

**Non-Aboriginal Teachers' Perspectives
on Teaching Native Studies**

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ABSTRACT

Since the mid-1980s, the Saskatchewan Department of Education has approved the instruction of Native Studies courses in provincial high schools. In hope of enhancing the instruction of these courses, this study focused on the perspectives of Non-Aboriginal teachers who were assigned to teach Native Studies. Through a questionnaire, personal interviews, and a focus group, nine Non-Aboriginal high-school teachers examined the following aspects of the courses: formal and informal training of instructors, goals of the courses, key content and pedagogical methodologies, major challenges, and recommendations for improving the delivery of the classes.

The literary context for the research was based upon three major areas: Non-Aboriginal teachers' perspectives on teaching Aboriginal students, preparing teachers to teach Native Studies, and preparing teachers to instruct Native Studies to Aboriginal students. Due to the 'single-group' nature of Native Studies curricula, considerable literature examination was focused on multicultural education models.

The research data of the study revealed that the majority of interviewees have minimal formal education experience with Aboriginal content or epistemology. In addition, most of the study participants indicated little, if any, informal cultural contact with Aboriginal peoples. Study participants generally acknowledged the limitations of their scant academic and experiential interaction with Aboriginal cultures, and recommended means of various education stakeholders improving the situation.

The study also exposed a variety of teacher perspectives about the goals of the courses. While there was unanimity regarding the efficacy of the courses, most teachers believed the goals of Native Studies varied depending on the

cultural composition of the class. In addition, a couple of teachers inferred that a major objective of Native Studies courses is the promotion of an ‘anti-establishment’ political message. Some teachers also indicated a quandary regarding whether the course curricula required them to “teach Aboriginal culture, or teach about Aboriginal culture.”

In terms of course content and teaching methodologies, there were numerous opinions on ‘what was important’. All the interviewees viewed history as a significant ingredient to a ‘good’ Native Studies class, but some of the teachers expressed a reluctance to delve into such issues as Aboriginal spirituality, racism, and ‘white-privilege’. There was also hesitation amongst many of the respondents to incorporate traditional Aboriginal epistemologies into course methodologies because they wanted to personalize instruction, not base it upon cultural generalizations.

In addition to the aforementioned issues and corresponding challenges associated with the background training for the courses, the goals of the courses, and the content and methodology of the courses, the study participants highlighted other concerns with the teaching of Native Studies: irrelevant curricula, lack of materials, poor course funding, student absenteeism, student perception that the courses are for ‘non-academics’, lack of flexible timetabling for experiential learning, and lack of staff knowledge and appreciation of Aboriginal cultures. All administrative levels of the education system were identified by the interviewees as influential in helping to mitigate the difficulties associated with the instruction of Native Studies.

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CHAPTER ONE

Context for the Research

The Canadian Federal Government gave Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan paternalistic permission to have their children attend public schools in 1951 (Perley, 1993). This constitutional allowance for Aboriginal students to attend public schools did not, however, result in an immediate influx of Aboriginal students into the public school system of urban centres. Rather than send their children to public schools, most Aboriginal parents continued to send their children to residential schools. Not until the late 1960s and 1970s did urban public school systems of the province begin to witness a substantial increase in the enrollment of Aboriginal students. Aboriginal unwillingness to endure the overt assimilation efforts of residential schooling plus the economic lure of cities eventually helped create an escalation in the number of Aboriginal students attending urban public schools. Recent data indicate that 34 per cent of Status Indians in Saskatchewan presently reside in urban centres (Heit & Blair, 1993). This high percentage of Aboriginals living in urban centres, many of whom live below the poverty-line, plus demographic information indicating that Aboriginal children will account for 45.7% of students attending schools in Saskatchewan by the year 2001 and that Aboriginal students are more than twice as likely as Non-Aboriginal students to leave school prior to high school graduation (Saskatchewan Education, 1991), have helped force urban school boards to institute programs which attempt to address the needs of the Aboriginal community.

To counteract the numerous difficulties which Aboriginal students encounter in the urban environment of Saskatchewan, school boards, both public and separate, have instituted new curricula. These new curricula, which usually adhere to directives from the Provincial Department of Education, have the following objectives: all students and teachers, regardless of race, develop an appreciation of Aboriginal cultures; curricular materials are relevant to Aboriginal students; all components of the education system transmit positive and accurate information in order to aid Native student efforts to gain a positive self-image and cultural identity (Saskatchewan Education, 1991, p. 13). By striving for these aforementioned goals, many educators hope to achieve a post-colonial education system for Aboriginal peoples which is free of systemic inequality.

Native Studies is one of the curriculum endeavors often referred to by provincial school boards as evidence that strides are being taken to “develop each student’s personal and cultural awareness and understanding, to promote the development of positive attitudes in all students towards Indian and Metis peoples, and to recognize biased and racist information” (Sask. Education, 1991, p. 11). The implementation of these courses is meant to ameliorate ethnocentric views in society and, arguably in the case of urban settings, help in offering “social-cultural enclaves for students, especially those from rural reservations” (Wright, 1990, p. 21). Native Studies courses in Saskatchewan are presently offered in some urban and rural settings at the grade 10, 11, and 12 levels. The three Native Studies courses are offered as alternatives to the history and social studies courses. The grade 10 Native Studies course is entitled *Societal Structures of Indian, Metis, and Inuit Peoples*, the grade 11 Native Studies, also known as Native Studies 20, is entitled *International Indigenous Issues*, and the grade 12

course, sometimes referred to as Native Studies 30, is entitled *Reasserting Control: Canadian Aboriginal Development*. Much to the chagrin of the Indian and Metis Education Advisory Committee (Saskatchewan Education, 1995), these courses are not mandatory components of high school matriculation, however, their prevalence is increasing throughout the province. Updated statistics (see Appendix A) indicate that Native Studies classes are presently taught in sixty of 178 Saskatchewan high schools which offer grades ten, eleven, and twelve. In Saskatoon, a minimum of one course in Native Studies is presently taught in all but one of the public high schools while the separate system offers Native Studies courses in three of its five high schools.

Just like any other course, students of Native Studies have eclectic cultural backgrounds. Saskatoon's student enrollment in Native Studies courses is not confined to those individuals of Aboriginal ancestry; in fact, the multicultural education initiatives supported by both the Saskatoon Public School Board and the Saskatoon Catholic School Board assume Native Studies will be accessible to all cultural groups in society. Whenever Aboriginal students comprise a significant percentage of the class roster, their cultural background is likely Metis or connected to one of the following First Nation's cultures commonly associated with present-day Saskatchewan: Cree, Dene, Anishinibeg, Dakota, Nakota, Saulteaux.

The teachers assigned to instruct Native Studies courses in Saskatoon also come from diverse cultural roots. Since there is no policy expectation in Saskatoon indicating that teachers of Native Studies should be Aboriginal, both Non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal teachers instruct Native Studies. In fact, the majority of Native Studies teachers in Saskatoon's high schools are Non-Aboriginal. The Saskatoon Public Board is presently trying to achieve an

affirmative action hiring goal of increasing the percentage of Aboriginal teaching staff (Willett, 1996), but there is no indication from the Board that more Aboriginal staff would automatically translate into more Native Studies teachers of Aboriginal descent. At present, it appears obvious that in the immediate future and potentially over the long-term, Non-Aboriginal teachers will continue to play a prominent role in Saskatoon in the instruction of Native Studies to Aboriginal students.

The Problem

An important educational stakeholder whose voice has often gone unrecorded in critiquing the effectiveness of Native Studies courses in meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students is that of teachers. Curriculum writers and educational theorists have been influential in developing the Native Studies courses, but teachers, both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal, who often have the greatest effect on the outcome of the courses, have not been heard. Some Aboriginal teachers in Saskatchewan are finally beginning to have their perspective on formal schooling heard (Battiste, Bouvier, & St. Denis, 1997; Friesen & Orr, 1995), including the role of Native Studies, but Non-Aboriginal teachers' voices have remained largely silent regarding the influence Native Studies classes may have on students. This exclusion of Non-Aboriginal voices may be largely due to the stereotypical view that only Aboriginals can truly ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of Native Studies curricula and its influence on Aboriginal students, but the reality is that without the inclusion of Non-Aboriginal teachers' perspectives in the examination of Native Studies a

holistic view of how schools are meeting cross-cultural needs for all students is not attained.

Not only should Aboriginal educators be questioning the effectiveness of Native Studies courses in achieving stipulated curricula mandates, so too should Non-Aboriginals. While it is obviously erroneous and simplistic to draw a direct correlation between continued societal roadblocks facing Aboriginal Peoples and unsuccessful Native Studies courses, it is still important for all pedagogical professionals to deliberate whether Native Studies courses are increasing student sensitivity towards and awareness of Aboriginal cultures. Are these courses helping students to respect Native cultures and to become aware of the societal inequalities which have long plagued Aboriginal Peoples or are they only serving to maintain a status-quo which is rife with cultural misunderstandings and racism?

Significance of the Research

This study of the perspectives of Non-Aboriginal teachers instructing Native Studies is needed to improve the delivery of Native Studies courses to all students. The views expressed by Non-Aboriginal teachers can be utilized by educational stakeholders, including Aboriginal parents and elders, to more accurately identify educator beliefs and practices which are perceived to either aid or harm the delivery of Native Studies. The statements of the study participants will also help gauge the effectiveness of a Single Group Study (Sleeter & Grant, 1993), like Native Studies, in helping to ameliorate cross-cultural misunderstandings and discord. In addition, inclusion of the Non-Aboriginal teacher's voice in Native Studies with the emerging Aboriginal teacher's voice

throughout the formal schooling system brings an enhanced objectivity in determining the school programming needs which best serve Aboriginal cultures in urban centres.

The responses of Non-Aboriginal teachers is meant not only to help all education stakeholders to critique the appropriateness and delivery of Native Studies courses, but also to provide information on how effective present teacher preparation programs are in sensitizing educators to the needs of urban Aboriginal communities. Do Non-Aboriginal teachers perceive the realities of teaching Native Studies to urban Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students to support or to contradict the educational training they receive at university or Board-sponsored inservices?

Research Questions

The focus of this research was to provide insight into the perspectives of Non-Aboriginal teachers as they instruct Native Studies to Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students in the urban centre of Saskatoon. The key questions which helped guide this investigation were as follows:

1. What background training and experiences do Non-Aboriginal teachers have which have prepared them for the instruction of Native Studies?
2. What do Non-Aboriginal teachers perceive as the goals of Native Studies courses?
3. What teaching content and pedagogical processes do Non-Aboriginal teachers

view as significant in helping them achieve the goals of the courses?

4. What challenges have Non-Aboriginal teachers encountered in the teaching of Native Studies?
5. What recommendations do Non-Aboriginal teachers have for improving the delivery of Native Studies?

Researcher's Story

During my first eight years of employment with the Saskatoon Public School Board I was privileged to teach Social Studies to both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students at Mount Royal Collegiate. Although I enjoyed the experience and believed I was working in the best interests of my students, I was often perplexed and frustrated by the negative reaction I received from some Non-Aboriginal students whenever they were informed that the course being studied examined Aboriginal content and perspectives. Once informed of the course outline, many students exclaimed 'I do not want to learn any more Aboriginal stuff' or, in worst case scenarios, 'Indians get too much stuff, why should I learn about a bunch of freeloaders'. Saskatchewan Education curricula encouraged the inclusion of Aboriginal content in the classroom, yet my experience often appeared to contradict the goal of creating a more harmonious relationship between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students. Instead of fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding between all peoples, the schooling experience appeared to encourage negative stereotyping and racism.

Another frustration of teaching at Mount Royal, and undoubtedly linked to the apparent lack of understanding between Aboriginals and Non-Aboriginals, was the poor attendance and leaving-school rate of some Aboriginal students. Despite my best teaching efforts, Aboriginal students consistently missed class and often left school. While various economic and social realities outside of school influenced this leaving-school rate, I was convinced that schools could do more to improve Aboriginal student attendance. The arrival of Native Studies courses in the early 1990s was meant to alleviate some of the formal schooling concerns facing Aboriginal students, yet many of the problems continued unabated. Although I was not so naive as to think Native Studies courses would be a panacea in improving Aboriginal students' academic success rates at the school and in enhancing understanding of Aboriginal cultures by both Native and Non-Native students, I was hoping they would help mitigate some of the challenges faced by Aboriginal students in the formal education system.

My interest in the effectiveness of Native Studies classes improving all students' perceptions of Aboriginal communities and increasing the retention rate of Aboriginal students in the school system was intensified this last teaching year when I was transferred to Aden Bowman Collegiate in Saskatoon and assigned the responsibility of instructing two Native Studies 20 courses. I was excited about the opportunity to teach Native Studies, since it would provide a chance for me to be a primary witness to the course and its impact on students, but I also experienced some apprehension, especially after I was informed that I had been asked to disseminate the course only after the lone Aboriginal instructor on staff had refused to teach the class because he perceived the curriculum as 'anti-white'. As I prepared my materials and planned my methodologies for the course, there were numerous self-initiated queries which I entertained. Not having taken any

Native Studies classes at university, I asked myself, do I have sufficient academic training to adequately instruct the course? Should I delve into the issue of Aboriginal spirituality and, if so, to what extent and in what manner? How will the fact that I am not Aboriginal affect my approach to the course and subsequent student response?

Having just completed my first year of teaching Native Studies classes at Aden Bowman, and as a self-proclaimed caring and reflective teacher, I felt impelled to try and respond to the aforementioned questions plus examine the omnipresent issue of whether Native Studies courses in Saskatoon are achieving their desired impact, and, if not, discover what can be done to improve the situation. The realities of Saskatchewan's burgeoning Aboriginal population, including such accompanying societal issues as racism and economic self-sufficiency, makes it more imperative than ever that schools provide an environment in which all cultures and races are respected.

The opportunity to interview other teachers of Native Studies has been invaluable in helping me examine my queries about Native Studies courses in Saskatoon. Prior to writing this thesis, I heard a lot of informal comments from Non-Aboriginal teachers about the level of success of Native Studies classes in addressing the needs of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students, but I had difficulty locating any formal documentation on their perspectives. This lack of information on the views of Non-Aboriginal teachers who teach Native Studies was unfortunate since they bring a unique perspective to the education arena.

Without more dialogue, including views from both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal teachers, on curricular items impacting on all students, I am worried urban education systems will be missing an opportunity to improve. If Aboriginal communities are not convinced that school boards are taking the

necessary steps to mitigate racism and provide a successful formal education experience for Aboriginal students they may choose to develop a separate school system for their children. To me, the existence of separate schools based on race or culture is a significant threat to the stability of Canada's pluralistic society because segregation breeds mistrust and suspicion rather than the harmony required for a unified nation.

Delimitations

1. The study was delimited to Non-Aboriginal teachers working in the urban centre of Saskatoon who teach Native Studies courses or have taught Native Studies courses at least once in either the public or separate school system.
2. Data were gathered by means of a questionnaire, interviews, and a focus group.
3. Data collection occurred in the fall of 1997 and the winter and spring of 1998.

Limitations

1. Since the researcher is employed as a teacher in Saskatoon, participants in the study are known to the researcher as either colleagues, friends or acquaintances.
2. Since only Non-Aboriginal teachers of Native Studies in Saskatoon were interviewed, the teachers' views may not reflect the perspectives of Non-Aboriginal teachers in other urban or rural centres.

3. Since Native Studies is often considered a 'sensitive' education issue', teachers may have felt pressured to provide 'politically correct' responses.
4. Since the anonymity of the respondents might have been compromised by a detailed description of their teaching environment, individual case studies were not utilized in the examination of teacher perspectives.
5. My perceptions influenced the interpretation of the collected data.
6. Data collection techniques were limited by my experience level and the direction I received from my supervisor.

Definitions

For the purpose of the study, the following terms are defined:

Aboriginal

Refers to First Nations, Inuit and Metis people. Often used interchangeably with 'Native'.

Culture

Refers to the way of life a group of people live. It includes beliefs, attitudes, values, means of communication, socialization patterns, and learning styles.

Epistemology

Refers to the characteristic strategies of acquiring knowledge, skills, and

conceptual understandings. It includes a combination of perception and processing.

Euro-Canadian

This term is used to indicate aspects of Canadian culture which are generally associated with the traditions, values, beliefs and practices emerging from European society.

Multicultural Education

An educational initiative which is geared “to reform the school and other educational institutions so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality” (Banks, 1994, p. 3).

Non-Aboriginal

A term referring to those individuals who are not considered First Nation, Inuit, or Metis. Often used interchangeably with ‘Non-Native’.

Post-Colonial

Term used to denote the period after colonial structures impacting on Aboriginal cultures have been eradicated. Since colonial structures continue to have considerable influence over Aboriginal Peoples, this era has yet to be realized (Duran & Duran, 1995; Perley, 1993).

Teaching Strategies

Describes the framework of approaches a teacher may take to achieve learning objectives. Strategies can be direct, indirect, interactive, experiential or independent study. Often used interchangeably with teaching methodologies.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Literature which specifically addresses the topic of Non-Aboriginal teachers' perspective on teaching Native Studies to both Native and Non-Native students in an urban environment is limited. Detailed personal testimonials are available in which Non-Aboriginal teachers' reveal their insights on teaching Aboriginal students (Richardson, 1994; Taylor, 1995), as well a plethora of information exists on the appropriate cultural content for educators to incorporate into Native Studies curricula (Cajete, 1994; Hampton, 1995; Sweet, 1994). Detailed writings are also available on the best pedagogical methodologies to strongly consider when instructing students of Aboriginal ancestry (Gilliland, 1995; Taras, 1997), but a definite literary void exists in knowing the views of Non-Aboriginal high school teachers who have been entrusted with teaching Native Studies to students in an urban setting.

Examination of Non-Aboriginal teachers' viewpoints towards the instruction of Native Studies is contextually enhanced with knowledge of current literary findings in the following areas: previous Non-Aboriginal teachers' perspectives in instructing Aboriginal peoples, educator requirements to consider when teaching a culturally specific course like Native Studies, and recommended educator knowledge base when teaching students of Aboriginal ancestry in an urban setting. By examining literature on each of the aforementioned areas, a knowledge template is established which allows for greater comprehension and analysis of the research findings.

Non-Aboriginal Teachers' Perspectives on Teaching Aboriginal Students

Compilation of Non-Aboriginal teachers' testimonials of experiences instructing Aboriginal students provides information in the following areas: teacher attitudes when first undertaking the responsibility of teaching Aboriginal students, teacher diagnosis of problems associated with the education of Aboriginal students, and teacher prescription of requirements for an improved formal education system for Aboriginal students (Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Crago & McAlpine, 1995; Gilliland, 1995; Taylor, 1995). These Non-Aboriginal teachers, the majority of whom are from the United States, have written about their experiences instructing Aboriginal students. In Canada, some of the most thorough information on Non-Aboriginal teachers' perspectives of teaching Aboriginal students is associated with work in reserve communities (Taylor, 1995). The fact that the most detailed Non-Aboriginal teachers' perspectives on instructing Aboriginal students originates from teaching experiences in communities which are predominantly Aboriginal is not surprising since the large Aboriginal population likely makes Non-Aboriginal teachers more cognizant of cross-cultural dynamics. The cultural differences which exist between Aboriginal students and Non-Aboriginal teachers become more magnified to the instructors once they realize they are considered a cultural minority in the classroom and the community.

Non-Aboriginal teachers who accept assignments in predominantly Aboriginal communities approach their position with a diversity of opinion. Non-Aboriginal teachers may sometimes be leery about teaching in a different cultural milieu (Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Taylor, 1995), but the majority view the

opportunity to instruct Aboriginal students as an enriching learning experience (Crago & McAlphine, 1995; Taylor, 1995). Non-Aboriginal teachers who are new to Aboriginal communities and students usually “arrive with a genuine desire to contribute, but poorly prepared to respond to the setting” (Taylor, 1995, p. 225).

The vocational excitement that Non-Aboriginal teachers often experience upon first encountering their Native students, be it on a reserve or in an urban setting, is usually tempered by varying degrees of culture shock (Taylor, 1995). Even if Non-Aboriginal teachers have received formal instruction about the cultural traits of the community and its students, there is a distinct possibility that they will have some difficulty adapting to their new environment. Soon after they begin teaching Aboriginal students, Non-Aboriginal teachers are forced to come to terms with different cultural values and resulting student behavior.

Non-Aboriginal teachers indicate that their response to the culture shock they experience inevitably determines their level of job satisfaction and, of greater importance, their level of success in educating Aboriginal students (Crago & McAlphine, 1995; Taylor, 1995). Teachers who are unwilling to recognize and accept the cultural legitimacy of the Aboriginal community values and attitudes appear to fall into the colonizer trap of finding constant fault with the actions of their Aboriginal students, rather than acknowledging the possibility that their personal inability to adjust to a different paradigm may be the cause of poor student performance (Blesse, 1997; Memmi, 1965). Non-Aboriginal teachers who are unable to adapt to the new cultural environment respond by either constantly chastising the community or ostracizing themselves from the community whenever possible. Criticism of and limited interaction with the community, often referred to as encapsulation, is an attempt by Non-Aboriginal teachers to

“justify their reality or their concepts of ‘the way things should be’” (Taylor, 1995, p. 229).

Non-Aboriginal teachers who have written about their cross-cultural experiences have identified multiple factors which influence their ability to successfully adapt to the teaching of Aboriginal students. One element viewed as affecting a Non-Aboriginal teachers’ degree of instructional success is the knowledge of different dialogue types between traditional Aboriginal cultures and Euro-Canadian society. Non-Aboriginal teachers usually come from backgrounds where communication is highly verbal, while many Aboriginals are often accustomed to a culture where less reliance is given the spoken word (Taylor, 1995). To avoid frustration when communicating with Aboriginal students, Non-Aboriginal teachers have indicated a need to be conscious of the possible differences in communication pattern (Heit & Blair, 1993).

Another factor influencing a Non-Aboriginal teacher’s success in teaching Aboriginal students is an awareness that Non-Aboriginal teachers’ perception of their community role is often incongruent with that of their students (Taylor, 1995). Many Non-Aboriginal teachers view their job as school-based, with no expectation to become involved in community activities. Aboriginal students however, especially on reserves, have a more holistic view of the teacher’s role. Many Aboriginal students assume all their teachers will play an educating role in the community both in and out of school.

Degree of willingness to incorporate Native content into the curriculum has also been identified by Non-Aboriginal teachers’ as impacting on their level of success in teaching Aboriginal students. Due to a lack of preservice or inservice training, many Non-Aboriginal teachers feel ill-prepared to incorporate Aboriginal content into the curriculum (Taylor, 1995). There are also some

Non-Aboriginal teachers who hesitate to include Aboriginal material in class because they believe it to be subordinate material which detracts from more important information. Without the inclusion of Aboriginal content in the school curriculum, many Aboriginal students have difficulty believing their Non-Aboriginal teachers are committed to improving the education of Indigenous Peoples.

Difficulty including Aboriginal parents in the school education of their children has also been identified as an impediment to Non-Aboriginal teacher success in the instruction of Aboriginal pupils (Crago & McAlpine, 1995 ; Richardson, 1995; Taylor, 1995). Many Aboriginal parents feel uncomfortable with formal schooling, often because of negative experiences they likely encountered in their youth, and, as a result, are reluctant to communicate with the teacher. Lack of communication between the school and home can undermine teachers' attempts to establish a positive learning environment.

The problems Non-Aboriginal teachers experience in attempting to instruct Aboriginal students are not mutually exclusive to the difficulties Non-Aboriginal teachers' perceive as being debilitating to Aboriginal students' learning. The impediments Non-Aboriginal teachers often encounter in teaching Aboriginal students can have a direct or indirect impact on the academic success of their students. Without parental support and a curriculum which encourages a strong cultural identity for Aboriginals, Non-Aboriginal school teachers have indicated that academic success for Indigenous students is difficult to achieve (Richardson, 1995; Taylor, 1995). Other factors identified by Non-Aboriginal teachers as barriers to Aboriginal school success include the following: lack of positive role models, unstable teaching community, inappropriately designed schools, and ineffective teaching methodology. All these aforementioned factors

negatively influence the most critical component of school success -- student self-concept (Cajete, 1994; Duran & Duran, 1995).

Non-Aboriginal teachers may differ on both their assessment of the major barriers confronting Aboriginal education and their prescription for ameliorating the ailments, but there appears to be consensus that showing respect to Aboriginal culture and students is a mandatory element for instilling the necessary positive self-concept required for Aboriginal students to achieve positive academic goals (Richardson, 1995; Taylor, 1995). The Non-Aboriginal teachers who have experienced the greatest degree of success in educating Aboriginal students are those who are willing to interact with the community beyond the school setting and demonstrate a desire to better understand and to appreciate Aboriginal cultures. By interacting and trying to learn about the Aboriginal community, Non-Aboriginal instructors send the message that they respect the community. Teachers who demonstrate respect for Aboriginal cultures and show a willingness to reduce the Euro-Canadian 'individualistic society' which has traditionally chosen to maintain distance to sustain privacy or authority, are more likely to experience a harmonious and successful teaching experience.

Preparing Teachers to Instruct Native Studies

Non-Aboriginal teacher testimonials, coupled with views of some university educators (Burstein & Cabello, 1995; Kirkness, 1992), indicate that Non-Aboriginal teachers are often ill-equipped to handle the complexities of the pluralistic classrooms of North America. Non-Aboriginal teachers, the majority of whom are Caucasian, have not received the necessary training, either in their university education or their professional development inservice, to adequately

prepare them for the teaching of Native Studies and the often associated challenge of teaching Aboriginal students (Campbell, 1991; Goddard, 1994). Prior to being assigned the responsibility of teaching a culturally specific course like Native Studies, educators should demonstrate the following: a respect and interest in Aboriginal peoples; an understanding of the inequities of the education system as it relates to Aboriginal peoples; an awareness of how an appropriate multicultural curriculum can potentially improve the societal inequities; and a solid knowledge of Aboriginal cultural content, including history and value systems.

One stated requirement for teachers entrusted with teaching Native Studies is a greater sensitivity and respect for Aboriginal cultures (Common, 1989; Finney & Orr, 1995; Rodriguez & Sjoström, 1995). Non-Aboriginal teachers who give instruction about Aboriginal culture must have “a consciousness that does not confuse [cultural] differences with deficiencies and assumes a willingness [for all people] to cooperate on the basis of equality” (Salzman, 1990, p. 225). Teachers incapable of demonstrating respect for Aboriginal cultures are viewed as inappropriate cultural brokers for a Native Studies course and, arguably, poor teacher candidates for any course. If teachers do not respect Aboriginal cultures, it is less likely that students will learn to honor Aboriginal cultures.

Another ingredient to successful teaching of Native Studies is knowledge of past and present inequities faced by Aboriginal peoples in the school system. Without comprehensive historical understanding of the social and political discrimination which has been inflicted upon Aboriginal peoples, there is little likelihood that Non-Aboriginal teachers will overcome any prejudices and misunderstandings about Aboriginals which they may harbor (Finney & Orr,

1995, p. 327). Only by being informed about the oppression which Aboriginal children have traditionally faced in schools and recognizing “the powerful socializing and identity-shaping influences of language, culture, ideologies, institutional practices, and structures on one hand and daily circumstances and interactions on the other” (Finney & Orr, 1995, p. 332) will teachers overcome their own tendency, and that of many of their students, to blame solely Aboriginal communities for any perceived shortcoming. Non-Aboriginal teachers must be made aware of the role discriminatory social structures and practices play in influencing Aboriginal education before they can begin to ameliorate the misconceptions, stereotypes and racist attitudes which often permeate cross-cultural learning environments which focus on Aboriginal peoples (Common, 1989).

To help diminish the barriers which often cast Aboriginal peoples in a negative light, thereby reducing their opportunity to achieve social equality, some educators (McIntosh, 1989; Solomon, 1995) propose that Non-Aboriginal teachers be encouraged to comprehend that a societal hegemony exists which perpetuates ‘white privilege’. Many teachers are conscious of the disadvantaged position in which Aboriginal peoples often find themselves, but rarely are educators aware of the corresponding ‘white advantage’ which exists in North American society (McIntosh, 1989). Those teachers who adhere to an assimilation paradigm for Aboriginal education or who do not perceive inequality in the school system are likely less compelled to adopt educational practices which alter the present system. To overcome the tendency of many teachers to resist alterations to the present hegemony, it is necessary that educators be taught to recognize that racism not only involves individual acts of denigration, but

involves social institutions that cater to the maintenance of a 'white superiority' at the expense of Aboriginal Peoples (Alladin, 1996; McIntosh, 1989).

Non-Aboriginal teachers' knowledge of systemic discrimination will hopefully be transmitted to their students, beginning the process of dismantling social injustices, and perhaps allowing educators to detect more readily subtle prejudicial teaching methods which support the status-quo. Common Non-Aboriginal prejudicial teaching practices perpetrated towards Aboriginal students have been identified as: less independent assistance, greater aggression, overt friendliness accompanied with covert rejection, and avoidance and assessment inconsistent with actual work performance (Delpit, 1995). Perhaps these negative teaching practices may be alleviated or even eliminated with understanding of the 'white privilege' which characterizes Canadian society.

Besides changing individual teaching practices which, either consciously or unconsciously, promote feelings of inadequacy amongst Aboriginal students and possibly feelings of superiority amongst Non-Aboriginal students, teachers of Native Studies need to personally challenge institutional structures which promote inequality (Solomon, 1995). As mentors assigned the role of educating the nation's youth in an increasingly diverse cultural milieu, teachers must assume new roles that are "more than simply acknowledging 'others' and analyzing stereotypes; more fundamentally it means understanding, engaging, and transforming the diverse institutions that produce racism and other forms of discrimination" (Giroux, 1993, p. 61). It would be hypocritical of teachers to not challenge systemic inequality when they are expecting their students to undertake the task. Although teachers "may perceive any critique of institutional processes as moving beyond their role of pedagogy into the untravelled territory of politics" (Solomon, 1995, p. 257), they must enter the political realm if it promotes an

educational system which encourages social reform (Giroux, 1993; Sleeter & Grant, 1993; Solomon, 1995).

In order to mitigate and potentially eliminate the societal inequities affecting Aboriginal peoples, many educators (Banks, 1988, 1994; Ghosh, 1996; Sleeter & Grant, 1993) deem it necessary for Native Studies teachers to be cognizant of how the curriculum and the manner in which it is implemented influences students. In recent years, educational theorists have promoted a variety of multicultural curriculum models, which focus not just on the inclusion of content on minority groups, but on how to alleviate stereotypical and racist views and, in an idealized state, encourage students to take social or political action to establish a more harmonious society. Many educators (Banks, 1994; Calliou, 1995) concur that assimilation practices of the past have failed minority groups, including Aboriginals, and must be replaced with curricula which foster an environment of mutual respect and understanding between all peoples.

While numerous educators (Banks 1988, 1994; Ghosh, 1996; Gollnick & Chinn, 1994; Sleeter & Grant, 1993) advocate a formal education system and curriculum in which all cultural groups are involved, there still exists the belief that segregation from 'mainstream culture' is the best means for minority groups to achieve societal equality (Memmi, 1965). Segregation is required because, in the case of Aboriginal peoples, the entire colonial system is fraught with racism. Formal educational success is difficult because "the teacher and school represent a world which is too different from the family environment"(Memmi, 1965, p. 106). Memmi (1965) holds that the only options available to the colonized in attempting to overcome the inequities of the system are assimilation or revolt. Since complete assimilation is both unattainable and detrimental to Aboriginal well-being, revolt, be it peaceful or violent, is required to dismantle colonial

structures. If Aboriginal Peoples are to construct an education system where equality truly exists, they must make a complete break from the present system and not compromise with the colonizers . To achieve equality in a post-colonial world, Aboriginal peoples must first achieve separation from the rest of society (Memmi, 1965).

Teachers of Native Studies should be aware of arguments favoring the segregation of cultures by school, but since the majority of urban teachers presently instruct in settings which have a heterogeneous cultural mix, they must also be knowledgeable about the variety of multicultural curriculum endeavors which are geared towards achieving mutual appreciation and respect amongst a non-segregated student clientele. Although the terminology used to differentiate between the different multicultural models varies depending on the academic who examines the issue, the following list of Sleeter and Grant (1993) encompasses the main components of multicultural curriculum which have characterized North American schools in recent years: *Teaching the Culturally Different*, *Human Relations Approach*, *Single Group Studies*, *Multicultural Approach*, and *Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist Approach*. The first two models perpetuate cultural discord by ignoring systemic inequalities while the last three models begin the difficult task of improving culture group relationships by acknowledging the inherent inequality existing in society's hegemony.

Teaching the Culturally Different is a multicultural model based on the premise that all cultures need to conform to a norm. In North America, this 'norm' is established by white middle-class society. Minority groups in society are expected to conform to the 'mainstream' by overcoming their perceived deficiencies. Although there are commendable teaching methodologies associated with this multicultural model (ie. teaching content relevant to the student, level of

instruction matching student's readiness level), it is blatantly assimilationist. To some individuals (Mallet, 1997), all societal groups must attempt to assimilate to a norm, otherwise cultural differences can sow national discord. To other individuals however, programs which promote assimilation do a disservice to minority groups, including Aboriginal peoples, since they "destroy the cultures of ethnic groups and ... make their members personally ineffective and politically powerless" (Sleeter & Grant, 1993, p. 77).

The basic goal behind the *Human Relations* model is "to promote positive feelings among students and reduce stereotyping, thus promoting unity and tolerance in a society composed of different people" (Sleeter & Grant, 1993 p. 85). This model, which is extremely popular with White teachers (Sleeter & Grant, 1993), has many commendable qualities, but ignores significant factors which need to be addressed if discrimination is to begin being eradicated. The Human Relations model has been assessed to have the following deficiencies: focuses on 'better feelings' towards all cultural groups at the expense of academic achievement, only deals with symptoms of discrimination (e.g., name-calling, stereotyping) rather than systemic inequalities which have manifested themselves throughout history. Overall, the Human Relations model has a meretricious appeal, but does little to establish harmony between society's various cultures (Sleeter & Grant, 1993).

A third multicultural approach of which teachers should be aware prior to instructing is *Single Group Study*. This multicultural model, also referred to as the *Ethnic Additive Approach or Heroes and Holidays Approach* (Banks, 1988), attempts to address the inequalities minority groups encounter in society with "the addition of content, concepts, themes, and perspectives to the curriculum without changing its basic structure, purposes, and characteristics" (Banks, 1988, p. 380).

This approach has the positive attributes of attempting to establish a better understanding of a particular cultural group and instilling a sense of pride for members of the group, but it does not alter the basic structure, goals and characteristics of the mainstream curriculum. Critics of this model (Hampton, 1995; Leavitt, 1993) argue that if teachers view Aboriginal culture as content and not a basis for pedagogy then Indigenous communities will continue to be isolated from the rest of society. Without restructuring the majority of the curriculum, the unequal hegemony of the education system is perpetuated; the stereotypes and misunderstanding of minority groups continues to manifest itself within the schools (Bennett, 1995). Another dilemma with this type of model is it often places too much emphasis on differences between cultural groups. The problematic nature of curricula placing too much emphasis on cultural differences is summarized in the following quotation:

Too much focus on separateness and uniqueness perpetuates the discourse of differentiation where 'I-thou' or 'subject-object' or 'oppressor-oppressed' or 'center-periphery' are reinforced and the outcome is toleration of difference rather than respectful and unconditional appreciation of diversity and the recognition that all is truly related (Calliou, 1995, p.70).

Another type of curriculum model which can be utilized when instructing in a pluralistic society is the *Multiculturalism Approach*. This approach, which Banks (1988) coined as the *Transformation Approach*, promotes the idea of cultural pluralism and the establishment of social structural equality. Students are encouraged to examine multiple perspectives on a particular issue, not just the viewpoints of the majority or a single group. In addition, the *Multicultural Education* approach seeks to change not just the curriculum, but attempts to reconstruct all elements of the formal education process (e.g., evaluation techniques, home-school relationships, staffing procedures). It is not just the

subject matter, but rather, the basis of pedagogy which needs to be altered (Leavitt, 1993). This model of education has become very popular in North America since the 1970s, but it is not immune from criticism. Some of the complaints levied against *Multicultural Education* include the following: minimal attention devoted to social class, legitimizes social divisiveness between cultures, and requires many teachers to be reeducated since most educators do not have the content or methodology basis to present multiple perspectives on the knowledge, concepts and skills which comprise the curriculum (Sleeter & Grant, 1993). The main complaint about the Multicultural Education model is that it directs “too much attention to cultural issues and not enough to social structural inequalities and the skill that students will need to challenge these” (Sleeter & Grant, 1993 p. 202).

Another curriculum model, which builds upon the strengths of the *Multicultural Education* approach, is the *Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist Approach*. This approach encourages all students to strive for the utopian goal of social structural equality which integrates race, ethnicity, class and gender. The vision of this utopian goal is not articulated by the teacher. Instead, students are encouraged, after having been exposed to a plethora of information and perspectives, to formulate their own ideal society. This model, also known as the *Decision-Making and Social Action Approach* (Banks, 1988) or *Transformational Education* (Giroux, 1994), could falter for the following reasons: difficulty convincing the school system, which is traditionally very intransigent towards change, to accept the need for a new social order; difficulty finding ‘common ground’ upon which various cultural groups can begin constructing their new reality; dilemma of teachers being able to help students

identify the problem of inequity, but having difficulty establishing paths to solutions (Sleeter & Grant, 1993).

Teachers who do not accept the *Teaching the Culturally Different* model often integrate aspects of other curriculum approaches when teaching in a multicultural milieu. Teachers often incorporate components of various multicultural models as they strive to examine societal inequality. The following observation applies to the majority of multicultural teaching: "It is not realistic to expect a teacher to move directly from a highly Mainstream-Centric curriculum to one that focuses on decision-making and social action" (Banks, 1988, p. 381). The evolution from single-group studies to multiculturalism and social reconstructionist takes time, but the process can be achieved and accelerated with teacher training which examines the various multicultural models. Overall, teachers need to institute curricula which have students recognize the reality of racism, explore the emotional, physical and cognitive realms of racism and "invite each of us to become peacemakers in our own hearts, in our own communities, and in our shared world, where unconditional respect, compassion, participatory democracy, strength, courage and reverence are daily lived ideals"(Calliou, 1995, p. 70).

Besides recognizing and accepting the social inequality faced by Aboriginal peoples and knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the various multicultural curriculum models which attempt to ameliorate this inequality, any teachers of Native Studies courses are often encouraged to become acquainted with events and belief systems which have molded Aboriginal cultures. Culture, which can be defined as "the shared and learned ways of feeling and acting among a particular group of people" (Garcia & Ahler, 1994, p. 25), includes insight into such variables as history, values, and epistemology. If teachers are

going to help to provide an environment in which students comprehend and appreciate Aboriginal cultures, then they, as educators, must be well informed. Only through a strong knowledge base can educators begin to dismantle the many misconceptions associated with Aboriginal cultures and aid Aboriginal community efforts to achieve their schooling needs. At present, far too few teachers are attuned to Aboriginal cultures, and hence, unable to deliver an education which helps all students to identify and to nullify systemic inequality (Common, 1989).

According to some educators (Cajete, 1994; Gilliland, 1995; Hampton, 1995) the historical content covered in Native Studies must not only reveal the assimilationist policies of the mainstream society and the subsequent impact on Aboriginals, but, in order to give an accurate portrayal of history, it is essential that this information include Aboriginal perspectives. Only by providing accurate historical information to all students, both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal, will they begin to reflect upon and question the status quo. If students are to help construct a desirable post-colonial society for Aboriginal peoples, a goal of many educational leaders in Aboriginal communities, then they must hear the voice of Aboriginals to counterbalance the ethnocentric views of mainstream society which are latent in most textbooks and curricula. Students need to examine Aboriginal cultures from the cultural relativist position that "asks us to view other cultures from their viewpoint, and when they differ from ours, to accept that they are merely different-- neither superior nor inferior" (Garcia & Ahler, 1992, p. 29). Cultural relativism is not to be misconstrued as nihilism, where 'anything goes', but rather as a means of encouraging objectivity (Garcia & Ahler, 1992).

When teaching about historical information, teachers of Native Studies are encouraged to refrain from portraying traditional Aboriginal cultures in a trivial

or irrelevant format (Sweet, 1994). Too often, teachers of Native Studies simply examine battles and people of the past or introduce students to a long list of foods or place names identified with Aboriginal cultures (Sweet, 1994). This teaching practice does a disservice to Aboriginal peoples since it portrays Aboriginal cultures as historic relics with little or no modern-day relevancy. Teachers need to ensure that when teaching about the history of Aboriginal cultures that they examine the continuum between past and present; students need to know that Aboriginal cultures are vibrant and influential entities.

Teachers who harbor an in-depth knowledge of Aboriginal histories are believed to be better equipped to detect many of the historical inaccuracies imbedded in much of the educational literature which has been traditionally used in schools to inform students about Indigenous Peoples (Gilliland, 1995). Historical misrepresentation of Aboriginal Peoples, such as the colonizers' portrayal of Indians as lazy and uncivilized (Memmi, 1965), has done irreparable harm to Aboriginal peoples' attempts to achieve equal opportunity in society. It is essential that teachers of Aboriginal culture have an ability to detect historical untruths (Gilliland, 1995; Saskatchewan Education, 1991; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 1992).

A strong understanding of history also helps teachers of Native Studies better understand and depict the modern-day goals and aspirations of Aboriginal peoples (Hampton, 1995). A good teacher of Native Studies is often seen as having the ability to respectfully communicate such noted Aboriginal community goals as the fruition of Aboriginal self-government and instilling Aboriginal children with the skills and knowledge to operate within both Aboriginal frameworks and those of 'mainstream society'. Since students are inclined to view their Native Studies teacher as an authority on Aboriginal issues, it is

deemed necessary that teachers be able to present and defend perspectives which are propagated by Aboriginal communities.

Educators (Cajete, 1994; Hampton, 1995) also believe that teachers whose courses focus on Aboriginal culture should expose their students to the values which all Aboriginal cultures hold in common. To gain a better appreciation and potentially respect for Aboriginal cultures, teachers should be capable of informing their students of the many societal values shared by Native peoples. Included among the values of Aboriginal cultures which are usually viewed as integral to a Native Studies course, as well as the rest of the school curricula, are the following: living in harmony with nature, holistic learning, honoring elders, and respecting the community (Saskatchewan Education, 1991). Exposure to the value system of Aboriginal peoples not only gives greater insight into their culture, but increases the likelihood of students increasing their objectivity on issues involving Native peoples.

Preparing Teachers to Teach Native Studies to Aboriginal Students

According to much of the literature devoted to improving formal education for Aboriginal peoples, the presence of Aboriginal students in urban Native Studies classes requires not only teacher understanding of the items previously identified as essential to the successful delivery of the courses, but also demands comprehension of the following: traditional Aboriginal epistemologies, awareness of teaching methodologies which may help facilitate Aboriginal student participation and success, an understanding of the impact of teacher cultural identity in teaching, and knowledge of how urbanization often affects Indigenous education. These factors are significant components of any Native

Studies course, regardless of the presence of Aboriginal students, but their importance is undoubtedly magnified once Aboriginal students are in the urban classroom.

Teachers who have an opportunity to instruct Aboriginal students, be it in Native Studies or any other forum, should be cognizant of possible cultural tendencies in the learning process, but also remain aware that students bring their own individual strengths to epistemology (Garcia & Ahler, 1992; Racette & Racette, 1983). Teachers must navigate the treacherous course of the paradox of generalizations: we require generalizations to help 'make sense of the world', but simultaneously realize that generalizations can cloud teacher assessment of a student's individual strengths and weaknesses (Heit, 1987, p. 273). Just because students are of Aboriginal ancestry does not automatically denote that they are inclined to perform better in a learning environment which emphasizes traditional Aboriginal epistemology. Good teachers "must consider the student as a whole, including his or her cultural, linguistic, cognitive and emotional needs" (Burstein & Cabello, 1995, p. 292).

Although significant attention has been given to ensure that Native Studies courses have culturally relevant material, minimal attention has been directed towards Aboriginal epistemology (More, 1984; Stairs, 1995). Teachers, as products of their own socio-economic environment, often have difficulty relating to the learning processes of their Aboriginal students. Most Non-Aboriginal teachers, many of whom originate from white, middle-class backgrounds, are unaware of the following traditional means by which many Aboriginal students learn: developing concepts and skills by observing and then repeating tasks, contextualizing all learning, and listening to stories which implicitly present concepts and principles (Cajete, 1994; Stairs, 1995). Reliance on the entire

community, and, in particular, elders as educational agents is also characteristic of traditional Aboriginal education. In addition, unlike Western European cultures, Aboriginal cultures expect individual student spirits to develop on their own accord in an open and informal learning setting. Young Aboriginal students are “accepted as individuals and are not expected to progress all in the same direction at the same time or to meet set standards of achievement” (Stairs, 1995, p. 142). Students learn when they are ready, not when the teacher decides they are ready. This ‘open’ and learner-initiated education is often in sharp contrast to the teacher transmitted education which frequently occurs in most formal schooling systems.

Inherently linked to cultural values is student social behavior; Aboriginal student actions are reflective of the values of the environment in which they are raised. Aboriginal students who are exposed to traditional values are potentially predisposed to conduct themselves in the following fashion: unwillingness to draw attention to themselves in a group setting, tendency to limit verbal responses, and a reluctance to look adults in the eye when talking to them. Educators of Aboriginal students should be cognizant and respectful of these potential means of communication, but also remain aware of the dangers of ‘labeling’ Aboriginal students (Heit, 1987). Generalizations about Aboriginal student learning styles can prove helpful, but “for every example which can be given of possible differences in communicating between Indian or Metis and non-Native peoples, there will be valid exceptions (Heit, 1987, p. 275).

The various epistemologies which Aboriginal cultures exhibit are often believed to require the accompaniment of a strong teacher understanding of methodology options and discipline techniques which will enhance student success (Campbell, M.I., 1991; Campbell, M.E., 1991; Gilliland, 1995). Without

competency for matching learning styles to teaching strategies, teachers are ill-prepared for the teaching of Aboriginal students. Although it is essential that teachers include a variety of teaching methodologies and not just pander to learning-style strengths of each student, the inclusion of methodologies by which students are familiar and more apt to experience success is fundamental to good teaching practice. Teaching methodologies which are often recommended for eliciting better Aboriginal student success include the following: cooperative group work, talking circles, peer teaching, experiential learning, and parental involvement. Computers have also proved useful in the instruction of Aboriginal students because “components of computer assisted instruction such as privacy, self-direction and self-evaluation, and personalized rate of learning, mesh closely with the traditional learning processes and the values of many Indian cultures” (Campbell, M.E., 1991, p. 48). In the area of classroom management, teachers have been encouraged by some of their peers to know that in many traditional Aboriginal communities discipline of students does not entail the authoritarian direction and guilt procedures which often characterize western school student management techniques. Teachers should strive to replace the common view that they are enforcers and task masters and, instead, encourage the view that they are friendly facilitators of knowledge (Gilliland, 1995; Taras, 1997).

Recognition of the impact of teacher cultural identity on the instruction of Native Studies is also desirable in adequately preparing Non-Aboriginal instructors for teaching about Aboriginal cultures (Giroux, 1993). Teachers need to reflect on how their cultural identity influences not only how they perceive the course, but on how others, in particular the Aboriginal community and students, perceive the course. Without contemplating the possible ramifications of their cultural identity on teaching Native Studies, teachers may be ill-prepared to

withstand the social and political forces which accompany their teaching assignment.

Non-Aboriginal teachers should know that there is sometimes considerable pressure from the Aboriginal community to have an Aboriginal educator instruct Native Studies. Many individuals prefer an Aboriginal to teach Native Studies because of the perception that “Indian and Metis students may identify more strongly with these teachers and will feel more comfortable expressing emotion and sharing experiences” (Heit, 1987, p. 325). Aboriginal teachers are often believed to be more capable of understanding Aboriginal cultures, especially the element of spirituality, espousing community goals, and acting as excellent role models for Aboriginal students. Some people also believe that when Non-Aboriginals teach Aboriginals about Native Studies they are demonstrating how “the dominant culture has moved ‘from obnoxious exteriority to obtrusive interiority’” (Powers, 1996, p. 72). The assumption that Non-Aboriginal teachers can know and interpret issues to the satisfaction of the Aboriginal community is viewed as an example of colonizer arrogance (Powers, 1996).

Besides resenting the perceived arrogance of Non-Aboriginals teaching Native Studies, some Aboriginals are reluctant to learn from a teacher whom they identify with society’s dominant group (Farnham, 1996; Kohl, 1993). Aboriginal students may feel uncomfortable learning from an individual whose culture is associated with enacting genocidal and assimilationist policies towards Aboriginal peoples. Non-Aboriginal teachers may be viewed as being unable to provide a ‘comfort zone’ which Aboriginal students require to experience academic success (Farnham, 1996). If Aboriginal students are uncomfortable with

their learning environment, they are apt to refrain from participating in class activities.

To help diffuse arguments that Non-Aboriginal teachers are perhaps ill-suited to instruct Native Studies courses, teachers need to familiarize themselves with and reflect upon opposition beliefs. Teachers must realize that if they accept the premise that they should not speak for or about other cultures they are limiting communication between cultures (Peterson, 1996). The logic supporting the principle of only Aboriginals being allowed to give instruction on Aboriginal issues would also support the practice of only Europeans being able to talk about European cultures or only Asians teaching about Asian cultures. This type of segregation between cultural groups will only breed further societal stereotyping and misunderstanding (Farnham, 1996).

To potentially minimize the concerns regarding a Non-Aboriginal teacher instructing a Native Studies curriculum teachers can adopt numerous teaching methodologies which demonstrate a sensitivity to the issue. Non-Aboriginal teachers need to be open about the context of their instruction and be willing to accept limitations of their knowledge and experiential base. To offset these possible limitations, teachers should strive to include the voice of Aboriginal community members (Peterson, 1996). The more dialogue generated between and about dominant and minority cultures, the greater the likelihood of a more harmonious and equitable society (Ghosh, 1996).

Teachers instructing Aboriginal students in urban centres are also encouraged to be aware of how city-life has had an impact on Aboriginal cultures and, more specifically, how it could be directly affecting their students of Aboriginal ancestry. Although there has been relatively limited research on the educational conditions faced by Aboriginals in urban settings compared to

reserves, there is still sufficient statistical and anecdotal information to indicate that urban centres and schools often exacerbate the difficulties experienced by Aboriginal students (Little Soldier, 1997; Saskatchewan Education, 1991).

Aboriginal students, compared to their counterparts on reserves, are more inclined to perform poorly on standardized measures of achievement, less inclined to feel like they belong in the school, and more prone to racism (Echols & Kehoe, 1994). The difficulties experienced by Aboriginal students in urban schools are multifaceted and, to some extent, typical of any group whose members constitute a significant proportion of a city's 'truly disadvantaged' (Stromquist, 1994). It has become an unfortunate reality that in many urban settings public education is synonymous with ineffective teaching and high leaving-school rates for students.

The difficulties experienced by Aboriginal students in urban settings are often unique compared to other minority groups. Just like Non-Aboriginal teachers who have moved to reservations to instruct, many Aboriginal peoples who have moved into the city experience culture shock (Little Soldier, 1997). They feel disconnected from their community and the land. Without a stable communal and ecological base, the mental, physical and spiritual well-being of an Aboriginal student is jeopardized. The strong sense of place and commitment to community which are essential components of Aboriginal education (Hampton, 1995) are difficult to obtain in an urban landscape which focuses on technological control of the environment rather than a peaceful co-existence with mother earth.

When moving from reservations to urban settings, a trend that is accelerating across North America, some Aboriginal students have difficulty adjusting to the frequent predominance of the English language (Little Soldier, 1997; Taras, 1997). Since many Aboriginal students have a primary language

other than English, the dominant communication median of most 'mainstream' curriculums, they often have difficulty in both comprehending teachings and having their ideas understood. This frustration with communication can increase the likelihood of Aboriginal students dropping out of school. Teachers should not "simply assume that all their Native American pupils are 'ready' for English to be the medium of communication in school" (Little Soldier, 1997, p. 651).

Teachers in urban settings should also be conscious of negative outcomes associated with possible changes in a student's familial relationships as they move from a reserve to city environment. The extended family support system which is often prevalent on reservations is often lost to Aboriginal youth in larger centres (Little Soldier, 1997). Without a strong family support system many Aboriginal students are more vulnerable to experiencing academic failure.

The increased presence of systemic racism directed at Aboriginal Peoples often becomes more tangible in urban centres. The city environment increases the likelihood of Aboriginal interaction with non-Aboriginal individuals and organizations, thereby enhancing probability that Aboriginal peoples will be more conscious of societies' inequalities. The positive portrait of the colonizer and the negative portrait of the colonized are constantly on display in the city. These images of colonialism manifest themselves in a 'soul wound' for Aboriginal peoples (Duran & Duran, 1995), thereby hindering attempts by Natives to achieve post-colonial formal education success in the urban setting.

Summary

The reviewed literature was meant to provide a knowledge basis upon which to better comprehend issues associated with Non-Aboriginal teachers'

perspectives on teaching Native Studies in an urban setting. The areas identified as influential in comprehending the topic were the following: Non-Aboriginal teachers' perspectives of instructing Aboriginal students, teacher preparation for instructing a Native Studies course, and teacher requirements for teaching students of Aboriginal ancestry in an urban environment. Non-Aboriginal teachers identified viewpoints about the factors believed to influence successful Aboriginal student performance and outlined recommendations to improve problem areas. The literature on teacher preparation for instructing Native Studies pinpointed various recommendations for ensuring teachers are properly trained for the task of instructing a culturally specific course like Native Studies in a multicultural, yet unequal, society. The literature on teaching Aboriginal students in an urban setting highlighted the values, knowledge, and skills that a Non-Aboriginal teacher is recommended to possess if a successful learning environment is to be created for Aboriginal students.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

This chapter presents the theoretical basis supporting the research design and the data collection. The chapter commences with an explanation of why qualitative research is applicable to the study. Once an explanation for the planned usage of qualitative research has been given, specific data collection techniques, with accompanying rationale for their utilization, are identified. Data collection procedures and itinerary are then presented. The next section, data analysis, describes the process by which the accumulated data were analyzed. The chapter concludes with a description of the ethical dimensions of the research.

Research Orientation

Qualitative methodology was utilized to reveal the perspective of Non-Aboriginal teachers who instruct Native Studies. Qualitative methodology was well-suited for this report since it is “flexible, interactive, and continuous, rather than locked in stone” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 43). This research required a qualitative approach which strived for “understanding the complex interrelationships among all that exists” (Stake, 1995, p. 37). Non-Aboriginal teachers’ viewpoints on teaching Native Studies to both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students required “looking at a wide sweep of contexts: temporal and spatial, historical, political, economic, cultural, social, and personal” (Stake, 1995, p.43). It would have been erroneous to attempt to discover and report the personal perspectives of Non-Aboriginal teachers through a quantitative inquiry model which preordains explanation as the purpose of inquiry, expects the researcher to assume an impersonal role in the research, and focuses on a

preconstructed knowledge base. The Non-Aboriginal teachers' voices are heard best when they are subjected to a qualitative research model where the function "is not necessarily to map and conquer the world but to sophisticate the beholding of it" (Stake, 1995, p. 43).

Research Design and Rationale

The subjects for the study were nine Non-Aboriginal teachers, seven from the Saskatoon Public School System and two from the Saskatoon Catholic School System, who are either presently teaching or have previously taught Native Studies to Aboriginal students. In attempting to ascertain the perspective of this cultural group towards their vocation assignment, the research was triangulated in the following fashion: questionnaire, personal interviews, and focus groups. This compilation of information through "the use of multi-data-collection methods contributes to the trustworthiness of the data" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 24).

The questionnaire, although not traditionally associated with qualitative research, was another median by which Non-Aboriginal teachers of Native Studies communicated their perspectives. Just like a probing initial interview which accompanies many interpretive studies, this questionnaire was another means by which "understanding is achieved by encouraging people to describe their worlds in their own terms (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 2). The questionnaire, which was administered to all participants upon their agreement to take part in the study, asked teachers to describe the context of their Native Studies teaching assignments (i.e. where they had taught Native Studies, how long they had taught Native Studies, how many Aboriginal students were enrolled in their perspective classes). Of the nine questionnaires distributed, seven were returned. While the

questionnaire was limited by its inability to illicit teacher perspectives on the instruction of Native Studies, it did provide a contextual framework which allowed for a deeper understanding and appreciation of each study participant's views.

Personal interviews with each of the study participants was another means of data collection for the research. Adhering to the interpretive interview model, the interviews obtained thick descriptive data upon which to build theories (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). To help ensure the interviewees were forthcoming in their responses, the interviewer made a conscious effort not to dominate the interview process or influence the research participants. A good rapport with the interviewees, based upon mutual respect, and sometimes friendship, was a cornerstone to achieving interviews which elicited the necessary depth, detail, vividness, and nuance required in quality qualitative research.

The interviews followed a semi-structured design. This design was appropriate since it "provides a desirable combination of objectivity and depth and often permits gathering valuable data that could not be successfully obtained by any other approach" (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 452). The semi-structured interview allowed for a mixing of cultural and topical interview styles. There was ample opportunity for interviewees to dictate the topics for discussion, yet there were times when the researcher directed the questioning in order to keep the conversation on a specific topic. During interviews the interviewees not only had time to elaborate upon information provided on their questionnaire, as well as discuss other perspectives they deemed pertinent to the instruction of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students in Native Studies courses, but they were encouraged to give responses to supplemental questions which corresponded to the primary research queries.

Although themes of interest related to the topic were identified prior to undertaking the study, there were infrequent occasions when these themes were not perceived as important by the interviewees. When the interviewees found particular themes irrelevant or of minor consequence, the interviewer attempted to minimize preconceived notions on the identified topic and explored research areas which the interviewee found more relevant. The interviewer knew it was important to be aware of respondent differences and to be “flexible enough to make proper adjustments for unanticipated developments” (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 364).

Besides being flexible when conducting the qualitative interviews, it was essential that the researcher incorporate iterative and continuous design into the process (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Having an iterative design “means that each time you repeat the basic process of gathering information, analyzing it, winnowing it, and testing it, you come closer to a clear and convincing model of the phenomenon you are studying” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 46). Information which was originally perceived as significant after the questionnaire or during the initial interviews was discarded or relegated to a minor position as the interviewing progressed. The continuous design of the qualitative interview process allowed for the questioning to be redesigned throughout the research; when a new line of inquiry emerged from interviews then the researcher, upon judging the relevance of the new theme, inserted the new theme into future interviews.

The inherent subjectivity of the interviewer in qualitative interviewing was an accepted characteristic of the data collection process. While quantitative researchers, sometimes referred to as positivists, attempt to nullify the subjective element of research. so that the accumulated data is supposedly ‘value free’, the qualitative researcher understood that personal emotions and beliefs influenced

the manner in which questions were posed and answers were analyzed (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The researcher needed to be leery of subjectivity consuming the research, but also acknowledged the reality that value-free research is non-existent. In addition, the researcher attempted to develop a close rapport with respondents in order to illicit in-depth disclosure, but guarded against becoming “a spokesperson for the group studied, losing distance and objectivity” (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 367).

A focus group, following a semi-structured format, also comprised a portion of the data collection process of the research. Occurring after the completion of the formal interviews, the focus group “is not meant to replace individual interviewing, but it is an option that deserves consideration because it can provide another level of data gathering or a perspective on the research problem not available through individual interviews” (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 364). The focus group, which involved six of the nine participants in the study, was meant to elicit additional opinions that Non-Aboriginal teachers have regarding the instruction of Native Studies courses. By having teachers interact with each other during the focus group, it was hoped that a greater depth and clarity of opinions would be revealed. Similar to the individual interviews, the participants in the focus group were provided an opportunity to expand upon previously identified perspectives, yet also had the chance to examine previously unexplored tangents of the topic.

While conducting the taped focus group the researcher made a concerted effort to remain cognizant of the possible deficiencies of this data gathering technique. Although focus groups usually offer invaluable insight into teacher perspectives, they also present the following potential shortcomings: a small coalition of individuals may have a tendency to dominate discussion (Fontana &

Frey, 1994), and group dynamics may impede certain respondents from truthfully stating their beliefs (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The focus group, due to group interaction, was a more challenging data collection process than personal interviews, but, with an awareness of possible pitfalls, the researcher tried to reveal an enhanced portrait of Non-Aboriginal teachers' perspectives' on the challenge of instructing Native Studies courses.

Throughout the entire research process the researcher made a concerted effort to ensure that the end product was credible. As a qualitative work, the credibility of the study should be judged on the following criteria: transparency, consistency-coherence, and communicability (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The transparency requirement of the research was hopefully achieved by making sure the reader was "able to see the basic processes of data collection" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 85). A thorough record was kept of the perspectives of each research participant and of the researcher's viewpoints of the data. In addition, the researcher adhered to the consistency-coherence expectations of the research by examining and attempting to explain any incongruous statements which respondents make in relation to the themes emerging from the data. The communicability component of the research was established by having text which was rich in detail and had an abundance of evidence to support statements.

Data Collection Procedures and Schedule

Prior to undertaking the collection of data, the researcher made a phone call and sent a letter (see Appendix B) outlining the purpose of the study to each of the nine present and former Non-Aboriginal teachers who have Native Studies classes in Saskatoon. The letter was followed-up by a phone call to ensure that

everyone received the letter and to clarify any questions or concerns that the potential research respondents might have regarding the study.

Teachers who expressed a willingness to be involved in the study were then sent a consent form (see Appendix C) and a second letter (see Appendix D) thanking them for their willingness to be involved in the study and indicating the five major research questions of the thesis so that they could hopefully begin some self-reflection on key components of the research. In addition to the thank-you letter which indicated the main research queries, the questionnaire (see Appendix D), clarifying the context of each teacher's Native Studies assignment, was distributed. Study participants were informed that they could submit their questionnaire responses during their scheduled interview session.

Individual interviews (see Appendix E) with each of the study participants occurred in either the fall of 1997 or the winter and spring months of 1998. The lengthy time span for the nine interviews was the result of the researcher working full-time for the School Board while simultaneously attempting to conduct interviews. Each interview that was conducted was taped and then transcribed. Once all the interview data were accumulated and reviewed, a focus group session with six of the nine research participants occurred in June of 1998. The verbal interaction of the group was audio-taped and again transcribed.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the accumulated data strove to attain an understanding of Non-Aboriginal teachers' perspectives on teaching Native Studies in Saskatoon and, whenever feasible, present theoretical and perhaps policy implications of the findings. To achieve these aforementioned goals, it was essential that the data

analysis occur simultaneously with all stages of the data collection process (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Throughout the study the researcher continued to reflect upon the significance of the data in order to achieve improved understanding and possible implications of the findings. Even though analysis was often fraught with contradictory or inconclusive information (Fontana & Frey, 1994), the on-going deconstruction of data proved to be an integral part of the qualitative research process.

A primary initial step in analyzing the data was the construction of a codification scheme. Coding, as defined by Rubin & Rubin (1992), "is the process of grouping interviewees' responses into categories that bring together the similar ideas, concepts, or themes [the researcher] has discovered, or steps or stages in a process" (p. 238). As the study progressed the researcher coded and recoded data in hopes of attaining a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and beliefs of the research participants.

The coded data helped in the identification of both major and minor themes of the research. As noted, the themes which emerged from the data were not meant to mesh with any preconceived model of what the perspectives of Non-Aboriginal teachers instructing Native Studies to both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students should be. This is an exploratory work which valued all information given by the respondents in hopes of better understanding and perhaps improving the formal education product delivered to Aboriginal students. While all collected information was important, the researcher did recognize the reality that "the qualitative researcher singles out some things as worthy of note and relegates others to the background" (Wolcott, 1994 , p. 13).

The written report which emerged from the accumulated data (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5) integrates descriptive, analytical, and interpretive elements. The

descriptive element strives to incorporate “enough of the context to make themes understandable” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 265). An adequate dosage of directly quoting or paraphrasing the research subjects hopefully helped in fulfilling descriptive requirements. The analysis element “addresses the identification of essential features and the systemic description of interrelationships among them” (Wolcott, 1994, p. 12). The interpretive component of the report attempted to depict the significance and potential ramifications of the data because interpretation is the “threshold in thinking and writing at which the researcher transcends factual data and cautious analysis and begins to probe into what should be made of them (Wolcott, 1994, p. 36).

Research Ethics

Throughout the compilation and subsequent report of data the researcher adhered to the ethical protocols expected with thesis research. Prior to contacting potential study respondents and their respective school boards, the researcher ensured that he had attained permission for his activities from the University Advisory Committee on Ethics in Human Experimentation. After this committee approved the research, the researcher obtained consent for the research from both the Saskatoon Public School Board and the Saskatoon Catholic School Board.

Throughout the study the researcher was definitely cognizant that “ethics is not something you forget once you satisfy the demands of human subjects review boards and other gatekeepers of research conduct” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 109). The ‘human component’ of the research demanded that the researcher treat each research participant with dignity and respect. In keeping with appropriate research protocol, study respondents were assured of the

following: proper notification of the purpose of the research, freedom of participation, anonymity and confidentiality of responses, and opportunity for feedback. In addition, the study participants and their respective school boards were assured that they would receive a copy of the finished thesis. Overall, the researcher remembered that he had a moral responsibility “to the subjects first, to the study next, and to [himself] last” (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 373).

CHAPTER FOUR

Descriptive Data

The purpose of this chapter is to relay the views Non-Aboriginal teachers of Native Studies in Saskatoon expressed towards their teaching assignment. Like all instructors, Non-Aboriginal teachers bring an “accumulation of their individual cultural backgrounds” (Orieux, 1988, p. 61) to the learning environment. This cultural background, as recognized by Stairs (1995), is significant since it influences how teachers perceive, organize, and transmit the content, concepts and values associated with curricula. It is assumed by the researcher that Non-Aboriginal teachers, as ‘creatures of culture’, bring a unique voice to the examination of how Native Studies courses are being offered to all students.

Prior to revealing the study participants’ perspectives on instructing Native Studies, a summary of the questionnaire results pertaining to the teaching context of each Native Studies educator is outlined. After summarizing the questionnaire findings, the personal interviews and focus group data are presented according to the five main research queries: first, the teaching context of each interviewee is further revealed through a description of the formal and informal contact with Aboriginal cultures they have experienced; second, the study participant’s envisioned goals for Native Studies courses are identified; third, the perceived significance of certain parts of the curricula, along with preferred methodologies for instructing the courses, are discussed; fourth, significant challenges facing the interviewees in teaching Native Studies are highlighted; and

fifth, recommendations on how to improve the delivery of Native Studies are outlined.

Teaching Context of Study Participants

Nine of the ten Non-Aboriginal teachers who were involved in the implementation and subsequent delivery of Native Studies in the regular high school systems in Saskatoon since the late 1980s provided data for the research. Two teachers were employees of the Catholic School System while the other seven teachers worked for the Public System. The two Catholic School System teachers instructed Native Studies on the westside of Saskatoon, where the majority of the city's Aboriginal population resides, at the only regular high school in the Separate System which offers Native Studies courses, while the Public Board teachers represented four of the seven regular Public System high schools on both the west and east sides of the city.

The educators interviewed had a teaching experiential range between six and twenty-one years. Their experience in teaching Native Studies ranged from one to ten years with six of the nine teachers having three years or less. Most of the teachers had taught Native Studies courses in both semesters with the bulk of the classes occurring in the morning. Enrollment numbers for the Native Studies courses fell between approximately twenty and forty students, with the typical class size ranging between twenty-five and thirty students.

Reports regarding the number of Aboriginal students enrolled in Native Studies classes reflected the demographics of the city; schools servicing larger Aboriginal communities tended to have Native Studies classes with a greater proportion of Aboriginal students than schools that serve few Aboriginal families.

Schools servicing the inner-city neighbourhoods on the westside of Saskatoon often witnessed Native Studies classes where over eighty percent of the students were Aboriginal while many 'suburbia-fed' high schools frequently had less than twenty percent of their Native Studies classes comprised of Aboriginal students.

The academic success rate of students taught in the Native Studies classes of the study interviewees ranged between approximately fifty and ninety-eight percent, with the inner-city westside schools having a slightly higher propensity to witness students failing the courses. Where high failing percentages existed, teachers indicated that the primary cause of this reality appeared to be a high leaving-school rate of students. In addition, other than at one eastside high school where only about thirty percent of the Aboriginal students enrolled in a particular class passed, compared to an overall class success rate of around eighty percent, the interviewed teachers reported no marked difference between the academic success rate of Aboriginal students compared to Non-Aboriginal students in Native Studies classes.

Background Experience with Aboriginal Cultures

Question #1: What background training and experiences do Non-Aboriginal teachers have which has prepared them for the instruction of Native Studies?

The interviewed teachers indicated that they have eclectic formal and informal academic backgrounds which helped prepare them for the instruction of Native Studies classes at the high school level. In terms of formal academic training, five of the nine teachers have not taken any Native Studies classes at the post-secondary level, two teachers took one Native Studies course at university, one teacher had taken two Native Studies courses at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, and one other teacher had taken two Native Literature classes

at university. Besides Native Studies classes, most of the teachers cited sociology, anthropology, and history classes, specifically Canadian history, prairie history, and Indian history and White Relations, as formal education vehicles which were especially beneficial in preparing them to instruct Native Studies.

Personal experiences with Aboriginal cultures outside the world of academia which the teachers identified as influencing their teaching were, for the most part, extremely limited. One teacher claimed to have had no informal contact with Aboriginal cultures outside the classroom while another instructor felt the only non-academic experience that sometimes helped him instruct Native Studies was the fact that he is “a bit of an outdoorsman.” Five other teachers, also admitting to minimal contact with Aboriginal culture outside their formal education, identified at least one of the following experiences as influential in preparing them for the delivery of Native Studies courses: personal interest reading of newspapers, magazines, and journals which focus on Aboriginal issues; spending time on a reserve by a summer cabin; workshops; trips to Aboriginal community resource centres; contact with Aboriginal students’ parents; discussions with the Indian and Metis consultant; coaching at two Indigenous Games; and having an Aboriginal schoolmate in primary school and part of secondary school.

Two of the interviewed teachers indicated a very comprehensive informal contact with Aboriginal cultures. One teacher, to help in preparing himself to teach Native Studies classes, spent a two-year leave in the mid 1980s instructing in the Eastern Arctic. He spent one year living in Iqualuit and a second year residing in the smaller community of Lake Harbour. During this Arctic stint, the teacher was immersed in Inuit culture and, in the process, gained a greater appreciation of some of the challenges facing many Aboriginals in Canada. He

claimed that his difficulty in learning Inuktituk “was one of the most humbling experiences of my life, and it gave me a real appreciation for Aboriginal kids [taking] English as a second language.” His Arctic teaching experience also allowed him to witness how the nurturing familial support network of many Aboriginals was being eroded, helping result in such social ills as alcohol addiction and suicide. He stated that his Arctic experience allowed him to “extrapolate how tough it must be for kids in an inner-city environment where there isn’t even a strong sense of culture to ground them initially in their base communities; so when they come into a mainstream high school, it must be just a devastating thing for a lot of them.”

The other Non-Aboriginal teacher of Native Studies in Saskatoon with considerable interaction with Aboriginals outside the classroom had, from a young age to the present, multiple experiences by which to acquaint himself with Aboriginals in Saskatchewan. This teacher grew up beside a residential school in Prince Albert in the 1950s and 1960s and indicated that many of his friends as a child were Native kids. He achieved further insight into Aboriginal cultures because his dad, who was a doctor, “was one of the last people to make house calls to the reserves ... I would go with him to various reserves, John Smith, Sturgeon Lake and so on.” After graduating from high school, this teacher worked for Athabasca Airways, flying into reserve communities in Northern Saskatchewan, and later worked for Parks Canada at the Battleford Historic Park where he learned about Native perspectives pertaining to the events in the North West Resistance of 1885. In addition, his first teaching job was at Chitek Lake under the auspices of the Department of Indian Affairs.

The formal and informal contact, whether extensive or limited, that the teachers had with Aboriginal cultures was enough of a catalyst for the teachers to

either personally initiate the instruction of Native Studies at their respective schools or to accept the challenge of teaching the courses when asked to do so by school administrators or their social science departments. Of the educators interviewed, the majority were appointed for a myriad of reasons to teach Native Studies while only a few instructors took a leadership role in helping to propel the courses into existence.

Study participants believed that one obvious factor leading to their selection to teach Native Studies was their formal education training; teachers with Native Studies courses on their resumes, or other classes perceived by principals or department heads as beneficial in instructing Native Studies, were viewed as being targeted as potential educators for the courses. One teacher commented that since “[the department] remembered that I had taken that anthropology class and that in discussion I had shown an interest in Native Studies, ... [the course] just sort of fell into my lap.” Another teacher noted that a significant factor in him being approached to teach the course was the fact that within the Social Studies Department at his school “I was the only one actually with the courses.” A third teacher felt he was selected to teach the only Native Studies course at the school partially because “there wasn’t a First Nations staff member (to teach the course) ... it appeared to me that I had the most [academic] qualifications.”

Besides formal education credentials, perceived interest of the teacher in instructing Native Studies classes was believed by most of the interviewees to be a major determinant in selection to a Native Studies course posting. Guidance counsellors, administrators and departments were viewed as often encouraging teachers with an apparent high interest in the subject matter of the courses to accept the position of Native Studies instructor. This genuine interest in Native

Studies courses, which was harboured by all the interviewees, was elaborated upon by one of the teachers in the following manner:

I have always had a real interest in Aboriginal history, and I think the reason for that is because I come from a family who was so inherently racist, not against Asian people, or African-Americans, but particularly against Aboriginal people. I always found that fascinating, and even as a young girl, I can remember not feeling the same way, not agreeing with them, and always knowing that I wanted to figure out why-why was there this inherent dislike, disrespect, hatred for Aboriginal People here in Canada? Right from high school into university I would take classes, read books, and try and understand the history of what happened ... I don't believe in the theory that every Aboriginal person is lazy and prone to alcohol. I know that's not true so I had to find out what the real truth was...

The teaching methodology exercised by the instructor was also highlighted by some respondents as significant in their selection to be a Native Studies teacher. One teacher believed that his ability to be flexible with his methodology, including a willingness to procure guest speakers and not teach from a textbook, helped result in his appointment to teach Native Studies. A second teacher indicated that one of the reasons he was approached to teach the course was "because I am fairly open-minded and like to try new things."

In a few instances, administrative decisions, either by a principal or department members, were mentioned as a major influence in deciding who would teach Native Studies classes. At one school, the principal's decision to offer Native Studies classes in the quarter system influenced the selection of a teacher for the courses since only one individual in the school's social studies department demonstrated an interest in this type of educational format. The study participant making this point stated, "since [I'm] the only person in the history department who offered to teach in the quarters, I guess I'm going to be teaching Native Studies." At another school, one teacher noted that his appointment to

teach Native Studies was primarily based on an unwillingness of senior department members to teach a course which they perceived as an alternate or modified class because “for whatever reason, when [Native Studies] was first introduced, it attracted lower academic students and that (trend) seems to have continued.”

Three teachers believed they were self-appointed as much as they were chosen to teach Native Studies classes. In all three instances, their respective schools had no Native Studies offerings until they approached school administration with their desire to implement Native Studies classes. The teachers noted the burgeoning Aboriginal population in their respective schools as a major impetus behind their desire to offer Native Studies courses. One of the teachers also made the following statement regarding her efforts to incorporate Native Studies at her school:

In my Social Studies 09, “Roots of Society”, where they have to do a thing on their cultural backgrounds, I was running into situations where I had Native students in my class and they wouldn’t own-up to being Native. They’d say they were German or whatever, and so I knew there was a problem... I (therefore) took it upon myself to educate the students about Native People.

Regardless of the reasons as to how a teacher was assigned Native Studies classes, most of the interviewees indicated the importance of having a good knowledge base of Aboriginal cultures in order to successfully deliver the course. While there appeared to be unanimity regarding the importance of having a good grounding in Aboriginal cultures to present adequate Native Studies courses, there was a differing of opinion as to the amount of emphasis school administrators and curriculum leaders should place on the formal education credentials of candidates for Native Studies positions. Some individuals vocalized a preference for Native Studies teachers to have at least an education minor in

Native Studies from a post-secondary institute to be eligible to teach the courses while others were reluctant to make this claim.

Teachers who indicated a preference to staff Native Studies classes with individuals who have taken Native Studies classes believe that this approach will mirror city School Board practice in other subject areas where staff members are generally expected to have at least an educational minor in the subject if they are to be considered candidates to teach the course. Completion of Native Studies classes from university as a prerequisite to instruct Native Studies courses not only would provide evidence of a knowledge base in the subject, and likely indicate teacher interest in the education discipline, but also give further academic credibility to the course. One teacher's remarks helped support the argument that Native Studies courses at university be a mandatory requirement to teach Native Studies at high school. He indicated that when he was required to discuss issues in class like land claims and justice "I need some formal training in that area to be confident." Another teacher made the following statement regarding the need to have formalized education training to instruct Native Studies:

They've got to start more hiring (of) Native Studies majors and minors because I think the reason I'm teaching at our school is that no one has a Native Studies major or minor. Out of seventy teachers nobody has one. We've got to start filling that requirement. What if somebody did complain about me teaching? They might have grounds or they could certainly make an argument for me not teaching this course; that I shouldn't be teaching this course because I have no background, culturally or scholastically. Maybe I shouldn't be teaching the course.

A couple of interviewed teachers expressed reservations about making university Native Studies classes a mandatory requirement for the instruction of Native Studies 10, 20, and 30. According to one teacher,

I understand that (having university training in Native Studies) is important, but I don't necessarily agree that you have to have a Native Studies university class to be able to teach the class. I just don't agree with that. I think that you can do as much on your own through reading and keeping up on current events and talking to aboriginal people in the community and getting other Non-Aboriginal people's viewpoints that are out there. I can do that as well on my own as I can sitting in a class at university.

Another teacher expressed some unease with the Saskatchewan Department of Education's recent proclamation that teachers of Native Studies 30 must have a minimum of twelve university credit units in classes focusing on Aboriginal Peoples and have taken an accreditation course in Native Studies in order to administer their own final examinations for the course. This individual indicated that there could potentially be a double-standard for Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal teachers being granted accreditation to instruct Native Studies 30. He stated,

What happens when it comes to accreditation? Is the band school going to simply say, 'we're going to accredit you because you are a First Nation's person, you have contact with elders and you have participated in traditional ceremonies and so on, and have been living and practicing the traditional ways, you're automatically credited, whereas [Non-Aboriginals need] to become accredited despite the fact some of us have worked in the North, have lived on reserves, worked for Indian Affairs and have participated in various ceremonies and so on. Can you tell me the difference between the two of us?

One interviewed teacher stressed the importance of having both a formal academic background in Native Studies and informal interaction with Aboriginal

cultures in order to teach Native Studies. This varied background enables a teacher to have greater perspective on the issues facing Aboriginals. He stated,

Seeing it on paper is one thing, the academia in ivory towers as opposed to living in the culture is totally different. Not that I've live it, [but] being involved with them (Aboriginals) gave me a better understanding ... [between] First Nations who were from the reserves as opposed to those living in the city [with] urban exposure. It reaffirms what you read ... the idea that there are many facets to native culture- the culture on the reserves versus the culture in the city- there's different ways of looking at native culture.

Another teacher was also very adamant about the importance of teachers having experiences outside the classroom with the Aboriginal community in order to do a commendable job of presenting the Native Studies courses. He noted, "in my view, if you haven't had contact with the traditional way of life or with reserve life or with everyday life with Native people, I don't think you can do a really good job, especially in a class made-up of Native people."

Perceived Goals of Native Studies Courses

Question #2: What do Non-Aboriginal teachers perceive as the goals of Native Studies courses?

Although none of the interviewed teachers were familiar with the exact wording of Saskatchewan Education's stated goals of Native Studies courses their views on the rationale for the existence of the courses are consistent with Sask. Ed.'s mandate in creating the courses: greater appreciation of Aboriginal cultures, material that is relevant to Aboriginal students, transmission of positive and accurate information in order to aid Native student efforts to gain a positive self-image and cultural identity.

Teachers who instruct or have instructed at schools with a high percentage of Aboriginal students in their Native Studies classes were prone to specify separate goals for their Aboriginal students versus Non-Aboriginal students. For Aboriginal students enrolled in Native Studies, one teacher believed that a major mandate for the course should be offering students an opportunity to explore their cultural past to “reinforce the fact to them that their history is just as important as [that of] white Canadians.” Another teacher reiterated this point by stating that the courses should give Aboriginal students “some feeling of pride, and some feeling of ‘this is who I am ... there were people in my background who made a difference, and there were people who did good things, accomplished things, rather than this negativity that the kids read in the press.” A third teacher elaborated on this issue by sharing the following story:

I think the best moment in teaching that I’ve ever had was to have ‘Billy’s’ mom [meet with me]. She said she didn’t raise ‘Billy’ because she was an alcoholic. Billy’s grandma raised [him], and she said ‘you made Billy proud to be an Aboriginal person. You made him feel it was cool to be native.’ And she said she wanted to come and meet me. I don’t think she expected me to be blonde, blue-eyed and white,... I don’t know what Billy told her about me, but I know she was at first kind of surprised to see me, but then she kind of warmed up to me afterwards as we talked and she said she just really wanted to come and meet [me]. That was probably the best moment I’ve ever had in the last six years of teaching.

Teachers who teach Native Studies to mostly Non-Aboriginal students usually highlighted the importance of the courses in instilling pride in Aboriginal youth, but they also identified one of the goals of the courses to be the enlightening of Non-Aboriginal students on Aboriginal cultures and, in the process, hopefully ameliorating racism towards First Nation Peoples in Canada. One teacher noted the following:

My goal was not so much to teach the people about their culture, but to teach people about a different culture they're exposed to every day and to try and teach them to understand. If I can teach my kids to examine culture that is foreign to them [then] ... before passing judgment on somebody, they might take the time to look at the history of something - as to why something is.

Another teacher indicated that one of the main reasons for the implementation of Native Studies at her school, with its small Aboriginal student enrollment, was "to teach the white people a bit more so they wouldn't be developing racist attitudes."

Some of the interviewed teachers also indicated that the existence of Native Studies courses was meant to not only address the needs of both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students, but also to satisfy political agendas of some individuals in the Aboriginal community. There was a feeling amongst some instructors of Native Studies that although the courses have considerable merits, they should not be offered as alternatives to traditional history courses, especially in the case of grade twelve matriculation requirements. There was the perception that students whose only social science classes are in Native Studies do not get a "solid vision of both world and Canadian issues." One teacher stated that "I'm not very comfortable with the fact that students can opt into Native Studies in grade ten and graduate from high school having learned very, very little about the mainstream things way work." These teachers believed the Department of Education erred when it bent to Aboriginal spokespersons lobbying for the allowance of Native Studies classes to suffice as social science requirements at the grade ten, eleven, and twelve levels.

There was also a pervading opinion of a few instructors that much of the content of the Native Studies courses served an Aboriginal political agenda with which they, as teachers, were leery presenting. Some teachers believed that the

courses cast too negative a light on Non-Aboriginal cultures. A teacher noted the following:

The courses are being used as kind of an equalizer- a power thing- by people who have an ax to grind, with what has occurred in the past. I'm not comfortable with the fact that the Native Studies agenda of some of the curriculum seems to be so confrontational, so anti-establishment, anti-white at times, and as a non-Aboriginal teacher I have quite a difficult time with some of the materials written in the curriculums ... to me its a confrontational kind of politics- if it were coming from any other perspective it probably wouldn't be tolerated.

In examining the goals of the courses as outlined by the Provincial Department of Education or the perceived political agendas as advocated by some interviewees, there was a differing of teacher opinion on the level of goal attainment which can be achieved by teaching the courses. A few of the teachers were extremely confident that the inclusion of Native Studies at their school could certainly enhance respect towards Aboriginal cultures, help foster more cultural pride amongst Aboriginal students, and help to counteract the travesty of racism. One teacher stressed how Native Studies curricula helped breakdown misconceptions about Aboriginals. The courses allowed him to delve into the stereotype of "Aboriginals living high on the hog", which is often a precursor to racism. Another teacher indicated that although the courses were not perfect, they were "a really good start" towards addressing the stipulated goals. One teacher indicated that the curriculum gives "excellent background information on [Aboriginals] and then you can take it from there to make it however you want, you know, as good as you can make it."

A few teachers had caveats attached to their acknowledgment that the Department of Education goals for Native Studies courses are attainable. Student composition of a class was noted as one factor in determining the level of success

in achieving the goals of the courses. The following statement emphasized the influence of the type of students enrolled in the class on the ability of the teacher to reach course objectives:

Let's put it this way- I had more success with some groups than with others. I remember a couple of classes specifically where they were great and I really enjoyed the group ... and I thought I did some good things there. There were others where I walked away from the course feeling pretty lousy; I'm not sure I reached a whole lot of them, especially when I read some of the final essays some of these guys wrote. In terms of having these kids understand the Aboriginal perspective, I don't think I realized that because some of the old redneck things just came shining through.

Another teacher felt the Department's goals for the course were achievable, but the curriculum content needed to be updated to increase course relevancy for the students and, in addition, teachers needed assistance in identifying racist information. The teacher believed it was easy to recognize blatant racism, but in recent years the 'politically correct' elements in society were perhaps too quick to identify the existence of racism.

For those teachers who perceive the courses to carry a political agenda, there was a begrudging acceptance that, at least in the short-term, Native Studies classes will continue to be viewed by the Department of Education in Regina as an acceptable alternative to the traditional history classes. In terms of the belief that the Native Studies curricula encouraged an anti-establishment feeling amongst students, it was noted by one teacher that some students resented the fact that the content was "picking on white people." However, the ability of the courses to fuel an anti-establishment bias was considered unlikely since instructors "teach around [material of this nature]". New teachers to Native Studies courses might feel compelled to present the so-called political agendas of

the courses, but it was more likely that “they would be somewhat intimidated [or] turned-off by the nature of the content.”

A number of teachers indicated that although the Native Studies courses were worthwhile endeavors, it was naive to believe that their existence necessarily translated into students attaining the identified goals of the courses. One teacher believed it was definitely incorrect for anyone to assume “that you’re going to respect a different group because you know a bit about their history.” Another teacher stated the following:

I don’t think you can change a person’s perspective in one class. I’d like to think that maybe you can plant a seed, make them think about it, reflect, hopefully it will grow, hopefully you’ll be able to start it, and that’s the important thing.

Perspectives on Curriculum Content and Teaching Methodology

Question #3: What teaching content and pedagogical processes do Non-Aboriginal teachers view as significant in helping them achieve the goals of the courses?

When asked to identify what they perceived as key curriculum items to present in the Native Studies classes, most of the interviewees noted that it was extremely important for the students to have a historical template from which to examine the plethora of issues facing Aboriginal peoples in Canada. One teacher stated that “I think starting with the history is really important. I think it gave everybody a beginning point or a grounding ...I found that I often got caught up in the history portion, maybe because of my training, but I also found that the students found it linear and comprehensible.” Another teacher elaborated upon the importance of history in Native Studies courses with the following statement: “I think there has to be a historical background to set the scene... I think for people to understand the present and the future, you have to understand how

you've come to be here." This same teacher also commented that he felt very comfortable delivering the history of cultures that is not his own. He stated that being Aboriginal or Non-Aboriginal "doesn't make a difference in teaching that historical content ... as long as we're open to the idea of the oral tradition and the historical processes that take place within the First Nations ... I think I can teach that historical content as well as anyone."

Aboriginal spirituality was also highlighted as an important curriculum component of Native Studies classes. It was noted that "[spirituality] is such an important part of their world view and culture, especially in early times, that I don't know how you can teach the course without it." Unlike historical information however, there were some study participants who expressed a feeling of intrepidation with having to present this curriculum component. This feeling of unease in broaching the topic of Aboriginal spirituality was displayed in the following quotation: "the spirituality side of things always gave a great deal of difficulty... I never felt that comfortable ... I don't feel personally like I have a good enough understanding of it." One teacher felt so inadequate dealing with the topic of Aboriginal spirituality that he was compelled to state "I still believe that you need to have somebody who is strong in their own Aboriginal spirituality teaching the course ... if the Board is serious about [Native Studies] they will hire quality people of Aboriginal ancestry to teach this course."

Many of the teachers believed they did not have the cultural knowledge and experiences to teach Aboriginal spirituality. One teacher recalled how his lack of understanding regarding Aboriginal spirituality had accidentally resulted in his asking an Aboriginal student to share 'sacred information'. In addition to teacher naiveté about Aboriginal spirituality, some interviewees felt a school setting was an inappropriate place to teach spirituality, just like it is unacceptable

for teachers to teach Roman Catholicism, unless they are in the Catholic System, or Hinduism to their pupils. The variation in spiritual practices and beliefs between Aboriginal cultures also weakened some teachers' resolve to delve into spirituality in any great detail. One teacher noted that "Spirituality has led to a lot of conflict in the teaching of it, because if you have a room full of students in Native Studies, they're not all from the same tribe, of the same background or they do different [spiritual practices]. If you discuss one [spiritual practice] you run into trouble with a section of the class."

According to one teacher, one of the main reasons for teacher hesitancy in addressing the issue of Aboriginal spirituality was the lack of curriculum clarity over how Native Studies courses were to present this culturally sensitive issue.

The teacher stated the following:

Is it the policy of the [Department of Education] to get kids to buy into spirituality or is it just one unit in the whole semester that you are supposed to cover? Nobody has told me, given me a directive as to what to do. I have a suspicion ... that the department wants it to be one part of the curriculum and the elders who are coming in are saying 'no, it's a total part' ... We, as teachers, are caught in the middle.

Some of the teachers incorporated means of addressing Aboriginal spirituality into the Native Studies courses without feeling uncomfortable or overwhelmed. One common practice for incorporating spirituality into the courses was to invite Aboriginal elders into the classroom. One teacher noted that "I don't have a lot of knowledge myself, but I try and get the kids to be listening to elders or take them to a sweat lodge." Having 'so-called' experts on Aboriginal spirituality in the classroom seemed to placate most teachers concerns about teaching spirituality, but some teachers noted that instructors need to be conscious that having an elder present the spirituality unit of a course is not going to necessarily reduce controversy over the best strategy for presenting this culturally

sensitive information. One teacher indicated that elders bring “various views on spirituality” that may or may not be accepted by Aboriginals in the community.

Another teacher stated the following:

Even though I bring elders in ... it is still not covering all the bases because you have to be from that particular culture ... Rituals are so different, even amongst Cree people, who you think would be fairly uniform ... I can bring an elder in to talk generally about spirituality, but I would never bring an elder in to teach them spirituality because that's not my place and the classroom's not the place. They need to be in a sweat lodge or they need to be in someone's house learning about that on their own.

The relevancy of the message of some elders was also questioned. One teacher sensed that a lot of his urban Aboriginal students find the message of the elders to be often irrelevant. He stated,

[Urban Aboriginal students'] reality and their perspective is a lot different than the elders who have mainly grown-up on the reserve and are bringing that idea and those views to young kids who have grown-up in the city and have accepted a lot of the values of city kids... I'm just wondering in my own mind the worth of teaching spirituality, and whether kids are connecting.

Besides inviting elders into the classroom to discuss spirituality, some teachers minimized their personal concerns about dealing with this content by issuing the disclaimer “I'm going to inform you of what I'm aware from my readings” or “I'm taking this material out of the curriculum; if you happen to know an elder, or if you happen to be of Native background, and know a bit about this, by all means interrupt me and tell me it's different.” Another prevalent approach to the spirituality component of the courses was summarized in the comment “I teach them about spirituality and don't teach them spirituality.” A lot of the interviewed teachers felt comforted with the idea that their job was to expose students to the ideas of Aboriginal spirituality, not indoctrinate.

In addition to including spirituality in Native Studies courses, all the teachers indicated that the issue of racism was a topic that was usually discussed, either on an ad hoc basis or as part of a particular unit of study. Many of the interviewees often discussed racism when examining social justice issues, evolution of education, or current event issues like the recent dispute over the appropriateness of a local high school, Bedford Road, having their teams referred to as the 'Redmen'. One teacher's adamant desire to discuss racism in class was evidenced by her following statement:

I tackle [racism] directly. The reason I tackle that directly, and the reason that I think it's even more important for me to be Non-Aboriginal is because unfortunately here in Saskatoon and Saskatchewan a lot of kids grow up feeling like the white community is very powerful and very educated, and I walk in there and I'm the teacher and I've got my education and I'm supposed to be like this smart all-knowing person, and there I am telling them that racism exists. I think in some ways, I hate to say it but I think it's true, it's almost more relevant coming from me than from an Aboriginal person because it's not just some person that is complaining about their own life and how they've been treated. I've never been treated that way ... and I'm saying it exists and I see it there and it's wrong and it disgusts me and I wish it didn't happen and there's some ways we can change this.

This same teacher felt it was important to devote time to the preparation of formal lessons on the topic of racism. She expressed a concern that a lot of teachers, not just in Native Studies, do not seem motivated to present teaching units on racism. She claimed that some teachers have said "why teach racism as a unit?; everybody knows what it is." Her teaching experiences have, however, led her to believe that students generally "don't understand what [racism] means. And they don't have a clue about power, and where power extends from and how racism fits into the power structure of our society."

Only a couple of teachers expressed minimal interest in delving into the issue of racism in much detail. One teacher acknowledged that his classes focus not so much on directly discussing racist attitudes and the causes of racism, rather he tried “to give kids as much information as I can about an issue so they can make their own mind up as to whether or not they want to affirm a stereotype or want to change their view of a stereotype.”. The other teacher was also reluctant to commit substantial time to the topic of racism because of the belief that focusing too much on this topic breeds a culture of victimization where energies go towards blaming others rather than improving the present situation.

Although not always highlighted as an important topic by the interviewed teachers, the issue of ‘white-privilege’ was consistently acknowledged as existing and was usually addressed in the classroom in a variety of fashions. One teacher stated, “I believe in white-privilege; I know it’s there. I think you have to be a complete idiot not to see it. And I think that for us to approach it is really important.” Another teacher did not use the term ‘white-privilege’, but tried to address the concept by discussing ‘citizens minus’, Aboriginals, and ‘citizens plus’, Non-Aboriginals. This teacher felt it was important for students to see how Aboriginals have rarely been in a position to dictate their own future since the beginning of colonial times in Canada. These teachers acknowledged that some Non-Aboriginal instructors might feel uncomfortable delving into this issue, but “you can’t reject history, it’s there in black and white. You’ve got to have big shoulders if you’re going to teach [the course] if you’re a Non-Native person. Accept the fact that it happened, that you were no part of that, you want no part of that, and the kids will accept that.”

A lot of teachers discussed the concept of white-privilege with their students, but contextualized the issue by informing their pupils of the existence of

other forms of privilege in society. One teacher indicated that although white-privilege was discussed so too was native-privilege. She stated, “there’s native-privilege too. Their hunting rights and things like that. If one comes up I always bring up the other, to kind of even it off and give them the other perspective.” Another teacher also addressed the issue of white-privilege with students by outlining the adjunct examples of other unequal relationships in society, like the fact that Status Indians are privy “to all treaty rights, and rightly so” while Non-Status Indians are not entitled to the same benefits. These teachers thought it was important to acknowledge the existence of white-privilege, but not to portray it as omnipresent. One teacher noted, “the problem I have with the curriculum is that [white-privilege] is pointed out again, and again, and again.”

The pedagogical methodologies utilized by the interviewees to deliver the Native Studies curricula did not emphasize traditional Aboriginal epistemologies. Teachers made reference to traditional epistemologies of Aboriginal cultures in the content of the courses, however they did not necessarily make a concerted effort to incorporate traditional ‘ways of knowing’ into their teaching repertoire. Most of the teachers indicated that they utilized teaching methodology for the courses which they perceived as the best means of delivering the curriculum; if the selected methodology coincided with traditional epistemology it was from a desire to ‘best meet the needs of the students’ rather than an attempt to adhere to traditional learning methods. One teacher made the following comment about her preferred methodologies for Native Studies:

I use whatever works. It’s not like I’m teaching Aboriginal students so I better do a lot of talking and they can just sit and listen. They’d be bored stiff. I’ve brought in people who are very good story tellers and my kids snored- they’re teenagers and even though they come from an Aboriginal culture they want things that will turn them on and are exciting. They don’t necessarily like the

oral tradition any more than any of my other kids. They're kids and they like to do a little reading, do a little bit of writing, like to listen once in a while, like to watch movies. I use all the same [methodologies] as I do with my other classes, bring people in, go out to different places, get as many different experiences as possible ... I don't find that [Aboriginal students] require different types of instruction.

Although adhering to traditional Aboriginal epistemologies was not a methodology priority for the interviewees, many of them did incorporate teaching strategies into Native Studies classes which are typically associated with traditional means of Aboriginal peoples attaining knowledge. Providing an opportunity for practical experience or 'hands-on-learning' was identified by some of the teachers as a common methodology in their classes. A lot of teachers also stressed the importance of using talking circles in their classrooms. As one teacher noted, "I tried to do talking circles to encourage kids to express their feeling." Another teacher elaborated upon his usage of talking circles in the following manner:

I did a lot of talk in circles , which I think is quite effective for First Nations' kids because ... if I asked a question, everybody would just shut up, nobody would answer. What you need to do is to get the people to talk, to feel comfortable...These talking circles worked well... [students] will communicate a little bit more with you and will open up a little more, so you have to talk, talk to First Nations' kids.

The most frequently mentioned teaching methodology for Native Studies, and one that usually corresponds with traditional Aboriginal epistemology, was inviting members of the city's Aboriginal community, often elders, into the classroom to orally impart their knowledge and experiences to the students. One teacher, who taught at a school with a small percentage of Aboriginal students, gave the following advice stressing the importance of bringing in guest speakers:

Bring in more experts. If I were to coach volleyball, I have no background on it, I would bring in somebody to help me out. If I were to teach chemistry I'd go running to people. It's the same thing [with Native Studies]. I try to bring in an expert in certain areas plus ... the interesting thing is that most of these kids have had very little contact with Aboriginal people so to bring in Aboriginal people would break the stereotypes that [the students] may have had ... I think [Aboriginal guest speakers] feel more comfortable answering some of the tougher questions I don't feel comfortable answering as a white person.

One teacher, who was cognizant of the traditional importance placed on group learning by Aboriginals, indicated a reluctance to incorporate this type of methodology into the Native Studies classroom. He viewed group work as a good learning technique in theory, but often impractical for most Native Studies classes he instructed. He stated the following:

The problem in our schools throughout western Canada, and in Canada in general, is attendance. It is impossible to work at group activity because somebody may be here for a day and gone for two weeks back to the reserve or disappear and spend some time in jail. It just causes all kinds of havoc so I [prefer] to stay away from that.

A few other teachers mentioned the importance of utilizing resource-based learning in Native Studies, not so much because it has aspects which adhere to traditional epistemology but because of the practical constraints of the courses. With no assigned course textbooks and, at times, minimal knowledge base of the instructor on a particular topic, the teachers often relied upon students to formulate their own understanding on issues by examining provided resources. One teacher indicated that almost all his teaching in Native Studies "is resource based."

One interviewee admitted to using a variety of teaching methodologies that fit the traditional epistemology model, just like he did in all his other classes, but noted limitations to attempts to incorporate traditional Aboriginal teaching methods into the formal classroom. As a product of a Western-styled formal education system, he believed he was preconditioned to deliver courses in a manner that were not necessarily in keeping with traditional Aboriginal methodologies. He also expressed uncertainty about relying solely on traditional Aboriginal epistemology by stating “am I (as a teacher) tied to the standards that [western-society] has established? Should students be expected to write to express their ideas and thoughts or should I put more emphasis on the oral?”

Challenges in Teaching Native Studies

Question #4: What challenges have Non-Aboriginal teachers encountered in the teaching of Native Studies?

To successfully teach Native Studies the interviewed teachers highlighted numerous challenges, some of which were briefly alluded to in discussions pertaining to their formal and informal training for the courses, their perceptions of the goals of the courses, main content to be covered, and the best methodologies to be utilized. When asked to reflect upon the major challenges encountered in teaching Native Studies, some of the interviewed teachers instantaneously revisited issues like the instruction of Aboriginal culture, poor student attendance and their efforts to overcome what they perceive as a poor curriculum, especially in the case of Native Studies 20. Besides referring to some issues that had arisen in association with earlier discussions, the interviewees also noted the following challenges to teaching Native Studies which had not previously been mentioned: overcoming students’ non-academic perception of the

courses, lack of teaching resources, and successfully meeting the needs of the demographic mix of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students in the courses.

The ability to adequately and appropriately teach about Aboriginal cultures, especially the component of traditional spirituality, was noted by a few of the interviewees as the major challenge in teaching Native Studies courses. As Non-Aboriginals, they felt it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to gain the cultural awareness of Aboriginal peoples required to appropriately teach the courses. In addition, they felt their lack of Aboriginal heritage reduced their credibility with students when discussing an issue like spirituality. One teacher stated the following regarding the importance of having an Aboriginal teach cultural issues in Native Studies:

In terms of culture, that's where an Aboriginal person would be more able to answer the questions. In terms of selling your students on things, I think it would be much easier for a student to believe an Aboriginal person than to believe me; [just like] I think it would be easier for a basketball player to listen to a person who is six foot eight inches and has played the game, than to listen to someone is five foot six inches and never played the game.

Another teacher made the following comments about how only an Aboriginal teacher can satisfactorily undertake the challenge of teaching about Aboriginal cultures:

I think to give real credibility to [the course], you should have an Aboriginal background. Would you teach history without a history degree? Would you teach math unless you were a math major? It just makes sense to me that you would bring far more to the process in terms of your own life experiences and your own sense of values and beliefs ... if you were somebody of Aboriginal background. The perspective I could give my students, having taught in the Arctic, was always that of an outsider being a guest of another culture.

While some teachers perceived their lack of knowledge about Aboriginal cultural practices as a constant challenge in their teaching, and a major reason to argue in favour of the installation of Aboriginal teachers in Native Studies classrooms, most of the interviewees rejected the notion that they are ill-suited to instruct the courses because of a general lack of intimate cultural interaction with Aboriginal peoples. As noted earlier, many of these teachers believed that since they were not teaching a specific cultural perspective they were capable of fulfilling the mandate of the courses. One teacher emphasized this point with the statement “I feel I couldn’t teach them about their own culture because I feel they’re all so different. I’m teaching the big picture. This is what’s happened; it’s a history course.” Another teacher noted that an individual’s race is irrelevant in determining who should be appointed to instruct about culture in Native Studies; the most important factor is knowledge of Aboriginal culture. He stated that “in the ideal world, whether I’m Aboriginal or not should not affect if I teach Native Studies. I could have been brought up in a Native environment and ... still (effectively) teach this course.” Another teacher stated, “It’s not going to matter who you get in there, they’re not going to be the perfect person to teach Native Studies because they’re going to have their own individual perspective ... There’s no such thing as an Aboriginal perspective.”

According to a lot of the teachers, particularly those who had a high percentage of Aboriginal students in their classes, another major challenge in teaching Native Studies was dealing with a high rate of student absenteeism. This concern about attendance was summarized by the following statement:

I think the biggest challenge is attendance because I can start out with thirty kids, or over thirty kids, and I’m excited if I have twenty left by the end. And it shouldn’t be that way; I shouldn’t be excited with twenty, it should be thirty. It should start with thirty and end with maybe twenty-eight or something like that. That’s

discouraging and I can see how some teachers who have taught for years and years and years are discouraged by the numbers.

Those teachers who mentioned student absenteeism as a main concern when teaching Native Studies, initiated various strategies in an attempt to rectify their respective situations. To counteract attendance problems some of the teachers made more of a conscious effort to monitor attendance in Native Studies classes because of the higher probability of students being chronic non-attenders. In addition, some interviewed teachers noted the importance of establishing a good rapport with those students prone to absenteeism because “if you don’t have a personal connection they will disappear on you.” A few teachers also indicated the significance of not being too intransigent with attendance policies when addressing absenteeism; although the attendance policy at one school was to remove students after twenty absences from a class, teachers were reluctant to strictly enforce the policy. One teacher demonstrated his flexibility regarding the attendance issue with the following statement:

I like to let [the students] make the decision, not me... People will look at me and say ‘how can you pass this kid with twenty-five or thirty absences?’. I justify it from the point of view that the kid, when he or she is there, did the work and came to write the final and I look at it from the point of view of the age of the individual. Why should I prevent this kid from moving on to say-some kind of reserve-sponsored program?

Another teacher indicated the importance of being flexible with attendance procedures, especially in lieu of concerns in the school community that the policy of ‘fifteen absences and your out’ is racist. This teacher believed that a restrictive attendance policy did not necessarily accommodate the unique attendance circumstances of some students, be they Aboriginal or Non-Aboriginal. This teacher’s view on claims that the school had a racist attendance policy and the

importance of a student's individual experience being the focal point in determining whether or not he or she should be allowed to remain enrolled in the class was demonstrated in the following statement:

Aboriginal students haven't been successful in schools for a long, long time. There's statistics there to show it, so what is the reason for that? I suppose there's a million different reasons but is it possible that some of the policies are racist? I don't know- possibly, but I try to do the best in my classroom with teaching each person as an individual, [like other Native Studies teachers in the school], and looking at the situation and just trying to help them be successful.

A couple of teachers also re-emphasized the point that teaching what they perceived as a weak curriculum, especially the Native Studies 20 course, was also a major hurdle to overcome as an instructor. One teacher stated that "the curriculum guide books are quite weak ... lots of typos- it's just dry material-political pages that you absolutely wouldn't dare give [students]." Another teacher made the following comments in direct regard to Native Studies 20: "In the case studies I found there were so many different examples of different people from different times, different places that without adequate background students really got lost ... And that I found tough." He also further stated that of the three offerings of Native Studies "the course I take the least from is the course entitled Native Studies 20 because it's not relevant to most of [the students]."

The common occurrence of students perceiving Native Studies classes to be 'an easy credit' was also identified as a professional challenge by the interviewees. One teacher indicated that student perception of Native Studies as really a non-academic class was his "biggest problem" with the course. He stated that in the three Native Studies classes he had taught "half [the students] are there only because they heard that it's an easy credit- that's pretty well the source of all my grief." A few of the teachers indicated a belief, often gained by discussions with guidance counsellors, that many students enroll in Native Studies classes

because of the rumour that these classes are less of an academic workload than the traditional history classes. While one teacher acknowledged “watering down standards to keep kids coming back” when Native Studies was first offered at the school, there was unanimity that today’s Native Studies courses are undeserving of a non-academic label; students taking Native Studies may not always be the best academic students in the school, but it is erroneous to assume from this reality that Native Studies classes are not academically challenging.

Another challenge in teaching Native Studies, particularly for those individuals who teach or have taught at schools with a relatively small Aboriginal student population, appeared to be the procurement of instructional resources. A number of the interviewees lamented the fact that although the courses are interesting to teach, the search for resources required exhaustive effort. One teacher noted that one of the definite challenges in teaching Native Studies was “a lack of resources in our library.” In addition to the assessment that schools often have a lack of written resources to aid in the instruction of Native Studies, one teacher found it difficult to get a lot of Aboriginal guest speakers to present to his classes because “being Non-Aboriginal I don’t have as many of those contacts; I haven’t grown up knowing elders and the [Aboriginal] context.”

Those teachers who felt challenged in gathering sufficient and appropriate information to instruct Native Studies, turned to various sources to help them teach their classes. Numerous teachers appeared to rely upon the presence of the Public School Board’s Indian and Metis consultant to help better inform students on particular issues pertaining to the courses. Other popular resources that were mentioned as being helpful in instructing the courses included the following: texts from Native Studies classes at university, guest speakers, field trips, films, the

internet, daily newspapers, the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre, Aboriginal students with a good understanding of their traditional culture.

A few interviewees also indicated that an additional challenge to teaching Native Studies was meeting the sometimes differing needs of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students in the class. To some of the educators, the racial mix of the students provided a constant dilemma since they viewed the courses as having different mandates for Aboriginal versus Non-Aboriginal students. One teacher indicated that the cultural make-up of classes could easily influence the overall focus of the course; if there was a large proportion of Aboriginal students in the course there was apt to be more emphasis placed on instilling pride in one's culture, while if the majority of the class were Non-Aboriginal there was more of an attempt to highlight the gross injustices of colonialism. This teacher's different course strategies, emerging from the racial composition of the class, were summarized in the following fashion:

I don't want to give my Aboriginal kids a view of the mountain, I want them to see a little hill that they can just climb over. I'd give the white kids that huge mountain so that they could see how bad things really are, and that they would hopefully never again say something, do something or let someone get away with a statement that just perpetuates this racism that exists in our society.

Another teacher indicated that unique classroom dynamics sometimes arose with a heterogeneous racial grouping of students in Native Studies class. The teacher noted that "I've had kids drop out of my classes who felt uncomfortable who were Non-Aboriginal ... in one particular case a girl was taking the class because she was interested in Aboriginal culture and she felt very intimidated [by the views expressed by many Aboriginal students." This teacher felt there was a definite challenge in trying to attain a class tone which allows

both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students to feel comfortable in expressing their views.

A few teachers also mentioned the need to handle their own discomfort in teaching Native Studies to Aboriginal students as a challenge. One teacher indicated that the presence of Aboriginal students in class made him more self-conscious over whether he was using words like ‘Natives’, ‘Indians’, ‘First Nations’, and ‘Aboriginal’ in the correct context. Another teacher also noted that the presence of Aboriginal students in class made him “more careful as to what I say in class, because I don’t know whether someone will construe something I say as prejudice... [Aboriginal] students in the room makes me a little more wary of what I say and also makes me more anxious.”

Recommendations for Improving the Delivery of Native Studies

Question #5: What recommendations do Non-Aboriginal teachers have for improving the delivery of Native Studies?

To improve the delivery of Native Studies classes to high school students in Saskatoon, the interviewed Non-Aboriginal teachers provided a variety of recommendations for education stakeholders to consider. These recommendations, often a direct manifestation of the teachers’ perceived challenges in teaching Native Studies courses, were meant to give helpful direction to one, all, or combination of the following influential educational groups; in-school administrators, central office personal of both city school boards, curriculum writers with Saskatchewan Education , the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, the F.S.I.N., and the Saskatoon Tribal Council.

When asked to provide recommendations for improving Native Studies classes, many of the interviewees were quick to revisit the idea that school boards

should focus their attention on recruiting Aboriginal teachers to Native Studies postings. As one study participant stated, “I really think that I’m just playing an intermediate role. I hope we can get to the point where Native people can teach Native Studies ... I really think they should be the ones doing it.” While most of the interview participants rejected the recommendation for only having Aboriginal teachers instruct Native Studies, a concept they viewed as more likely to foster racial misunderstanding than racial harmony between Aboriginals and Non-Aboriginals, they did concur with the idea that school boards should be making a more concerted effort to hire Aboriginal teachers in all subject areas. One teacher made the following statement pertaining to the hiring of Aboriginal teachers:

We need a lot more hiring of Native People ... [not just] to teach Native Studies, but to teach mathematics, to teach sciences, teach English and so on ... The simple fact that kids can see ‘Yeah, there’s a woman, there’s a guy who has it together and I can talk to you when it comes to math.’ I had a Board member say to me once, ‘is there something wrong with these people that they can’t do mathematics?’ My head almost hit the table when this came out, but to improve the situation a lot more hiring [of Aboriginals] needs to be done at the secondary level.

Another teacher stated, “I think it would be nice for Native students to have more role models ... I’d like Native people to be teaching everything.”

For one teacher, having school boards hire individuals, particularly elders, who are well-versed in Aboriginal culture would help to alleviate some of the apprehension associated with the teaching of the Native Studies courses. These ‘Aboriginal experts’, like the Indian and Metis Consultant presently employed by the Public Board of Education, could act as references for the courses. The teacher’s view on this issue was stated in the following manner:

The Board could clearly hire some experts in Native Studies; that makes perfect sense. The Native spirituality being what it is, it really makes sense to have an elder attached to the school. We've had speakers come in and we've offered a gift of tobacco, or whatever, but in our system there's plenty of work for an elder. This could easily be a position where someone gets paid. If there's enough work in the school system someone should be paid to do the work. I don't think we can expect people to continuously come to schools for a bag of tobacco.

Besides hiring more Aboriginal teachers in all subject areas, not specifically Native Studies, the majority of interview respondents expressed a definite need for school boards to insure that Native Studies teachers have an excellent knowledge base in Aboriginal issues. Rather than arguing the merits or drawbacks of the racial background of the Native Studies teacher, they expressed the concern over making sure those individuals appointed to teach Native Studies have sufficient knowledge to teach the courses. The importance of making sure Native Studies teachers are well-versed in course materials was highlighted by the following quotations:

There was a mother of one of my students, who works for the Department of Education, in Native curriculum and literature, who was rip-roaring mad that I was teaching a class- because of my lack of background, not because I wasn't Aboriginal. She came to the open-house and started asking questions and, of course, I knew immediately that she knew what she was talking about, and I didn't try and block her in any way. She was not only mad that I wasn't qualified but that the system [had me teaching Native Studies; she asked, 'what kind of inservice have you had?' [I answered], 'absolutely none'. So there is something to it.

Maybe we shouldn't let white people like myself just think that we can teach [Native Studies]. I'm not saying that we're not doing a good job, but maybe we shouldn't be allowed to [teach the course] until we've taken certain courses, gone through certain things. Like in order to be a history major and to teach history I've had to take a

certain number of courses. I guess with accreditation coming up with Native Studies 30 ... that's one stopping measure they have.

Almost all the interviewed teachers indicated that a lot more needs to be done to enhance their knowledge level of Aboriginal issues. They felt school boards, and perhaps even Aboriginal governing bodies, should provide more opportunities for Native Studies teachers, as well as other teachers in their respective schools, to access classes, workshops and seminars that would improve their knowledge in the field of Native Studies. Money needs to be made available to allow “whoever is teaching Native Studies the opportunity to attend workshops, conferences that are put on by [various Aboriginal agencies].” Teachers and students require an opportunity to better utilize Aboriginal resources in the community. The need to provide Native Studies teachers with additional money to properly deliver Native Studies courses is expressed in the following two quotations:

Paying an honorarium is also a problem. A lot of First Nations' People now want to be paid for visiting a school ... finding a \$50 honorarium three or four times a year is not easy. If we wanted to do anything special- like making a special craft, whether it is a leather product or dream-catcher, even making bannock ...where does the money come from? There needs to be a budget allotted with that.

Spend some money. Spend some real money and make buses available. Make speakers available. Allow kids to get off-site of the school. Hire subs so you can spring your classroom teachers free... If you're going to offer Native Studies class you should experience the environment, have some of the stories, learn about the plants, learn about the medicines, hear some legends, experience a sweat, listen to elders speak, and make it the holistic total package.

In-school administrators, who were identified as one of the educational groups that could assist the funding needs of Native Studies courses, were also

viewed by the interviewed teachers as extremely influential in the successful delivery of the courses. Not only can they provide more financial assistance to support Native Studies, they can support the programming in any one of the following fashions: vocalize their support for Native Studies classes, gain a better cultural understanding of Aboriginal Peoples, provide all staff members with an increased opportunity to appreciate Aboriginal cultures, alter course timetabling to meet the unique challenges often posed by Native Studies courses, and attempt to increase parent involvement in the classes.

There was also the belief amongst some of the study participants that in order to increase the credibility of Native Studies classes, principals and vice-principals need to show unwavering support for the courses across the city. Right now there is a perception amongst a few teachers that some school administrators “think they don’t need [Native Studies] in their schools.” Regardless of the number of Aboriginal students enrolled at a high school, the view was expressed that Native Studies classes need to be offered and supported by administrators because of the increasingly influential role Aboriginals are playing in Saskatchewan.

A few of the study participants also believed that more educational support for Native Studies classes could possibly be garnered if principals and vice-principals, along with other staff members, knew more about Aboriginal cultures. One teacher expressed the concern that administrators and other teaching staff at his school have previously viewed such class activities as teepee raisings and smudging with suspicion because of a degree of naiveté about Native cultures. To off-set this lack of understanding about Aboriginal cultures, it was recommended that staff inservices be provided on Aboriginal cultures. As one teacher noted, “I’d like to see more of our teachers have a better understanding of

what Native Studies is and how it's taught, because I don't think a lot of that is shared, and my gut feeling is that a lot of people think ... 'why are we doing this?'"

Demonstrating flexibility with the time-tabling of Native Studies classes was mentioned by a number of interviewees as an important school administrative role in enhancing the delivery of the courses. In the following quotation, one teacher indicated why he thought it was important for administrators to slot Native Studies classes into the afternoon:

We ran into some time-tabling problems because the classes start at 8:30 a.m., and that's the wrong time of the morning for most guest speakers to come ... I think the afternoon would have been a much better time; during part of the day we could have done more activities that wouldn't affect the other classes. Visiting Wanuskewin, the Indian Cultural Centre, the Gabriel Dumont Centre or whatever- the afternoon would have been much better ... you can't bring an elder in [early in the morning] (because) some of them come from a distance.

Another teacher, who taught in a school where absenteeism was a concern, believed that administrators must be open to the idea of delivering Native Studies via the quarter class system. He stated,

The quarter system gets them [in school]; it's a two hour stint, you've got them there, you can get them through. A credit is given and the students can go on with their lives. I think that's really important, especially for kids who are coming from difficult situations or transient situations. It's really important. They can see the progress really quickly and there's an end [in sight].

The importance of administrative willingness to alter traditional school timetabling to allow for improved delivery of Native Studies classes was also mentioned in the following quotation: "make the school year-day-month much

more flexible somehow. That's a big recommendation. [Allow for] learning outside the classroom."

A few other recommended steps school administrators could take to improve Native Studies offerings included helping to ensure that Native Studies is perceived as an academic course, trying to facilitate more parent involvement with the school, and keeping visible in the hallways and classrooms. One teacher indicated that administrators, along with guidance counsellors, need to be active in ameliorating the notion that Native Studies is an easy credit. He stated,

Native Studies, as I have seen it, has fallen into this category- easy credit ... From the perspective of encouraging acceptance and combating racism I don't think you want History for real students, Native Studies for weak students- that could be seen as a racist split, you know, for slower kids there's Native Studies. If you don't want to associate 'slower' and 'Native' then administrators and councilors [should] have a little meeting with whoever is teaching Native Studies and say, 'okay, this year [Native Studies] has to come up to the level of our History classes.'

Another teacher believed administrators could help students, especially those of Aboriginal ancestry, succeed in Native Studies, and other classes, by "being more visible with the kids. [An administrator] has to become more of a person to them ... The kids feel more comfortable because they're accepted, they're treated more like individuals." This same teacher also indicated that administrators can help Native Studies students, many of whom are Aboriginals with poor attendance records, by "encouraging parents to get involved in the schools."

At the system level, both public and separate school teachers believed measures could be enacted to help in the delivery of Native Studies. According to one teacher, the Board that employs him needs to increase the support it is presently giving Non-Aboriginal teachers of Native Studies. He stated,

I think that our Board has to be very supportive of the Non-Aboriginal teacher who is teaching the Native Studies class. I think often times they look at only ... being an affirmative action employer... I think they have to have appreciation and understanding for those of us who are Non-Native, who have actually learned the culture and have an appreciation and understanding of it, and have done what we can to assist the matter. I don't think our directors have taken a look at that issue; [they're too focused] looking at how to retain the Indian teachers in our system.

To assist teachers of Native Studies, a few of the interviewed teachers mentioned that their Board should not only continue to support the useful position of Indian and Metis consultant, but also create a Social Studies sub-committee that could examine issues pertaining to the Native Studies courses. This committee could provide teachers of Native Studies with a forum to discuss common challenges and facilitate a sharing of resources and group planning for various field-trips.

The school boards, perhaps with direction and assistance from the provincial Department of Education, could, according to some of the interviewees, improve Native Studies courses by providing class textbooks. Teachers who made this recommendation are conscious of curriculum efforts to have Native Studies taught as a resource-based course that is not constrained by the parameters of a textbook, but there was a feeling that a core textbook could give students a better grasp of the courses while simultaneously providing another much needed resource for teachers. The view that textbooks can substantially assist the teaching of Native Studies is highlighted in the following quotations:

I guess we need a resource base. I guess that's a big no-no, but the reality is that if you're going to put non-specialist teachers into [Native Studies], expecting them to fill plugs all over the timetable, there's got to be a key resource that gets some things put together. To expect people to scramble for resources and make contacts, I don't think is very appropriate. With the lack of a text

there's no crutch; on a weak day in Native Studies you've got nothing. On a weak day in history class you'd open a text and away you go. I think that's significant.

It would be nice to have a textbook of some kind or something really specific that we could give our students to use on their own instead of constantly giving them sheets. I find that if they can have some kind of resource guide, that they themselves can look at and feel comfortable with, that's sometimes helpful.

According to a few of the interviewed teachers, the Provincial Department of Education can also make some curriculum adjustments to improve Native Studies offerings. As previously mentioned by some teachers, not only was there a perceived need to update course resources, and in the case of the Native Studies 20 course make it more relevant to present-day students, one teacher felt the Department needs to re-examine how it addresses Aboriginal culture throughout the K-12 curricula. This teacher expressed a concern that there is too much curriculum redundancy on material pertaining to Aboriginal peoples in Canada. To illustrate this point, the teacher stated, "in my last year of teaching, the students were actually upset we spent so much time on First Nations culture because they said they'd been taking First Nations culture since grade three ... They think they've had it for five years."

Another recommendation, meant more to improve the overall education of all high school students rather than directly enhance the specific delivery of Native Studies classes, was to encourage the Department of Education to reconsider its directive of accepting Native Studies 30 as a suitable matriculation alternative to History or Social 30. One teacher stated, "I'm still not real comfortable with the concept that you can go exclusively into a Native Studies stream in high school and graduate from that without a broader base of

knowledge and understanding of mainstream Canadian society and mainstream Canadian history.” This view was reinforced by the following two quotations:

There’s the contentious issue that Native Studies 30 being offered [instead of History 30] ... I have a problem with the idea ...[I have] a problem of having people specializing in just [Native Studies] ... I think it becomes a little too narrow.

Taking three years of [Native Studies] 10, 20, and 30, I don’t think you get the big picture... To get the big picture of what the country’s all about, since First Nations people make up 2.9% of the total population of Canada, I think you need to have that History 30 to have a broad perspective of what’s going on in the country.

When asked to reflect on means by which post-secondary institutions can further aid Native Studies instruction, there were two main ideas which emerged from the interviewed teachers. The proposition most frequently mentioned was to have universities help overcome the formal training deficiencies of Native Studies teachers by making Native Studies classes compulsory for all Social Science teachers in training at the College of Education. One teacher stated that “certainly in Saskatchewan [with its high Aboriginal population] all students should be receiving classes in Native Studies” while another interviewee said “I think it would be interesting to see the Education Department have some kind of mandatory Native Studies class that you have to take.” One teacher believed it was extremely important for all Saskatchewan educators, not just Social Science and Native Studies teachers, to take mandatory Native Studies courses at university. The importance of all teachers being exposed to Native Studies classes was stipulated in the following quotation:

Perhaps because a great deal of our students graduating from the College are going to be teaching in that kind of an environment (where there are Aboriginal students) maybe this would help. I

hear a lot of prejudiced attitudes coming from teachers of Native students. Many of these teachers have no background in [Native Studies].

One teacher believed the provincial Colleges of Education can play a more influential role in improving the instruction of Native Studies by offering a course, or at least part of a course, which focuses on methodology of how to teach about Aboriginal culture and how to specifically combine traditional learning techniques of Aboriginal Peoples with the formal Euro-Canadian teaching environment. This recommendation was stated in the following manner:

It would be interesting to look at the idea of pedagogy. How should [Native Studies] classes be taught and how should they be evaluated? ... I think that's a good course to give at the university level, or wherever, for the professional student. How should the culture be taught? To teach Native Studies goes against [traditional] Aboriginal culture, that's not how you learn.

Summary

This chapter articulated the views of Non-Aboriginal teachers as they navigate the cross-cultural aspects of instructing Native Studies to both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students. How do these teachers approach the teaching of courses which are comprised of historical and cultural content, concepts, and values pertaining to Aboriginal Peoples, and, in addition, face the challenge of familiarizing Aboriginal students with this aforementioned information? To give insight into how Non-Aboriginal teachers in Saskatoon have been prepared for traversing the societal turbulence sometimes associated with Non-Aboriginals instructing Native Studies and how they perceive their instruction of the courses, the results of the questionnaire, personal interviews and focus group were summarized. Apart from the first section of the chapter, which

solely focused on the questionnaire findings regarding the teaching context of each of the study participants, the research data were organized and reported upon according to the five key research questions identified in Chapter One of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Discussion, and Conclusions

The social challenges facing Saskatchewan's rapidly increasing Native population, including race relations between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal communities, have been the subject of increasing media coverage in the last few years. One positive manifestation of this attention is the enhanced visibility of initiatives generated in various societal sectors to help increase the likelihood of Aboriginals successfully meeting these challenges. The Provincial Department of Education is one institution which has undertaken a variety of measures to improve the probability of Aboriginals in Saskatchewan experiencing positive results to the various issues they must face, including that of racism. Significant amongst the Department's initiatives was the formulation and offering of Native Studies classes at the grade ten (Native Studies 10), grade eleven (Native Studies 20) and grade twelve (Native Studies 30) levels. According to the Department, the primary goals of these courses are encapsulated by directives for all curricula: all students and teachers, regardless of race, develop an appreciation of Aboriginal cultures; ensure curriculum materials are relevant to Aboriginal students; and transmit positive and accurate information in order to aid Native students gain an improved self-image and cultural identity (Saskatchewan Education, 1991).

In Saskatoon, Native Studies classes are presently offered at most high schools, but the extent to which they are meeting their mandate is open to interpretation. An important voice to be heard in determining the effectiveness of Native Studies classes is that of the teacher. While all teachers, regardless of race, can make important contributions to the dialogue on the 'success' of Native Studies classes, Non-Aboriginal teachers definitely need to be heard from

because not only do they instruct the majority of Native Studies classes in Saskatoon, but they also bring unique cultural perspectives, what Memmi (1965) would classify as that of 'the colonizer', to their interpretation and delivery of Native Studies curricula.

The garnering of a greater societal awareness of Non-Aboriginal teachers' views on instructing Native Studies, thereby allowing all education stakeholders to have greater insight into how these courses are attempting to meet their mandates, was the impetus behind the undertaking of this study. In the succeeding paragraphs a review of the major questions which spearheaded the study, along with a summary of the academic literature which supported this undertaking and a brief outline of the data collection procedures is provided. In addition, a summary and analysis of the study participants' teaching context and views on the instruction of Native Studies is presented. A focal point in the analysis of teacher perspectives is the insertion of the views of the interviewees into the multicultural education models proposed by the theorists Sleeter and Grant (1993). This chapter concludes with a listing of further research opportunities which emerge from the researcher's reflections on the study.

Design of the Study

The following five questions played a prominent role in guiding this study:

1. What background training and experiences do Non-Aboriginal teachers have which has prepared them for the instruction of Native Studies?
2. What do Non-Aboriginal teachers perceive as the goals of Native Studies courses?
3. What teaching content and pedagogical processes do Non-Aboriginal teachers

view as significant in helping them achieve the goals of the courses?

4. What challenges have Non-Aboriginal teachers encountered in the teaching of Native Studies?
5. What recommendations do Non-Aboriginal teachers have for improving the delivery of Native Studies?

The literature basis for the study examined three major areas:

Non-Aboriginal teachers' perspectives on instructing Aboriginal students, educator requirements to teach a culturally specific course like Native Studies in a cross-cultural environment, and recommended teacher knowledge base for instructing students of Aboriginal ancestry. The first area focused on the views of Non-Natives (Crago & McAlphine, 1995; Taylor, 1995) who have recorded their thoughts on their educational experiences in Aboriginal communities. The second literary area examined recommended training for educators who enter our pluralistic society, with particular attention paid to the Sleeter and Grant model which stipulates the following five means of organizing multicultural education: *Teaching the Culturally Different*, *Human Relations Approach*, *Single Group Studies*, *Multicultural Approach*, and *Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist Approach*. The third literary area, which is certainly interrelated to the first and second literary areas, revealed the thoughts of researchers (Cajete, 1994; Heit, 1987; Stairs, 1995) on the knowledge template required by those teachers who instruct Aboriginal students. Providing a review of academic literature in each of the aforementioned areas was meant to increase objectivity towards the data accumulated in the study.

The data for the study were collected from nine Non-Aboriginal teachers who either presently teach or have taught one or potentially all of the following courses: Native Studies 10, Native Studies 20, Native Studies 30. These study

participants were asked to be involved in data collection procedures involving a questionnaire, personal interview, and focus group session. The triangulation of the data collection was meant to increase the accuracy, and hence the validity, of the study. The questionnaire was structured to help reveal the Native Studies environment experienced by each study participant. The personal interview and focus group adhered to a semi-structure design which was guided by the five major research questions.

Dynamics of Focus Group

Although all nine of the study participants were invited to partake in the focus group interview, only six teachers, two women and four men, eventually participated in this data collection procedure. The focus group interview, lasting approximately one and a half hours, adhered to the same question guidelines which were the basis of the personal interviews. By asking interviewees to elaborate on their personal interview questions, a more comprehensive understanding of their perspective and a more lucid and detailed description of their teaching experience was obtained.

During the interview, each participant was asked to respond to the questions, but not all individuals felt compelled to address each query. The reluctance of some interviewees to answer certain questions may have been due to such factors as: wanting to avoid redundancy, lack of reflection time, and uneasiness with a particular topic. Whatever the reason for some interviewees avoiding a response to certain questions, the reality was that the majority of focus group questions did not receive unanimous response. In fact, there were often times when only three or four individuals verbalized their thoughts on a particular

question. Overall, of the six study participants in attendance, four individuals, who had clearly done considerable reflection on Native Studies classes, monopolized the responses to most questions. Particularly interesting, especially to those individuals with an interest in women or gender studies, was the fact that the voices of the female participants in the focus group were often the most pervasive. The influential voices of the women participants may be partially the result of them feeling an affinity for some of the issues facing Aboriginal peoples. Just as Aboriginals are a minority voice in society's hegemony, so too are women.

The responses in the focus group helped reinforce the ideas that the interviewees had uttered during their individual interviews. The group dynamics did not result in any contradiction of the participants' views in comparison to their personal interview replies. In addition, apart from concerns about teacher accreditation for the Native Studies 30 course, there was no topic discussed in the focus group which had not been examined during the personal interviews.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Besides providing a brief summary of the data, this section reveals the researcher's reflections on the accumulated information. By superimposing the interviewee responses on the literature review, as well as my general knowledge template, major issues emerge regarding the delivery of Native Studies courses by Non-Aboriginal teachers.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire results indicate a couple of expected outcomes. First, it is not surprising that the majority of study participants have three years or less experience teaching Native Studies since most city high schools only began offering Native Studies classes during this decade. Second, since many Aboriginal students are no doubt lured to Native Studies courses because of the opportunity to learn more about Native cultures and the corresponding issues, it is understandable that schools with a high percentage of Aboriginal students have high Aboriginal student enrollment rates for Native Studies classes. The high percentage of Aboriginal students in the Native Studies classes of some schools is undoubtedly an encouraging sign to many educators who view the schools as traditionally offering a lot of irrelevant courses to Aboriginals, but one concern emerging from these enrollment reports is that social science offerings at some schools are becoming streamed according to race-- Non-Aboriginal students take history, law, and psychology classes while Aboriginal students take Native Studies. This separation of races in the social sciences may be preferable to the previous colonial assimilationist curricula which either ignored or belittled Aboriginal cultures, but is it desirable in a society which is attempting to achieve harmonious relationships between all races and cultures?

Another noteworthy concern emerging from the questionnaire data is that student-teacher ratio in many Native Studies courses is often in excess of 30:1. While high student-teacher ratios are a concern in all classes, the high number of students in Native Studies classes, especially those classes with a lot of Aboriginal students, is especially disconcerting because, as noted by one teacher, for many Aboriginal students to achieve academic success in the formal schooling

environment, it is imperative that “they’re treated as individuals.” Providing the necessary individual attention required for academic success becomes extremely difficult when class sizes exceed thirty students; it is difficult to envision large classes being conducive to achieving what Klienfeld (1974) identifies as the main challenge facing teachers of Aboriginal students-- “the ability to create a climate of emotional warmth that both dissipate(s) student’s fears in the classroom and fulfill(s) their expectations of highly personalized relationships” (p. 20). If “caring is the very bedrock of all successful education and that contemporary schooling can be revitalized in it’s light” (Noddings, 1992, p. 27), then it is important to have smaller student-teacher ratios which are more capable of providing a ‘caring’ classroom.

One positive aspect of the questionnaire information is indication that, in general, there is not a noticeable difference between the academic success rate of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students in Native Studies. This information contrasts with the poor staying-in-school record of Aboriginal students compared to Non-Aboriginal students. Any course which appears to increase the likelihood of Aboriginal students achieving academic success needs to be examined carefully in order to determine the attributes which have helped attain these commendable results.

Personal Interviews and Focus Group

Discussions with the study participants revealed that the majority of them have limited post-secondary training in Native Studies classes and minimal direct contact with Aboriginal Peoples. The fact that most of the interviewees lack a strong formal academic training in the cross-cultural dynamics of instructing

Native Studies is consistent with the findings and views of many educators (Burnstein & Cabello, 1995; Campbell, 1991; Goddard, 1994; Kirkness, 1992; Taylor, 1995). While some of the interviewed teachers had taken Native Studies classes and, in the case of two teachers, had considerable interaction with Aboriginal cultures outside the walls of academia, most of the study participants identified their knowledge base for the instruction of Native Studies to have emerged from university humanities classes beside Native Studies, particularly Canadian history courses, and personal readings of books, newspapers and magazines. Their academic background, with or without Native Studies classes, along with their personal experiences and interest, or lack of interest amongst other social studies department members, in teaching Native Studies, were mentioned as the main reasons for their appointment to instruct Native Studies courses.

The degree of participant concern over the need to have university training in Native Studies classes, and other courses which specifically address the issue of inequality in society, and the need to interact with Aboriginal cultures outside the classroom varied. Some of the teachers, echoing the views of Common (1989) and Finney & Orr (1995), believed that these courses are instrumental in allowing teachers to portray Aboriginal cultures in a manner which will help promote a positive image of Aboriginal Peoples and ameliorate negative misconceptions. To these teachers, formal educational training enhanced their ability to expose students to the value systems shared by Aboriginal Peoples, present Aboriginal history in an in-depth and positive fashion, and better understand the societal inequities confronting Aboriginals.

Although no study participant suggested that formal training in Native Studies classes is unimportant to a successful delivery of Native Studies classes, it

is apparent that many of the teachers feel experiential learning of Aboriginal cultures should receive more official recognition as a significant factor in determining the prerequisites required to teach the classes. These teachers found it ironic that there is pressure to attain formalized Euro-Canadian training to instruct Native Studies when, from a traditional Aboriginal perspective, true learning best occurs when it is experienced. They felt that opportunities like residing in a predominantly Aboriginal community, speaking with elders, or attending traditional ceremonies, can significantly mitigate any concern over their lack of formalized instruction in Native Studies. In addition, they believed some of the knowledge attained in university classrooms can also be gained by an individual who is motivated to learn about Aboriginal cultures through personal readings of books, magazine articles, newspaper articles, etc. which focus on Aboriginal cultures.

From an examination of the study's data, there is clearly a concern about a lack of academic training in Native Studies for many of the high school educators of Native Studies in Saskatoon, but there also needs to be formalized recognition from education systems about the importance of experience with Aboriginal cultures outside the classroom walls. Just like students, teacher learning is enhanced when opportunity is given to 'breath in knowledge' (Cajete, 1994); learning requires a practical and experiential component in order for knowledge to be truly learned. As noted by one of the interviewees, 'the academia in ivory towers is totally different from living in the [Aboriginal] culture'. Academic classes help provide a knowledge template about Aboriginal cultures and encourage a theoretical examination of issues, while the experiential component can help establish some practical insights into culture which can broaden teacher perspectives. Colleges of Education, the Provincial Department

of Education and local school boards need to establish a criteria for giving some degree of formal recognition to experiential learning of Aboriginal cultures as either a mandatory component of receiving a Native Studies degree or, at the very least, something that could stand in lieu of a certain number of classes required to graduate with a recognized ability to instruct Native Studies courses. Formalized recognition of experiential learning would not only be more reminiscent and respectful of traditional Aboriginal epistemology, but it might bring the additional bonus of increasing the incorporation of the perspectives of elders and other 'experts' in Aboriginal cultures, be they Aboriginal or Non-Aboriginal, into the presentation of Native Studies curricula. With formal recognition of experiential learning, elders and other noted 'experts' on Aboriginal cultures might be able to easier achieve the standards required for employment by school boards, thereby gaining increased visibility in the classroom.

For those Non-Aboriginal teachers presently instructing Native Studies, many believed they would feel more secure, and in some cases more competent, in teaching their classes if they had both additional formal and practical experiences with Aboriginal cultures. School Boards and school-based administrators need to encourage and help support efforts of Native Studies teachers to gain a broader understanding of Aboriginal cultures by offering not just typical classroom inservices on Aboriginal cultures, but also providing opportunities for experiential learning. As Grant (1995) so aptly states, "traditional experiences ought to form a basis on which contemporary education builds" (p. 213).

While evidence of a teacher having both formal academic and experiential encounters with Aboriginal cultures are important determinants in selecting candidates to instruct Native Studies, it should be remembered that evidence of

these encounters does not guarantee the individual will be a successful Native Studies teacher. Academic classes and abundant interaction with Aboriginal cultures does not automatically translate into a quality Native Studies course. Even though a teacher has the academic and experiential qualifications, they may not have sufficiently internalized their learning to successfully present the Native Studies classes that meet curricula mandates. Other variables, such as personal interest in Native issues, staying attuned to recent current event developments, and selection and presentation of effective teaching methodology, also help in fostering a successful Native Studies course. When selecting educators for Native Studies postings, school boards and school administrators need to not only ensure that teaching candidates have sufficient academic and experiential qualifications, but that they exhibit personal characteristics which will enable them to construct a classroom with a conducive environment to learning about Aboriginal cultures. According to Blesse (1997), this classroom, if it is to truly capture the essence of Aboriginal cultures, should emphasize such traditional values as community connections, respectful relationships, cooperative partnerships, shared responsibilities and caring.

Besides the education system providing many of the Native Studies teachers with an opportunity to update their formal and experiential background with Aboriginal cultures, there also needs to be a clarification of the best means of achieving the goals of the courses. While the study participants were cognizant of the course aims of developing a greater appreciation of Aboriginal cultures, including positive and accurate information to help promote positive self-concepts for Aboriginal students, and presenting information which Aboriginal students find relevant, there was uncertainty as to whether the Native Studies curricula are properly structured to achieve these goals. Some of the

interviewees were confident that the course mandates are attainable via present course content, but some teachers who viewed certain material as irrelevant to students, especially parts of the Native Studies 20 course, and some material to have too much of a political agenda which is confrontational towards 'whites' in society. Some interviewees believed student awareness of racism and 'white-privilege' in society is important, but too much emphasis on these topics or failing to contextualize discussion of these issues by referring to different examples of racism in society and varying forms of 'privilege' only helps to further misunderstandings between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples. There is also the additional teacher dilemma of knowing whether course aims are best attained by addressing Aboriginal spirituality as a unit of study or incorporating it throughout the course. Some teachers were uncertain if they are to be presenting specific cultural practices or teaching about Aboriginal culture from a more distant, third-party narrative. Are they to teach Aboriginal culture as content for the course or as a basis for pedagogy?

Examining interviewee apprehensions about the structure and content of Native Studies classes in the context of what many educators (Banks, 1994; Giroux, 1993; Sleeter & Grant, 1993) have indicated as preferred multicultural education paradigms raises concerns about whether Native Studies classes are not only meeting their stated objectives, but also helping to create a society where systemic inequalities are significantly alleviated. Based upon the comments of the interviewees, Native Studies courses certainly appear to go beyond the *Teaching the Culturally Different Approach* where all cultures are encouraged to conform to 'white-middle class' norms, but it is debatable whether the courses consistently achieve the upper echelon of multicultural learning where students explore the emotional, physical, and cognitive realms of discrimination and "invite each of us

to become peace-makers in our own hearts, in our own communities, and in our shared world, where unconditional respect, compassion, participatory democracy, strength, courage, and reverence are daily lived ideals” (Calliou, 1995, p. 70).

While some teachers indicate that many students enrolled in Native Studies are given ample opportunity to garner a greater appreciation of Aboriginal cultures, there is definitely cause for concern with the courses if a few Non-Aboriginal students feel the curricula ‘picks on white people’ and have dropped the course because they feel ‘uncomfortable’ with the views of some Aboriginal students.

As a *Single Group Study* multicultural model, Native Studies classes are definitely incorporating more Aboriginal content and perspectives into the school, but, as pointed out by critics of this curriculum approach (Hampton, 1995; Leavitt, 1993), there is no guarantee the courses are changing stereotypes and racist views and challenging the unequal hegemony of our society. If some Non-Aboriginal students appear to be rejecting parts of the curricula, then perhaps, as indicated by Calliou (1995), there is too much emphasis on racial differences and not enough “recognition that all is truly related” (p. 70). There is also the possibility that some Non-Aboriginal students and teachers are unaccepting of certain aspects of the curricula because, as members of the colonizing groups in Canada, they are reluctant or unable to admit that colonialism was largely responsible for creating the societal inequalities which Aboriginal Peoples must endure on a daily basis (Memmi, 1965).

Unanimous interviewee apprehension over Native Studies 30 being accepted in place of Social Studies 30 as the social science credit for grade twelve matriculation is evidence of concern over whether a *Single Group Study* on Aboriginal Peoples can best meet the needs of high school graduates. The teachers’ worries about allowing Native Studies 30 to replace History 30 can be

viewed from two vantage points: Memmi's perspective that the colonizer is hesitant to have the colonized move away from the shadow of assimilation; or, a reluctance to see the nation's cohesiveness endangered by a lack of common citizen values and ideals. The study participants want evidence that Native Studies 30 goes beyond a *Single Group Study* and examines content and issues in a broader Canadian context. To help alleviate this concern, the Department of Education should give assurances that the Native Studies 30 curricula, as well as Native Studies 10 and 20, is a course which is meant to operate at the *Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist* level of multicultural education.

There is, arguably, also concern about the ability of Native Studies classes in Saskatoon to move beyond the limitations of a *Single Group Study* because of how some study participant's approach such contentious and significant curriculum content issues as racism and 'white privilege'. Some of the interviewed teachers give limited class attention to the topics of racism and 'white privilege in an attempt to diminish curricula focus on the negative 'center-periphery' relationship which has long characterized Aboriginal and 'White' interaction, but, by not highlighting these realities, there is the possibility that students will not acknowledge systemic inequality and not be challenged to find means of revamping the present societal hegemony.

The pedagogical methodology which the study participant's indicated they utilized in their instruction of Native Studies should also be scrutinized by all education stakeholders who want to see the courses meet their designated mandates. Most of the interviewed teachers discuss traditional Aboriginal epistemology as course content, not necessarily as a means of delivering Native Studies. Teachers indicated the use of instructional methodologies which adhere to the traditional 'ways of knowing', including group work activities, oral

presentations, hands-on activities, and talking circles, because they met the needs of particular classes or individual students, not because they are associated with traditional learning methods. As in other classes, teachers of Native Studies have made an effort to replace transmissional learning with transactional learning and have attempted to include a variety of teaching methodologies to enhance student interest. As noted by one teacher, “I use the same methodologies [in Native Studies] as I do with my other classes I don’t find that [Aboriginal students] require different types of instruction.”

The lack of Aboriginal epistemology as a basis for Native Studies courses, and for all course offerings, is somewhat disconcerting since, as noted by many multicultural educators (Hampton, 1995; Leavitt, 1993; Sleeter & Grant, 1993), viewing Aboriginal epistemology solely as content diminishes its importance and does little to establish social structural equality. The absence of traditional Aboriginal epistemologies as a basis for Native Studies in the classes of the interviewees is, in most instances, likely due to minimal teacher knowledge and practice with traditional epistemology and, more significantly, the constraints of the formalized Euro-Canadian education system. As noted by one study participant, teachers are “tied to the standards that [western-society] has established.” The present education system, with its attendance procedures, time framework, and physical structure of schools, has rarely been conducive to traditional Aboriginal epistemology which encourages students’ individual spirits to develop at their own natural pace rather than expecting students to achieve preset standards of achievement (Stairs, 1995).

The fact that none of the interviewees reported making methodology changes to their teaching repertoire in order to accommodate generalized cultural learning traits of Aboriginal students should not receive undue emphasis when

attempting to improve Native Studies offerings. While it is undoubtedly advantageous for teachers to be cognizant of possible cultural tendencies in the learning process, it is more important for teachers to emphasize methodologies which meet the learning needs of each individual student. It is reassuring to note that the interviewed teachers are more concerned about focusing on individual learning requirements, rather than assuming that Aboriginal students harbour particular cultural learning characteristics. By avoiding the generalizing trap of assuming that Aboriginal students are more inclined to learn via specific instructional methodologies, the teachers are less likely to overlook the personal learning needs of each student. In addition, by minimizing the notion that Aboriginal students have preferred cultural tendencies in the learning process, teachers break down racial and cultural barriers and aid society's efforts to achieve greater harmony between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Peoples.

The study participants' recommendations for helping address the challenges they associated with the teaching of Native Studies courses are noteworthy since most of the proposals, directed at multiple education stakeholders, will, if implemented, hopefully improve the likelihood of Native Studies moving beyond the *Single Group Study* in Sleeter and Grant's multicultural model and closer to the *Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist Approach* in which students strive for racial, gender, ethnic and class equality. The principal recommendations that the study participants made for improving Native Studies courses, as well as creating a formal schooling milieu which is more sensitive to the needs of the city's Aboriginal community, included the following: providing Native Studies teachers with means to upgrade their knowledge of Aboriginal cultures, hiring more Aboriginal teachers in all subject disciplines, ensuring all staff are better informed about Aboriginal Peoples, being

flexible with school time-tabling and resources to meet the unique needs of Native Studies classes, encourage post-secondary institutions to implement programs which ensure that all graduates are equipped to teach in a cross-cultural setting.

As noted, many of the interviewees were definitely aware of their knowledge limitations when teaching Native Studies classes. To their credit, rather than believe that their training was sufficient for a high school environment where instructors are typically 'generalists', many of the study respondents were adamant that they be provided with opportunities to enrich their knowledge of Aboriginal Peoples in order to present the multiple perspectives on the content, concepts and skills which comprise the curricula. Although some of the interviewees felt very comfortable presenting all or most aspects of the course, a need definitely exists to provide more workshops, inservices, and committees which allow all teachers of Native Studies, both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal, to learn more about Native cultures.

To the majority of study participants, much of the focus for improving Native Studies classes should center on ensuring that teachers have sufficient knowledge of Aboriginal cultures, rather than worrying about the cultural ancestry of the instructor. Although a few teachers, echoing the views of Powers (1996), believed an Aboriginal teacher should instruct the course because "it would be much easier for a student to believe an Aboriginal person than to believe me", the majority of Non-Aboriginal teachers in Saskatoon rejected the idea that Aboriginal teachers should be the only instructors for the courses. Installing only Aboriginal teachers in Native Studies classes seems counterproductive to achieving the utopian *Multicultural and Social*

Reconstructionist Approach to education because it limits communication between cultures, thereby furthering stereotyping and misunderstanding.

While few interviewees were advocates of the premise that Aboriginal teachers should be the only instructors for Native Studies classes, they were unanimous in stipulating a need for more Aboriginal teachers, including elders, to be incorporated into the formal schooling environment of Saskatoon. There was general agreement that each Aboriginal teacher brings a cultural experience that needs to be seen by all students across school curricula. Aboriginal teachers are important role models, particularly for Native students, who should not be limited to the stereotypical role of just instructing Native Studies. As noted by one teacher, “we need more hiring of Native People ... [not just] to teach Native Studies, but to teach mathematics, to teach sciences, teach English, and so on”.

To further assist Native Studies classes, as well as all other school courses, in adequately addressing the challenges facing Saskatchewan’s Aboriginal community, a few interviewees made the astute observation that other staff members at their respective schools and school administrators need to be exposed to the realities of Aboriginal cultures. As educators in a multicultural environment, all educators usually need to be better informed about Aboriginal culture to comprehend the merits in offering Native Studies classes and how they can personally contribute to the eradication of societal inequities. Obviously, all school courses are required to address the needs of the Aboriginal community if significant inroads are to be made in having formal education move closer to the *Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist Approach*. School Boards, as indicated by one interviewee, need to ensure that “more of our teachers have a better understanding of what Native Studies is and how it’s taught ... my gut feeling is that a lot of people think ... ‘why are we doing this?’” All educators need to

realize that many Aboriginal children “come to school with cultural and language frames of reference that are not only different from but probably oppositional to those of the mainstream and the school” (Ogbu, 1992, p. 12).

School administrators were often singled-out by study participants as being extremely influential in helping to deliver a ‘successful’ Native Studies class. Not only were principals and vice-principals viewed as needing to ensure that Native Studies teachers have an adequate knowledge and experiential base with Aboriginal cultures, provide increased staff awareness of Aboriginal Peoples, and personally stay abreast of the needs of the city’s Aboriginal community, they were also encouraged to help foster a good academic reputation for Native Studies classes, demonstrate flexibility with class scheduling and funding, and, especially where classes have a large contingent of Aboriginal students, attempt to help facilitate more parent involvement in the school. These recommendations, if implemented, could definitely help move schools, and particularly Native Studies classes, closer to the idealized levels of multicultural education.

With Native Studies classes at some schools having developed a reputation of having less stringent academic expectations compared to other social science courses, there is a definite need for school leaders to take measures to counteract the situation. If students negate the academic merits of Native Studies classes, there is the possible danger of them perceiving Aboriginal cultures as inferior to Non-Aboriginal cultures and viewing the terms ‘Native’ and ‘weaker student’ as synonymous. As noted by one teacher, “from the perspective of encouraging acceptance and combating racism I don’t think you want History [classes] for ‘real students’, Native Studies for weak students.” Administrators need to ensure that Native Studies classes are not categorized as having aspects of

the *Human Relations* multicultural model which often focuses on ‘better feelings’ towards all cultural groups at the expense of academic achievement (Sleeter & Grant, 1993). Where lower academic standards for Native Studies classes exist, there is a reinforcement of the center-periphery relationship between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Peoples. Since many of the students who take Native Studies are Aboriginal, there is also a possible perpetuation of the colonialism paradigm in which the colonizer’s culture is viewed as eminently superior to that of the colonized (Memmi, 1965). As members of a diverse cultural grouping that has traditionally performed poorly in public education and consequently been underrepresented in post-secondary schooling, Aboriginal students require rigorous academic training, not compensatory education programs, which will help ensure that they do not “suffer the stigmatizing consequences of negative labeling” (Mehan et al., 1992, p. 2).

A willingness of school administrators to support deviations from traditional formal schooling practices regarding course scheduling and funding was identified by interviewees as beneficial to the ‘successful’ delivery of Native Studies. While some critics may view this flexibility as providing ‘special status’ for Native Studies classes, administrators should perceive this pliancy as an example of how schools can be transformed into venues where Aboriginal epistemologies have an opportunity to achieve equal status with Non-Aboriginal ‘ways of knowing’. By making more funding available for resources in Native Studies, especially honorariums for elders and other Aboriginal community spokespersons and perhaps even course textbooks, students and teachers will have increased access to a knowledge of Aboriginal cultures. Reconfiguring course timetabling so that students of Native Studies have increased opportunity for experiential learning was also indicated by study participants as a means by which

administrators can help facilitate course improvement. Implementation of the quarter class system or some other time-tabling system where there is an opportunity for extensive field-trips with “learning outside the classroom” were mentioned by some interviewees as means of increasing the likelihood of teachers encouraging experiential learning and students interacting with the Aboriginal community. According to one teacher, an additional bonus to the quarter class system is that it increases the probability of ‘high-risk students’, many of whom enroll in Native Studies, completing the course because they see their academic ‘progress’ much faster than in a semester system.

Abiding by one interviewee’s suggestion that school administrators should attempt to “encourage parents to get involved in the school”, especially Aboriginal parents who have historically been excluded from having input into formal education practices, would allow Native Studies courses, and, more importantly, the entire school system, to better meet the needs of the Aboriginal community. By having Aboriginal parent involvement in Native Studies, as well as throughout the rest of the school curricula, schools would be including a traditional Aboriginal education model in which elders and parents “teach young people by sharing experiences with them” (Leavitt, 1995, p.132). The inclusion of Aboriginal parents in the school learning process would also hopefully help to mitigate the problem of many Aboriginal students having poor academic performances in formalized education. Aboriginal parent involvement with the school would “provide the [Native students] with concrete evidence that (family) members appreciate and value academic success” (Ogbu, 1992, p. 12).

Having post-secondary institutions incorporate the recommendation that Native Studies classes and methodology classes focusing on cross-cultural learning environments be mandatory elements of an education degree would also

enhance the probability of the education system achieving the *Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist* level of multicultural education. All teachers need to “study the histories and cultural adaptations of (Aboriginals) in order to understand the bases and nature of the groups’ cultural and language frames of reference as well as the children’s sense of social identity” (Ogbu, 1992, p. 12). Ogbu further indicates that teachers need to realize that culture affects communication style and cognitive thought patterns (p. 10). If teachers do not have a good knowledge of Aboriginal cultures and do not comprehend how their cultural identity can potentially influence the learning environment, there is no hope of moving Native Studies courses into the realm of the *Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist* model of education.

For the *Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist* level to be reached by students, there needs to be greater recognition of the role played by teachers’ ethnicity on the learning environment. While Ogbu (1992) has criticized multicultural education for downplaying student responsibility in the learning process and not differentiating between cultural groups which are forced to adapt to the formal education process and those which choose to conform, there is also the overlooked need to appreciate how the teachers’ cultural setting influences their ability to present multicultural curricula. Just like it is important to ascertain the students’ schemata when they enter the classroom, it is essential to comprehend the teachers’ cultural frame of reference as they navigate cross-cultural relationships, content, concepts, skills, and values in the classroom.

The likelihood of the *Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist* level being attained is further enhanced when greater emphasis is placed on recognizing the importance of incorporating multiple personal epistemologies with multiple perspectives on issues. Sleeter and Grant (1993) indicate that

significant erosion of cross-cultural misunderstandings can not be achieved without including various ‘cultural ways of knowing’ in teaching, but, based upon discussions with the interviewees, there needs to be an emphasis on ‘personal ways of knowing’ which ‘accompanies ‘cultural ways of knowing’. Too much generalizing about student learning strengths and weaknesses based on culture only inhibits attempts to undermine the stereotypes which galvanize societal differences.

Finally, if a multicultural society is to exist which embodies Sleeter and Grant’s idealized visions of multicultural education, the term ‘Native Studies’ needs to eventually become passé. The label ‘Native Studies’, just like affirmative action policies, is an acknowledged effort to mitigate the horrors of colonialism, but it often creates societal discord. By singling out a particular group in society, some individuals feel resentment toward the group because of the perception of ‘special status’ and may associate characteristics of the course, both positive and negative, with the culture being studied. The content, concepts, values, and skills that are encompassed by Native Studies curricula help society move towards equality for all individuals, but the ‘Native Studies’ moniker inhibits the creation of utopian equality. It would be preferable for all high school students to be exposed to history and social classes which are identified by time, place, or issue, rather than by a particular culture.

Summative juxtaposing of Sleeter and Grant’s *Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist* model with the views of Saskatoon’s Non-Aboriginal teachers of Native Studies, reveals some potential teacher shortcomings to achieving idealized multicultural education, plus some possible additions to the model which would improve understanding of how Native Studies, along with other courses, can be enhanced to help attain the model’s societal goals. Although the

interviewed teachers claimed to support many of the curriculum, instructional, and school-wide practices that undoubtedly influence the likelihood of the model's goals being achieved (e.g. building on students' learning styles, hiring more Aboriginal teachers in all subject disciplines), the aforementioned approaches by some teachers to issues like racism and 'white privilege' raises concern as to the potential success rate of these courses in revamping the unequal societal hegemony which presently exists. In addition, to strengthen reader comprehension of the best means of operating the model so it achieves its goals, it would be helpful to incorporate specific examples of how support services can enhance the implementation of the model (e.g. administrative support for alternative time-tabling and efforts to ensure a strong academic reputation for the courses) as well as to add a separate section to the model outlining the knowledge, values, and skills which teachers should embody if they are to successfully present the courses. The model focuses on what teachers and school systems must do to facilitate excellent multicultural education, but it is also important to indicate what teachers require from within themselves to adequately present all courses, including Native Studies, in a multicultural milieu. Based on the interviews, it was apparent that most Non-Aboriginal teachers of Native Studies perceived the following personal characteristics to be influential in determining the ability of an educator to 'successfully deliver' a multicultural course: diverse theoretical and practical exposure to numerous cultures, knowledge of various epistemologies, awareness of how teacher ethnicity can potentially influence instruction; demonstration of a strong interest in multicultural education.

Conclusion

Many of the Non-Aboriginal teachers of Native Studies in Saskatoon, like the majority of Non-Aboriginal educators who enter a cross-cultural environment, “come with a genuine desire to contribute, but poorly prepared to respond to the setting” (Taylor, 1995, p. 225). While it is unfortunate that many of the interviewees have minimal formal training and experiential learning with Aboriginal cultures, it is commendable that they acknowledged their shortcomings and recommended means of improving the situation. The study participants are also deserving of praise for their willingness to move “beyond their role of pedagogy into the untravelled world of politics” (Solomon, 1995, p. 257) where they offered their opinion on the best means of structuring Native Studies courses so that the barriers which often separate Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal cultures in can be removed. Not only did they generously share their impressions of Native Studies curricula and outline the methodologies they utilized in the teaching of the classes, but they also indicated how the formal education system needed to be transformed to increase the likelihood of students of all cultures ensuring that Canada’s pluralistic society operates in a harmonious fashion.

Noteworthy from the research is the fact that all study participants recognize the efficacy of Native Studies classes. This efficacy, however, appears threatened by some Non-Aboriginal teachers’ indecisiveness of how to address the issue of Aboriginal spirituality, the minimal examination of racism by some interviewees and the view of some respondents that Native Studies courses primarily exist to serve a political agenda for Aboriginal peoples. To ensure that

Native Studies classes fulfill their promise as catalysts towards the *Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist* model envisioned by Sleeter and Grant (1993), it is essential that steps be taken to ameliorate these concerns.

In consultation with Aboriginal elders, Saskatchewan Education needs to clarify the manner in which school teachers should examine the issue of Aboriginal spirituality. Aboriginal spirituality is designated an important component of the courses, but there is clearly a need for many teachers to be given more direction and support on the topic. If teachers remain uncertain about how to incorporate Aboriginal spirituality into their classes, the efficacy of the courses is diminished.

The minimal exposure the topic of racism appears to receive in some classrooms also threatens the potential power of Native Studies courses. The content of the courses provides ample opportunity to make an in-depth examination of racism, but if teachers are reluctant to examine the issue then the ability of the courses to help counteract this societal scar is nullified. With stories of racism often saturating local news stories, it is important that students be examining the issue in a formal education context where there is supposed to be an open and respectful exchange of information and ideas.

Mitigating the perception of a few teachers that Native Studies courses are simply a 'political tool' needs to also become a focus for all education stakeholders. The efficacy of Native Studies only remains intact if people, especially teachers who disseminate the courses, acknowledge that the inclusion of the courses is more than just 'political posturing'.

Essential to ensuring that Native Studies courses reach their utopian goals is the educational administrator. Both in-school and out-of-school administrators in Saskatoon have means at their disposal to help Native Studies courses meet

their mandates. If truly interested in having Native Studies courses achieve the upper-echelons of Sleeter and Grants multicultural model, education administrators should consider some of the following recommendations made by research participants: hire individuals with a real interest in learning more about Aboriginal cultures, assign teachers to the courses who have both a good formal and informal education knowledge of Aboriginal cultures, provide inservice opportunities for Native Studies teachers and entire school staffs to learn more about Aboriginal cultures, provide money and materials to support Native Studies offerings, ensure Native Studies classes maintain high academic standards, and be flexible in school timetabling to accommodate some of the traditional epistemologies of Aboriginal peoples.

If steps are taken to implement the teachers' recommendations and ameliorate threats to the efficacy of the courses, Native Studies curricula have the capacity to help the education system promote a society with a more equitable hegemony. With their unique perspectives, Non-Aboriginal teachers play a fundamental role in the idea that everyone must 'think together' to attain a society in which the dominant traditions are examined and unmasked (Minnich, 1990). As noted by Minnich (1990), hearing the voice of all teachers on multicultural curriculum is significant for the following reason:

As long as [people] do not engage in critiquing and correction of the curriculum, the framework of meaning behind particular questions of what to teach to whom will continue to be inhospitable to all those who have been excluded from knowledge and knowledge making, and so also from effective participation in understanding and exercising power on a basic cultural level. (p.11)

Suggestions for Further Research

The following topics are offered as suggestions for further research:

1. Ascertain the perspectives of Aboriginal teachers who instruct Native Studies to see how their views compare to those of Non-Aboriginal teachers.
2. Discover how students, particularly Aboriginal students, perceive and react to Native Studies classes which are taught by Non-Aboriginal teachers.
3. The preparation and implementation of school or system inservices which examine the delivery of cross-cultural education.
4. Examine perspectives toward the teaching of Native Studies from instructors in rural settings or other urban settings.
5. Witness the teaching environments of the study participants to see how their perspectives compare to classroom occurrences.
6. Investigate the effects of post-secondary cross-cultural training on the implementation of Native Studies courses.
7. Examine administrative strategies for enhancing Aboriginal community involvement with formal schooling.
8. Examine the role Native Studies plays in affecting the attitudes of students.

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Appendix A

Saskatchewan Schools Offering Native Studies

**SCHOOLS TEACHING 10, 20, or 30 NATIVE STUDIES CLASSES
DURING THE 1997-1998 SCHOOL YEAR**

School	City	Telephone
Broadview School	Broadview	696-2727
Bert Fox High	Ft Qu'Appelle	332-4343
Balcarres School	Balcarres	334-2749
Grenfell High School	Grenfell	697-2744
Wolseley High	Wolseley	698-2591
Athol Murray Col. of Notre Dame	Wilcox	732-2080
Frontier School	Frontier	296-2040
Vanguard School	Vanguard	582-2134
Special Tutorial Class	Regina	781-8414
Sheldon-Williams Collegiate	Regina	791-8335
Cochrane High School	Regina	791-8350
Martin Collegiate	Regina	791-8360
F W Johnson Collegiate	Regina	791-8370
Campbell Collegiate	Regina	791-8380
Balfour Collegiate	Regina	791-8400
Scott Collegiate	Regina	791- 8415
Thom Collegiate	Regina	791-8425
Robert Usher Collegiate	Regina	791-8435
Winston Knoll School	Regina	791-8696
Lestock School	Lestock	274-2255
Regina R.C.S. School Div. #81	Regina	791-7200
Miller Comprehensive High	Regina	791-7230
Archbishop M C O'Neill High	Regina	791- 7240
Dr. Martin -Leboldus High School	Regina	791-7250
Michael A. Riffel High School	Regina	791-7260
Punnichy High School	Punnichy	835-2140
Nutana Collegiate	Saskatoon	683-7580
Aden Bowman Collegiate	Saskatoon	683-7600
Bedford Road Collegiate	Saskatoon	683-7650
Marion M Graham Collegiate	Saskatoon	683-7750
Mount Royal Collegiate	Saskatoon	683-7800
Sion Middle School	Saskatoon	668-7480
Joe Duquette High School	Saskatoon	668-7490
Bishop Murray High School	Saskatoon	668-7494
E D Feehan High	Saskatoon	668-7950

School	City	Telephone
Leask School	Leask	466-2206
St. Mary High	Prince Albert	953-7544
Pleasantdale School	Pleasantdale	874-5540
L P Miller Comprehensive School	Nipawin	862-4871
Melfort & Unit Comprehensive C.	Melfort	752-2891
Wesmor High School	Prince Albert	764-5233
Carlton Comprehensive High	Prince Albert	922-3115
John Paul II Collegiate	North Battleford	446-2232
Cando School	Cando	937-3934
Hartley Clark Elementary	Spiritwood	883-2143
Turtleford School	Turtleford	845-2079
Carpenter High	Meadow Lake	236-5236
Holy Rōsary High School	Lloydminster	875-3600
Lloydminster Education Advancement Program	Lloydminster	825-9088
Maymont Central School	Maymont	389-2045
North Battleford Comprehensive	North Battleford	445-6101
Cutknife High	Cutknife	398-2333
Rossignol School	La Crosse	833-2010
Valley View School	Beauval	288-2022
Churchill School	La Ronge	425-2255
Hector Thiboutot School	Sandy Bay	754-2139/2002
Dene High School	La Loche	822-2223
St. Pascal School	Green Lake	832-2148
Minahik Waskahigan School	Pinehouse	884-4888/98
Charlebois School	Cumberland House	888-2181

Prepared by: Lana I. Lalonde Prepared for: GDI

Documentation File Location: Queries\Native Studies Documentation

System File Location: /acct/prj/lalondl/NATIVE STUDIES/April4,1998

Appendix B

Initial Letter to the Participants

LETTER TO THE PARTICIPANTS

Dear Colleague,

I am interested in gathering information about Non-Aboriginal teachers' perspectives on teaching Native Studies in Saskatoon. Non-Aboriginal teachers of Native Studies occupy an important cultural brokerage role in the education of Indigenous youth, yet their viewpoints on factors affecting the education of both Non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students are not often heard. For a more holistic vision of how Native Studies courses are meeting the needs of our society, I believe it is important to hear the Non-Aboriginal teacher voice. My research topic, Non-Aboriginal Teachers' Perspectives on Teaching Native Studies, will hopefully bring an enhanced objectivity in determining the school programming needs which best serve our urban community.

Data for this thesis research will be collected using personal interviews, a brief questionnaire, and a focus group. The personal interview, or interviews if further clarification of responses is required, will provide you an opportunity to answer specific questions which my research has identified as significant to the topic, plus encourage you to raise any other issue you perceive as pertinent. The questionnaire will address the context of your Native Studies courses. The focus group is meant to allow an opportunity for all study participants to interact with each other so that greater depth and clarity of opinions is attained. Similar to the individual interviews, the focus group will provide a means to discuss previously identified issues, yet also allow for the possibility of examining unexplored tangents of the topic.

The deliberations of the interviews and the focus group will be taped and transcribed for the purpose of ensuring accuracy of data. To further ensure exactness of data and to help maintain the confidentiality of your response you will have the opportunity to review transcripts so as to determine accuracy and agreement on your perspectives. All data, accessed solely by myself and my advisor, will be used for academic purposes only and confidentiality will be maintained in regards to all other purposes. In addition, the anonymity of your responses will be protected by the use of pseudonyms in reference to particular individuals and schools.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Even if you consent to partake in the study, you are free to withdraw your participation at any time. Any concerns or queries you have regarding the research can be directed to either myself (244-2708) or my advisor, Dr. Vivian Hajnal (966-7611) of the Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan.

Thank you for your anticipated support of this research study.

Sincerely,

John Dewar

Appendix C

Participant Consent Form

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT

I understand that my participation in the study entitled Non-Aboriginal Teachers' Perspectives on Teaching Native Studies includes involvement in three data collection procedures: a questionnaire, taking approximately ten minutes to complete; a personal interview, lasting approximately an hour and a half; a focus group, lasting approximately two hours. I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any stage of the data collection process and, upon withdrawing from the study, all data I have offered will not be reported. In addition, I understand that the researcher will link findings from the questionnaire, personal interview, and focus group, and that information gathered may be used for publication.

Furthermore, I know that while the researcher will attempt to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of my responses by ensuring that only he and his supervisor review transcripts and by using pseudonyms in reference to particular individuals and schools, I am aware that the researcher can not guarantee complete confidentiality and anonymity of views expressed in the focus group. To help maintain the confidentiality and the anonymity of beliefs vocalized in the focus group, I agree to respect the privacy of other individuals' views.

In accordance with the conditions outlined above, I consent to become a participant in the study entitled Non-Aboriginal Teachers' Perspectives on Teaching Native Studies.

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Date: _____

Appendix D

Second Letter to Participants and Questionnaire

LETTER TO THE PARTICIPANTS UPON AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study Non-Aboriginal Teachers' Perspectives on Teaching Native Studies. In preparing for the personal interview would you please fill out the accompanying questions which will provide background information for the study. I will collect your answers to the questions at the beginning of our interview session.

Questions

*Note- elaborate on your responses if you feel it results in greater clarification.

1. At what school(s) have you taught Native Studies?
2. How many years have you taught?
3. How many years have you taught Native Studies?
4. In which semester(s) have you taught Native Studies?
5. During what period(s) of the day was(were) your Native Studies class(es) scheduled?
6. What was the approximate average number of students who enrolled in each of the Native Studies classes you taught?
7. What was the approximate average number of Aboriginal students who enrolled in each of your Native Studies classes?
8. What was the approximate average number of students who passed each of the Native Studies classes you taught?

9. What was the approximate average number of Aboriginal students who passed each of the Native Studies classes you taught?

In addition to filling out the questions pertaining to your teaching context of Native Studies courses, please reflect upon, but do not answer, the following major research questions which direct my study:

1. What background training and experiences do you have which has prepared you to instruct Native Studies?
2. What do you perceive as the goals of Native Studies courses?
3. What teaching content and pedagogical processes do you view as significant in helping to achieve the goals of the courses?
4. What challenges have you experienced in teaching Native Studies?
5. What recommendations do you have for improving the delivery of Native Studies?

Once again, thanks for agreeing to take part in the study.

Sincerely,

John Dewar

Appendix E

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. What background training and experiences do you have which has prepared you for the instruction of Native Studies?
2. What formal training have you received to enable you to teach Native Studies?
3. Besides your formal education, what other experiences do you perceive as influential in preparing you to instruct Native Studies?
4. Why were you selected to teach Native Studies?
5. What do you perceive as the goals of Native Studies courses?
6. Are the goals of the courses worthwhile objectives?
7. How do your perceived goals for the courses compare to the Department of Education's goals for the courses?
8. Are your perceived goals for the courses attainable via the Native Studies curricula?
9. What teaching content and pedagogical processes do you view as significant in helping to achieve the goals of the courses?
10. What Aboriginal epistemologies do you consider important to include in teaching Native Studies?
11. How do you address the issue of racism?
12. How do you address the issue of spirituality?
13. How do you approach the idea of white-privilege?
14. What methodologies do you find effective in the instruction of Native Studies?
15. How does the class presence of Aboriginal students influence your teaching of Native Studies?
16. What challenges have you experienced in teaching Native Studies?

17. How was each difficulty handled?

18. How does your identity as a Non-Aboriginal affect your instruction of Native Studies?

19. What recommendations do you have for improving the delivery of Native Studies?

20. What changes could universities make to their programs to better prepare future teachers for the teaching of Native Studies?

21. What steps could administrators, both at the Board and school level, take to improve Native Studies?

