they get a sheet to colour in, and draw lines too; well is that really helping them learn to read? Probably not, they're just sitting and colouring.

She explained that having students sit and colour to fill time or because they won't listen to a teacher's lecture is not the solution. Instead she advises teachers to look at the lessons they are providing and make sure that students are actually learning.

Learning materials, instructional practices, and evaluation practices must meet the needs of the students. All of the educators shared stories of teaching split level grades that can result in varying learning levels and capabilities. It is clear that non-Native educators need to learn the needs and interests of their students in order to develop effective learning experiences. It is also clear that the issue of students working at multiple grade levels must be approached without judgement, or discrediting their capabilities.

In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations), stated in its policy paper that “unless a child learns about the forces which shape him: the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being” (p. 9). It is through the development of responsive lessons, evaluation tools and practices that the shift of “education into culture, not culture into education” can be implemented (Kirkness, 1998, p. 12). Through this

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privilege of learning from experienced educators, both Native and non-Native ally, I have learned that transforming First Nations education to meet these goals is an act that goes beyond adjustments or adaptations to the education system, it asks for all educators to work towards a learning experience that is agreed upon by community, parents and educators.

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I summarize the main findings that address the question leading this project; “What do experienced educators (First Nations and ally) believe that non-Native teachers should know about planning and teaching First Nations students in remote communities in northern Ontario?” The knowledge shared by the experienced educators asks non-Native teachers to listen to colleagues, parents and community members in order to learn how to provide a meaningful learning experience. I discuss how the findings from this study reinforce the knowledge in previous literature, such as learning from experienced educators (Goulet, 2001), working in collaboration with the community (Agbo, 2006, 2007; Bell, 2004; Fulford, 2007; Taylor, 1995), and transforming First Nations education for increased success to occur (Kirkness, 1998; Mendelson, 2008). I also discuss how the findings contribute to the current literature with a focus on who the teacher is and how this connects to student success. The findings respond to the concerns of the non-Native and non-Inuit teachers in Agbo (2006), Berger & Epp (2007) and Harper’s (2000) research regarding inadequate training and resources. I conclude this chapter with further research ideas and what these changes mean for the advancement of First Nations education.

I began this research hoping to add to the discussion on how non-Native educators can learn to develop culturally appropriate ways of teaching. After listening to the personal narratives of the experienced educators I realized that I needed to shift the focus from ‘what’ teachers can do to ‘who’ teachers are and how this directly affects the development of a successful learning environment. A successful learning environment reinforces the values students bring from their home, encourages wholistic development

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and strengthens a student's sense of self. The education system, the curriculum content, and teacher epistemologies are all elements in need of change for success to ensue. First Nations students are not failing, they are not in need of changing, it is the learning environment that is failing students. Anderson (2002) explains that:

The education system was not designed to teach us that we are Anishinaabe, but indoctrinate us as to how we should embrace the world of the colonizer, be molded into the image they have defined and accept, without question, their ways and our place as second class citizens. (p. 295)

This discussion is not to place blame on individual educators or to take away from the sincere efforts of all educators. Rather it is to eliminate the current cultural deficit discourse often heard by non-Native educators to justify the high drop out rate of Aboriginal students in Canada. Orłowski (2008) found almost all of the 10 White high school teachers he interviewed use the cultural deficit discourse by blaming Aboriginal parents and cultural affiliation for student learning difficulties. In this research, none of the educators, Native or non-Native, blamed students, parents, community or culture for education difficulties. Instead they focused on how teachers can create a successful learning environment. Hampton (1995) says that "if educators realize that they are agents of cultural brainwashing rather than altruistic helpers, much that is otherwise incomprehensible becomes self-evident" (p. 35). For non-Native educators to be part of successful education practices they must first recognize how colonization has affected education in Canada and continues to affect it today. Iseke-Barnes (2008) says that:

A step in the process of defeating colonial power is to recognize this power, how it is structured into an integrated system, and to begin to disrupt it through knowledge of how the system works. With this knowledge the system can be challenged and dismantled. (p. 123-124)

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The first step is for teachers to reflect on the pedagogy that perpetuates assimilative practices and to recognize their own epistemology as well as their students' epistemology. This is not an easy process, but according to the educators I spoke with and in my own personal experience the educator who is actively listening and learning will develop the capabilities to create the interconnectedness of home and school that the students need to thrive.

According to Bell (2004), Fulford (2007), Goulet (2001) and the experienced educators that I spoke to, there will always be successful examples to learn from. There may be formal positions or committees assigned to assist educators in transitioning into the community or to assist in developing meaningful cultural activities (Bell, 2004; Fulford, 2007). If there is not, there will be dedicated educators willing to help non-Native teachers in the transition as shared by Goulet (2001) and those in this study. Most of the educators that I spoke to said that they were always available and willing to share their knowledge and experience with anyone wanting to know. It is when non-Native teachers demonstrate resistance to listening and learning, or dismiss what they hear, who will have difficulties meeting the students' needs.

The ideas presented in this project are a snapshot of views and do not represent the views of everyone in every community. That is why many of the educators spoke of the importance of being open to new experiences and new ideas. Those who had experience working in various communities directly mentioned differences in each place. What occurs in one place may not work in another community, especially if it is against the goals of the community. Though there is not one single formula for non-Native teachers to subscribe to, there are clear directions to help in the transition. From the

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knowledge gathered in the previous chapter, I have created six main points that can help non-Native educators who are going to teach in a remote First Nations community in northern Ontario, and are likely useful to consider in similar contexts. They are:

1. Realize that you are entering a community with values, knowledge, skills and experience that are vital to a student's learning experience.
2. Reflect on your own personal intentions in order to demonstrate sincerity, build reciprocal relationships, and recognize your role as a visitor.
3. Remember that you are to be part of a learning environment that validates the interconnections between home, school, community and culture. Your teaching practices must enhance the learning environment and not go against it.
4. Successful education requires a shift from authoritative teacher to learner. As an educator, you must be willing to put yourself in the humble position of the learner, to be flexible, to laugh at the good and the challenging, and to be patient, especially as the journey of the learner can be difficult and challenging at times.
5. Work to support culturally responsive education through lesson plans, evaluation practices and curriculum expectations.
6. Work to ensure that your teaching practices strengthen a student's sense of self while developing their intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical self.

Every community is unique with its own culture, ideals, and ways of living; though not all examples provided in this project will be applicable, I am confident that the attitude of the learner can be applied anywhere. The attitude of the learner, being of service, and getting to know the students, parents, colleagues and community members is

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applicable to any community – the specific lessons and plans will have to be adjusted and decided within each community.

If teachers arrive in First Nations communities knowing that their learning is far from complete they may arrive more willing to learn. In Agbo's (2006) research, the non-Native teachers recommended that they needed "two types of orientation: 1) prior to their arrival in the community; and, 2) after their arrival in the community" (p. 46). Similar to this, I suggest that faculties of education could be viewed as part 1 of training and re-education with part 2 considered to be ongoing and occurring in the community. I say community and not school as the school is not a separate entity, it is only one source of a student's growth and development. Until changes in training and orientation take place educators can initiate their own re-education by seeking the experienced educators that are their colleagues.

The stories shared by the educators that I spoke with encouraged cultural inclusion through language and land based learning; culturally responsive education begins with sharing the values, knowledge and skills of the community. Educators are not asked to include aspects of culture into the provincial curriculum content, educators are encouraged to create a learning environment that is an extension of the learning provided in the students' homes and in the community. Learning and training can begin prior to working in a community by re-learning the history of Aboriginal people and, colonialism and by exploring examples of educational practices that have been harmful to student success as well as educational practices that have been successful.

It is important to remember that success is not always based on academic achievements. Two of the First Nations educators spoke of their own personal challenges

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while going through the education system. They spoke of feeling lost, and not seeing their own identity in the education system. Though these educators continued their education, it is a strong reminder of why so many others struggle to continue in the current education system. Goulet (2001) says that “social struggles are enacted in classroom practice where Aboriginal students can encounter an ethnocentric curriculum, authoritative relationships, racist attitudes, and prejudicial beliefs about their inferiority or deficits” (p. 68). She shared stories of experienced educators to show how sharing knowledge and experience is an important method of learning for other educators. In my own experience, I felt that the majority of my learning how to teach in a remote community came from listening and learning from the experienced educators that I was fortunate enough to call my colleagues. They were able to share their experience and direct me to the community for many resources and learning opportunities for both me and my students.

The knowledge shared in this research extends the knowledge in previous literature as it explores who the teacher is in connection to student success and it responds to concerns regarding teacher training, learning resources and improving student success within First Nations education, showing some promising avenues for non-Native teachers teaching in remote First Nations communities to pursue. The knowledge shared in this study points to the effect teachers have on student success. A non-Native teacher’s learning journey begins with the foundation of sincerity and honesty; from this place, all other areas of learning can develop, such as building reciprocal relationships, respecting the role of the visitor, and a willingness to learn from the knowledge and experience of others. Non-Native educators must be willing to reflect

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on their own teaching practices – making adjustments when needed in order to meet the needs of the students and be part of the advancement of student success.

Previous research has found non-Native teachers to be concerned over lack of training in English as a Second Language, cultural awareness, and appropriate learning resources (Agbo, 2006; Berger & Epp, 2007; Harper, 2000). Harper (2000) asks: “Is it really possible to prepare teachers from elsewhere for work and life in the North? If it is possible, how do we best prepare teachers for careers in remote, northern, band-controlled schools” (p.154)? The response to this question, and to the concern about lack of resources is threefold; from personal reflection, experienced colleagues, and community members (parents, Elders, community members). It begins by helping non-Native teachers to learn to work with the community. Stairs (1995) describes a difference between Native and non-Native teachers:

Most basically, non-Native teachers identify primarily with the formal education system and strive to bring the community into the school, while Native teachers identify with their communities and strive to make the school a significant part of the students’ community life. (p. 147)

Non-Native teachers can learn from experienced educators in the community, from parents and from community members to learn how to “make the school a significant part of the students’ community life.” The learning and training structure may look different than their experience in the Faculty of Education; therefore, it is important for educators to initiate their own opportunities for learning. In remote communities, the learning and training will depend on personal initiative and a willingness to listen and learn along with their ability to reflect on their previous ideas of teaching and education. Those willing to become teacher and learner will find numerous resources and opportunities for learning.

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A challenge for many First Nations schools is hiring quality educators who will work well in the school and the community. In response to this challenge, two educators who are also community members suggest the implementation of community training. Mary Oskineegish suggested that “it would be a good idea if teachers would come in to the community, have a teacher orientation in the community” and not solely in urban communities. Another First Nations educator suggested that Faculty of Education programs allow for student placement to take place in First Nations communities, and not solely in urban communities. There have been some improvements in teacher training and even student placements occurring in Aboriginal communities (Bell, 2004); however, the concerns and ideas made by educators suggest that further improvements in the hiring educators are needed.

The ideas that have emerged from this research generate future research questions that are beyond the scope of this project. Future research questions in need of exploration are: How would the development of formal training in each community assist the transition for non-Native teachers? Can Faculty of Education programs work with communities to develop collaborative training and practicum opportunities? Can Faculties of Education assist teachers to understand how colonization impacts education and impacts student success? As First Nations education changes to meet the needs of the students, the role of the non-Native teacher will have to change alongside it.

Thinking of my own experience teaching in a remote First Nations community in northern Ontario I would say that I tried to listen and learn and I laughed. I remember laughing with the students every day and thinking there is nothing more rewarding than having fun while teaching and learning. The laughter helped a great deal, especially on

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those challenging days when mistakes were made, and lessons did not go as planned. Re-learning everything that I knew about education was a difficult task at times, but without the support and guidance of experienced educators, parents and community members my experience could have been much more difficult. As I listened to the experienced educators in this study I often found myself reflecting on my own experience, identifying times when I listened to the students needs, cringing at the times that I should have done better, and wishing that I had arrived with far more knowledge of First Nations history, colonialism, and holistic learning.

My goal throughout this work was to support student success. By exploring the relationship between the non-Native teacher and First Nations student success I had hoped to describe how teachers can develop culturally responsive lessons that ensure a positive learning experience. What I ended up learning was the effect a teachers' attitude has on his or her role in the community and ability to connect with and teach students. The culturally responsive lesson plan comes second to who the teacher is. A sincere, open and positive teacher will become open to re-learning and re-adjusting his or her teaching approach, will adopt the knowledge and values of the community, and will find numerous ways of including Elders, language, land based learning, and community members into the learning environment.

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Appendix A: Guiding conversation questions

Background Information:

1. Do you identify yourself as a person with Aboriginal ancestry?
2. How long have you taught in a remote northern First Nations' school?
 - a) Less than 5 years
 - b) 5 – 10 years
 - c) 10-15 years
 - d) More than 15 years
3. What is your background in teaching/working within Aboriginal education?
4. Have you mentored a non-Aboriginal teacher? (ie. formally or informally assisted, provided advice, etc...)

Personal Teaching Philosophy:

5. In your opinion, how important is it for teachers to include First Nations students' culture (ie. values, norms, traditions, & language) into their classroom?
6. In your experience, how does the inclusion of First Nations culture affect students in school?
7. Could you share some of your experiences in developing and teaching successful teaching practices/lessons?
7. How do you assess and evaluate student success? (i.e. how do you know that you have provided a successful classroom lesson for the students?)

Advice to new teachers:

8. What advice do you have for non-Aboriginal teachers, who are going to teach in a remote First Nations' community in northern Ontario, on best teaching practices?
9. In your opinion, what is the best way a non-Aboriginal teacher can be respectful while working in a remote First Nations' community?
10. In your opinion, what is the best way a non-Aboriginal teacher should approach colleagues or community members to aid in their development of culturally appropriate lessons?
11. What characteristics are necessary for non-Aboriginal teachers to be successful in teaching First Nations' students?

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12. Do other factors affect the ways in which a teacher can become a successful teacher for their students?

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Appendix B: email message to potential participants I personally know

To: (potential participant)

I am currently working on a thesis research at Lakehead University for the Master's of Education program. I am interviewing teachers who have worked in a remote Aboriginal community in northern Ontario in order to help new non-Aboriginal teachers become successful teachers for Aboriginal students. I would like to interview you for this project as you have experience creating successful educational practices and have knowledge that would be of great benefit on this topic.

I have attached a description and consent form along with the questions that I would ask during the interview for your consideration. Participation is completely voluntary. If, after reviewing the description and consent form, you are interested in participating, please let me know. I would contact you by phone to answer any questions you might have before deciding on whether to take part.

We could then arrange to complete the interview at a mutually determined date and time, either in person or by telephone. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at: mmoberly@lakeheadu.ca or (807) 285 3947.

This research has been approved by the Lakehead University Senate Research Ethics Board. My supervisor is Dr. Paul Berger, Associate Professor, and my committee member is Dr. John Hodson, Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Aboriginal Education.

Thank you for considering this request,

Melissa Oskineegish

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Appendix C: email message to potential participants referred by others

To: (Potential participant)

My name is Melissa Oskineegish, I am a student in the Master's of Education program at Lakehead University. I am conducting thesis research based on my own experience as a non-Aboriginal teacher who taught in a remote First Nations community in northern Ontario. I am interviewing teachers who have worked in a remote Aboriginal community in northern Ontario in order to help new non-Aboriginal teachers become successful teachers for Aboriginal students. I have your name as someone who would be good to interview from _____. I would like to interview you for this project as you have experience creating successful educational practices and have knowledge that would be of great benefit on this topic.

I have attached a description and consent form along with the questions that I would ask during the interview for your consideration. Participation is completely voluntary. If, after reviewing the description and consent form, you are interested in participating, please let me know. I would contact you by phone to answer any questions you might have before deciding on whether to take part.

We could then arrange to complete the interview at a mutually determined date and time, either in person or by telephone. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at: mmoberly@lakeheadu.ca or (807) 285 3947.

This research has been approved by the Lakehead University Senate Research Ethics Board. My supervisor is Dr. Paul Berger, Associate Professor, and my committee member is Dr. John Hodson, Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Aboriginal Education.

Thank you for considering this request,

Melissa Oskineegish

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Appendix D: Description and Consent Form

How can non-Aboriginal teachers best develop culturally responsive programs in remote Aboriginal communities? Learning from the Experts.

Description and Consent Form

Dear Participant,

I am currently working on a research study that looks at how non-Aboriginal teachers can learn to develop culturally responsive programs in remote northern Aboriginal communities. I hope to address this question by interviewing experienced educators (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal allies) who have mentored non-Aboriginal teachers and/or who have developed successful educational practices for Aboriginal students. I would like to interview you for this research study as I believe that your knowledge and experience in Aboriginal education can be of great benefit to new teachers who seek to work with Aboriginal students.

Description of the project: This research study seeks to honour the knowledge and experience of educators who have worked in remote communities in northern Ontario. The information regarding the development of culturally responsive practices will help non-Aboriginal teachers recognize the knowledge, training and mentorship that can arise in each community and help teachers become better teachers, which will ultimately impact the success of Aboriginal students.

Interviews: I will conduct interviews in person or by phone, for approximately one hour or when you feel you are finished. Participation is voluntary and you are under no obligation to be interviewed. If you chose to be interviewed you may refuse to answer any question, and you may stop at any time without penalty.

I have attached the questions for your consideration. The questions will be used as a guide but will not be followed rigorously as I encourage you to share what you feel is important on this topic. The guiding questions will ask what you think is important for non-Aboriginal teachers to know to be successful teachers, as well as ask you to share your experience in best practices in Aboriginal education. If you agree, I will audio-record the interview.

You will be invited to review the transcript of the interview to check for accuracy in representation and/or to make additions or comments.

Risks & Benefits: No known risk is associated with participation in the research. A small token of thanks will be given after the interview.

Confidentiality & Data Storage: Your name and other identifiable information will remain confidential, unless you prefer to have your name used. All interview data will be

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safely stored at Lakehead University for a period of five years.

Research Results: Research results will be shared in the thesis; and may be shared in reports; academic journal articles; academic presentations; and workshops for teachers.

Researcher Information: The research is being conducted by:

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The research has been approved by:

Lakehead Research Ethics Board: (tel: 807 766 7289)

I, _____, have been fully informed of the objective of the research being conducted. I understand these objectives and consent to being interviewed for the project. I understand that I can choose whether or not my name will be used. I understand that I do not have to answer any question that I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

I would like to remain anonymous
in presentations and writing about
this research

or

I would like my name used in
presentations and writing about
this research

I agree to have the interview audio-recorded

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Signature of the participant

Date

Signature of the witness

Date