Tracking Education Career Path and Employment Status of BC Teachers of Aboriginal Ancestry

Learning and Career Pathways

By
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with assistance from
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Trish Rosborough, Director
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BC Ministry of Education
620 Superior St.
Victoria, BC
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Dear Ms. Rosborough,

We appreciated the opportunity to undertake this important study and we submit to you the **Tracking Education Career Path and Employment Status of BC Teachers of Aboriginal Ancestry** Report and Recommendations.

The project gathered important data, information, and narratives from the Steering Committee, the in-depth interviews, and the Aboriginal teacher education students/teachers who responded to the survey. The exercise of finding contact information for respondents proved very challenging for all parties. In retrospect, the survey component of the study required a longer period of time to work with institutions to identify applicants, current students, and graduates who have identified themselves as Aboriginal. Notwithstanding this challenge, the responses we did receive were very powerful and informative.

Yours truly,

_____ _____

Dr. Victor Glickman Dr. Jo-ann Archibald

Date:_____ Date:_____

_____

Mr. Ian McKinnon

Date:_____

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Acknowledgements

On behalf of the study team, we would like to thank the many individuals and organizations that helped us execute and report on this project.

First, we would really like to thank the members of the Steering Committee who provided much feedback and advice on this study at various stages, including the drafting of this report. The Steering Committee included: Gayle Bedard, Surrey School District (SD), Ted Cadwallader, BC Ministry of Education, DeDe DeRose, Kamloops SD, Mike Grant, Malaspina-University College, Budd Hall, University of Victoria, Nell Hodges, Ministry of Advanced Education, Thea McMahen, Ministry of Advanced Education, Trish Rosborough, BC Ministry of Education, Chris Stewart, British Columbia Teachers' Federation, Norman Thorne, BC Ministry of Education, Prissilla Walkey, Kootenay-Columbia SD, Lorna Williams, University of Victoria.

Thank you to the Deans, coordinators, and support staff of the post-secondary teacher education programs around the province who took the time to send on the survey package to students and graduates of their programs. Thank you to the 14 key informants, data stewards, and data specialists who gave us their time and feedback at the beginning of this research study, and to the 23 education professionals who shared their time, expertise, and insights during our in-depth interviews. Thank you to the 65 survey respondents who took the time to fill out and return the survey, and to those who agreed to share even more of their experiences with us in a follow-up interview.

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We would particularly like to thank Trish Rosborough and Ted Cadwallader, our project supervisors and contacts in the Ministry of Education for their steady support, direction, and encouragement. While our study team formally included six individuals, our "team" really consisted of the over 120 individuals we worked with on this project.

Thank you,

Dr. Victor Glickman

Author Bios

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Jo-ann Archibald, from the Sto:lo Nation, is Associate Dean for Indigenous Education and the Acting Director for the Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP), Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia. She is also an associate professor in the Educational Studies Department. Jo-ann received a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree from the University of British Columbia, a Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree and a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree from Simon Fraser University. At UBC, Jo-ann held the positions of Director of the First Nations House of Learning from 1993–2001 and Supervisor of the Native Indian Teacher Education Program from 1985–1992. Before joining UBC, Jo-ann taught elementary school and worked at the Coqualeetza Cultural Education Centre as a curriculum developer. She has developed curriculum for use at regional, provincial, and national levels. Jo-ann received a National Aboriginal Achievement Award in 2000 for her work in education.

Victor Glickman
Victor Glickman is the founding director of Edudata Canada, a research associate at the UBC Faculty of Education, and an adjunct professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria. Dr. Glickman has directed many large-scale projects for Statistics Canada and both Federal and British Columbia ministries. Several of these projects involved the use of Statistics Canada and provincial education information by First Nations communities and organizations.

Ian McKinnon
Ian McKinnon chairs Statistics Canada's National Advisory Committee on Social Statistics and has been a member of the National Statistics Council for 15 years. His positions in the private sector included President of Decima Research, a survey research firm specializing in public policy issues. In the British Columbia provincial government, he has been the Provincial Statistician and a deputy minister. His publications include *Canadian Attitudes towards Aboriginal Self-Government*, published by the Inuit Committee on National Issues.

Edudata Canada
Edudata is an independent research centre at The University of British Columbia that provides innovative education research, products, and services. Its mission is to increase data and knowledge sharing and to facilitate successful research and policy collaborations. Edudata is a leader in the provision of quality education research across Canada and internationally, and is the only education data public utility in the world.

I. Executive Summary

In a request for proposals C5/2534 the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education solicited proposals to undertake research and analysis on trends in participation and graduation rates of Aboriginal students in teacher education programs at BC post-secondary institutions, transition rates of these students to employment in the teaching profession, and retention rates for those in the profession. In addition, key factors that influenced Aboriginal students' experiences and decisions in their teacher education, transition to employment, and, for those that pursued the teaching profession, retention in the profession were examined. The ministries intended that this research inform government, British Columbia's post-secondary teacher education programs and school districts on how to increase the number of qualified Aboriginal teachers in the BC public education system generally, as well as in areas of specific need; and on data collection for tracking Aboriginal students in teacher education programs and transition to and retention in employment.

The study used a mixed methods approach comprised of discussions with Faculty of Education administrators, interviews, a survey, and examination of post-secondary student databases, Census data, and previous research applicable to this study. A project Steering Committee assisted with the planning process, suggested names of educational professionals to interview, approved the survey, and gave feedback on the first draft of the research report. Members of the Steering Committee included representatives from public school districts, university teacher education programs, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, and the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education. In-depth interviews with 23 educational professionals informed the development of the survey questions and they were analyzed for the Indigenous wholistic analysis. Sixty-five (65) surveys were returned, for a 20% response rate.

The research team encountered a rich range of stories and perspectives from various groups throughout the project. These included planning discussions with the project Steering Committee, discussions with Faculty of Education Deans and administrators, interviews with educational professionals, and survey responses from current Aboriginal teacher education students and Aboriginal educators. Various data sources from Statistics Canada, the BC provincial government, universities and colleges, and professional education associations provided additional contextual information. Seven narratives emerged from the qualitative and quantitative study.

1. The Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, universities and colleges, and school districts lack an action and accountability framework regarding Aboriginal learners' accessibility to and completion of teacher education programs and recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers in the public schools. As a result, Aboriginal people are grossly under-represented in teacher education programs and in the teaching profession.

If Aboriginal teachers were to represent the Aboriginal K–12 student population, just over 3,000 Aboriginal teachers would be needed. The 2001 Census data identified 1,210 Aboriginal teachers in BC schools. The need to triple the numbers of Aboriginal teachers

in order to meet population parity was also recommended by the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, Volume 3, p. 574). A more recent provincial study reinforces the under-representation of Aboriginal people in educational leadership positions. The Leadership in First Nations Education (LIFE, 2004) initiative managed by the British Columbia School Superintendents' Association (BCSSA) and funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) through the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) in 2004 found that Aboriginal people were under-represented in all teaching and leadership positions in the BC school system. LIFE estimated that Aboriginal teachers comprised less than 1% of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF); less than 1% of principals/vice-principals in the British Columbia Principal and Vice Principals' Association; less than 2% of district staff in the British Columbia School Superintendents' Association; and less than 7% of trustees in the British Columbia School Trustees' Association.[1] Their findings are somewhat lower than the 2001 Census that showed that K–12 Aboriginal teachers comprise 2.5% of the teaching force in BC.

The British Columbia Teachers' Federation identified 325 Aboriginal teachers in their 2002 survey, which accounts for 0.9% of their membership. The divergence between the Census data and that of the BCTF may be partially attributed to the latter having few members in Band and Independent schools and by the significant under-reporting of Aboriginal identity that our in-depth interviewees discussed. Another factor may relate to individuals not wanting to self-identify because of their perceived negative stigma attached to Aboriginal teachers. The BCTF is the only provincial organization that is attempting to identify and keep track of Aboriginal teachers in the public schools. Provincial Aboriginal teacher data about recruitment and retention in public, Band, and independent schools is a critical information void.

Our study points to the same conclusion as previous studies and data sources: the consistent trend of gross under-representation of Aboriginal people in the teaching profession. A focussed cooperative effort among provincial and federal governments, universities and colleges, school districts, educational professional associations, and Aboriginal communities/organizations is required in order to reach a target of 2,000 more Aboriginal teachers.

In addition to a co-operative strategy, institutional accountability to act on the issues identified in this study is urgently needed. These issues relate to Aboriginal invisibility in teacher education programs, except for Aboriginal-specific programs; the systemic marginalization of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal knowledge; extraordinary expectations placed upon Aboriginal teacher education students and Aboriginal teachers; and enduring racism.

[1] The slide presentation, Leadership in First Nations Education (March 2004), outlines project goals, opportunities and challenges, and strategies to promote leadership roles for First Nations educators. http://www.bcssa.org/topics/firstnations/firstnations.htmlhttp://www.bcssa.org/topics/firstnations/firstnations.html

2. Post-secondary institutions, especially teacher education programs and public school districts, tend not to keep or use consistent data about Aboriginal teacher education students and Aboriginal teachers teaching in public schools. Limited and disparate data result in lack of ability to identify and track Aboriginal teacher education students and lack of ability to identify Aboriginal teachers in the public schools.

Generally, BC teacher education programs do not have a data collection process in place to identify and track the admissions and subsequent academic progress of Aboriginal students enrolled in their programs, except for Aboriginal-specific programs. Nor do they track Aboriginal students' transition to and retention in the teaching field. The study research team found it difficult to obtain specific information from Faculties of Education about the numbers of Aboriginal students enrolled in their programs. Some would say, "less than a handful" and others, "we don't keep track of that type of student data."

Having a consistent data tracking method will help provide basic information that would be useful for planning and accountability purposes, but it will not alleviate the systemic problems that prevent Aboriginal people from self-identifying. Because of the negative assumptions and stigma attached to being Aboriginal, some of the survey respondents and interviewees told of Aboriginal teachers who did not self-identify as Aboriginal when applying for teaching positions.

3. Aboriginal people and Aboriginal knowledge are systemically marginalized in public schools and post-secondary institutions.

Aboriginal learners and teachers' experiences of marginalization in high school, teacher education programs, recruitment to teaching, and retention in the teaching profession were voiced many times throughout the study. The Aboriginal narratives about the K–12 and post-secondary system, the Teacher-on-Call process, and enduring educator employment largely spoke to experiences of exclusion to them personally or to their Aboriginal knowledge and culture. Except for Aboriginal-specific and community-based teacher education programs, the stories positioned Aboriginal people as being "outsiders" to the education systems. Their stories reflected experiences of an Aboriginal add-on approach in public school, college/university, and employment systems.

4. Aboriginal teacher education students and educators face extraordinary expectations and multiple responsibilities.

The Steering Committee conversations, study interviews, and survey responses addressed the difficulties of multiple expectations and responsibilities for Aboriginal learners and educators. They are expected to be experts on Aboriginal knowledge and culture, advocates for improving Aboriginal education, liaisons for all Aboriginal parents and communities, and experts at solving the problems of Aboriginal students, their parents, and communities based on the premise that because they are Aboriginal, they should know. Aboriginal teacher education students begin to take on the extra responsibility of educating their professors and fellow students about Aboriginal matters in their courses, where they are in the minority. They also become the target of backlash when Aboriginal political issues are aired on the media. New Aboriginal teachers are often assigned to

difficult teaching assignments that experienced teachers or specialists should have. Because there is a need to have Aboriginal representation on school and district committees, and because there are so many inequities to address in Aboriginal education, the few Aboriginal educators take on extraordinary responsibilities in order to make institutional change. All these extraordinary expectations and responsibilities add much additional stress and pressure on Aboriginal teachers.

5. Aboriginal knowledge, culture, and community are necessary for creating successful pathways for access to and completion of teacher education programs.

Aboriginal-specific and Aboriginal community-based teacher education programs attract Aboriginal learners to their programs. The inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge, culture and perspective, along with maintaining family and community connections, are helpful factors in successfully completing a teacher education program. The few Elders associated with university/colleges provide valuable support to Aboriginal students. Community-based programs ensure relevancy to the community's educational goals and needs. Teacher education coordinators who work with these programs become sensitized to the colonization effects that influence Aboriginal learners. These programs are viewed as being a safe and caring place to learn; thereby enhancing the successful completion of Aboriginal learners.

Conversely, when Aboriginal knowledge, culture, and community are marginalized and not valued, their exclusion is cited as a hindering factor. Those who leave their home territory and community to complete their teacher education program experience added stress and additional financial and emotional costs.

6. Racism endures in schools and post-secondary institutions.

All British Columbians censure racist actions. Unfortunately, many Aboriginal learners and educators who participated in this study believe that racism continues to be a significant impediment to Aboriginal learners' education and their subsequent employment. How can the British Columbia public education system successfully recruit and employ more Aboriginal teachers if Aboriginal learners experience racism in their secondary schools, then continue to post-secondary education and experience racism once more, perhaps to a lesser degree, and then encounter racism once more in their work place?

7. A significant increase in Aboriginal educators requires transformative change in order to eliminate systemic hindering factors and to increase the helpful factors that lead to success in each education and career pathway.

The issues identified in our study in relation to the aforementioned thematic areas resonate with earlier research (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Human Capital Strategies, 2005;[2] University of Victoria,[3] 2000). Common obstacles that post-

[2] Human Capital Strategies. (2005). Final Report. Review of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Programs, Services and Strategies/Best Practices & Aboriginal Special Projects Funding (ASPF) Program. Submitted to Ministry of Advanced Education, Province of British Columbia.
[3] web.uvic.ca/iicrd/graphics/Canada%20Survey%20Report.PDF

secondary Aboriginal learners faced in these studies and the teacher career path study included:

- low high school completion rates and lack of required high school academic courses for entrance to university programs
- inadequate financial support
- racism
- lack of adequate academic skills
- stress related to relocating such as finding housing, moving away from family, and feeling unsupported
- institutional curriculum that omits or marginalizes Aboriginal knowledge and culture

Helpful factors included:

- teacher education programs with sound Aboriginal knowledge base and perspective
- caring and knowledgeable Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal faculty and staff
- programs that built and maintained family ties and community spirit
- Aboriginal teacher networks and mentoring programs
- positive relationships with family, community, teacher education faculty and staff, and school colleagues

These seven interconnected narratives have been shaped by the actions over time of multiple communities—Aboriginal communities, public schools, post-secondary programs, teacher education programs and Aboriginal teacher education programs, school districts, provincial ministries, and Aboriginal education partners. Our conclusions and recommendations follow from these stories and are addressed to agents who we believe can work to fill the accountability vacuum. Accompanying our recommendations is an identification of which agent(s) we feel are responsible for implementing the recommendations.

Recommendations

The following recommendations identify strategies for government and key stakeholders to increase the number of qualified Aboriginal teachers in the BC public education system generally, as well as in areas of specific need. It also recommends data collection and analysis for tracking Aboriginal students in teacher education programs through transition to and retention in employment. The recommendations build upon the study's seven major findings noted above, which are based on the interviews, surveys, examination of databases, and previous research. The first recommendation should be given priority because it provides a framework for the others, which are organized according to the education and career paths discussed in the Indigenous wholistic analysis, survey findings, and data discussion sections. The other recommendations do not have an order of priority. All recommendations are important.

Recommendations to increase the number of qualified Aboriginal teachers in the BC public education system generally, as well as in areas of specific need

Recommendation 1: Develop and implement an Aboriginal Teacher Education and Employment Policy and Action Plan to guide Aboriginal Teacher Education and Employment initiatives.

Change Agents: School districts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education, Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, BC Partners' Group on Aboriginal Education

There is need for a deliberate, aggressive, yet cooperative plan and accountability policy regarding Aboriginal Teacher Education and Aboriginal Teacher Employment and Retention. The BC Partners' Group on Aboriginal Education could lead the development and oversee the implementation of a policy and funded outcome action plan that sets target enrollment and graduation rates of Aboriginal teacher education students, sets target numbers of Aboriginal educators teaching in public, Band, and independent schools, and establishes program benchmarks for quality Aboriginal teacher education.

Recommendation 2: Create personally oriented mentoring and recruitment initiatives for Aboriginal high school students through cooperative efforts among high schools, Band schools, teacher education programs, and Aboriginal communities/organizations.

Change Agents: Aboriginal communities, School districts, University Transfer/Arts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education

Teacher education programs should develop proactive outreach efforts to encourage and mentor Aboriginal high school students to consider teaching as a future career. RCAP (1996) even suggested that teacher career efforts could begin in later elementary grades. These efforts go much beyond attending school career fairs and setting up an information table. Future teachers' clubs, interactive websites, mentoring programs, sending

personalized letters to Aboriginal students encouraging them to think about a teaching career are some suggestions of proactive initiatives. Teachers, principals, and other school staff could identify students who have an aptitude or "gift" for teaching and encourage or mentor them. University teacher education students could design a teachers' club or interactive website. Aboriginal high school students may become more motivated to complete required academic courses needed to enroll in teacher education programs if they have a future career path. These initiatives could also help Aboriginal high school students acquire the necessary academic and study skills in the areas of English, writing, and mathematics. Aboriginal knowledge, community/parent/Elder involvement, and Aboriginal perspectives must be a core part of these recruitment and mentoring strategies.

Recommendation 3: Financial support, in the form of bursaries and awards, and the waiving of registration fees, is highly recommended in order to alleviate the high costs of attending a college or university.

Change Agents: Aboriginal communities, University Transfer/Arts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education, Ministries of Education and Advanced Education

There are a lot of circumstances that make access to post-secondary education difficult for Aboriginal learners. A disproportionate number of Aboriginal students come from locations that make it impossible to complete their education while living in their own community. In addition, Aboriginal students are more likely to wait before entering post-secondary, which means they may have additional family responsibilities. These facts, along with the leadership role played by many Aboriginal students in their extended family or community, means they are more likely to face additional financial responsibilities. Rising tuition fees and limited Band funding are barriers that prevent Aboriginal people from considering teacher education. Institutions that offer bursaries, awards, and any other financial incentives may attract applicants. Sometimes applicants may not follow through with an application because they do not have the registration fees. While a registration fee of $100 may not seem like much to a big institution; it is a hindrance to those who do not have the funds. In future, institutions may need to think about awarding tuition awards to attract strong Aboriginal applicants. Currently, universities such as UBC give tuition awards to Ph.D. students accepted into graduate programs for a four-year period, in order to be competitive in attracting top students.

Recommendation 4: Establish or enhance teacher education programs that build upon Aboriginal knowledge, address Aboriginal K–12 student learning needs, and maintain family and community ties. These programs may be Aboriginal specific, and/or integrate Aboriginal knowledge throughout the program, and/or be joint initiatives between post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities and organizations. Other strategies that fall within this recommendation include:

a. Ensure Aboriginal Elders have a teaching and mentoring role and compensate them for their professional expertise.

b. Increase Aboriginal faculty in teacher education programs.

c. Ensure that all teacher education students take one core course about Aboriginal education and integrate Aboriginal content and perspectives throughout general teacher education programs.

Change Agents: Aboriginal communities, University Transfer/Arts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education, Ministries of Education and Advanced Education

Increasing Aboriginal peoples' accessibility to teacher education programs that meet their cultural and geographic diversity requires the availability of many options. Research participants emphasized the value of Aboriginal-specific and community-based programs. They also talked about the need for general teacher education programs to include more Aboriginal content and perspective. There are currently seven universities in BC with a Faculty of Education offering teacher education programs. Not all have the resources to develop and maintain an Aboriginal-specific program and not all agree that Aboriginal-specific programs should be the only option for Aboriginal learners. Joint-degree initiatives offered in partnership between universities and in cooperation with Aboriginal communities/organizations could maximize limited financial and human resources.

We hope that, as a new generation of teachers enters the profession having been educated along with Aboriginal students, it will reduce Aboriginal teachers' isolation within the schools, as they will have been part of the diversity of the teacher education process.

Recommendation 5: Ensure teacher education programs address the wholistic needs of Aboriginal teacher education students and prepare them for the challenges they will face in the teaching profession.

Change Agents: Aboriginal communities and organizations, School Districts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education, Ministry of Education, and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation

The wholistic Indigenous analysis discussed the helpful and hindering factors that related to the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual domains. The influence of self, family, community, and place upon these factors and domains was also part of the wholistic framework. Aboriginal knowledge and culture is often described as having a wholistic nature. If teacher education programs build upon Aboriginal knowledge and culture, then they must incorporate a wholistic approach.

The research participants identified critical challenges that Aboriginal teachers face in the teaching profession: extraordinary expectations and multiple roles; colonization impact from Aboriginal parents and communities; and isolation and marginalization. These issues could be addressed in coursework and practica. Teacher Education Programs could also develop cooperative initiatives to deal with these critical challenges with Aboriginal organizations such as the First Nations Schools' Association, the First Nations Education Steering Committee, the Aboriginal Teacher Education Consortium, Schools Districts, Ministry of Education, and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation.

Recommendation 6: Ensure teacher education programs are responsive to the educational needs of K–12 Aboriginal learners. Transformative action plans need to be developed in the following areas: Aboriginal languages, special education, literacy, mathematics and science, and classroom management.

Change Agents: Aboriginal communities, School districts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education

The research participants suggested areas that needed to be addressed in teacher education programs as indicated in the recommendation above. A transformative approach is recommended in responding to the educational needs of K–12 Aboriginal learners, which includes questioning approaches that focus on a student deficit approach or that perpetuate a Western education perspective to the exclusion of Aboriginal knowledge. The teacher education program areas/specializations must be based upon Aboriginal knowledge. Aboriginal languages continue to be an area of priority for many Aboriginal communities. All BC Band schools have a First Nations language program and public schools are slowly increasing First Nations language offerings. A transformative approach would consider combining learning the First Nations language with curriculum development and pedagogy such as language immersion approaches. Special education approaches would critically examine the effects of labelling, consider Aboriginal ways of identifying the "gifts" that each child has, and then develop

approaches that build upon one's gifts in order to improve the child's learning difficulties. Culturally responsive approaches could be used for teaching literacy, mathematics, and science and dealing with classroom management.

Recommendation 7: Teacher education programs should prepare Aboriginal students and graduates for their job search in areas such as interviewing and developing their knowledge of school district organization and hiring practices.

Change Agents: School districts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education, British Columbia Teachers' Federation

According to the research participants, job search skills were either non-existent or inconsistently developed in teacher education programs. The competitive nature of the job search, systemic challenges related to the Teacher-on-Call process, and racism are challenging factors facing new Aboriginal teacher applicants to public schools. Teacher education programs could work with school districts and the BCTF to develop a course module or job-search program to better prepare Aboriginal applicants. This cooperative action should not be seen as replacing the need to change the systemic challenges facing new Aboriginal teacher applicants.

Recommendation 8: School districts should have Aboriginal teachers in numbers that at least reflect the Aboriginal student population in their district. To this end, districts should be held accountable for their Aboriginal teacher-hiring and retention strategies in pursuit of this goal.

Change Agent: School districts

Address the following:

a. Recognize and deal with the fact that hiring based on seniority from Teacher-on-Call experience discriminates against new teachers who do not have the social and personal networks in the school districts. This tends to discriminate against Aboriginal teachers.

b. Encourage newly graduated Aboriginal teachers to teach in classrooms longer before taking on district-wide roles (recognizing that many currently begin in district roles because of the difficulty of securing sufficient seniority through the TOC system to become employed full time).

c. Reduce the pressure on new Aboriginal teachers to act as a knowledge resource, social worker, and Aboriginal community representative on top of their role as classroom teacher. These additional pressures and expectations on Aboriginal teachers prompted many to reconsider their position as a classroom teacher.

d. Stop the stereotyping of new Aboriginal teachers that often sees them placed in the most challenging classroom situations—often without proper training. If an Aboriginal teacher is placed in a classroom with students who are having trouble with the school system, it should be because that teacher is trained in those areas, not because a disproportionate number of the students are Aboriginal.

Recommendation 9: Create an Aboriginal teachers' network that facilitates the development of mentoring programs, engages in action teacher research, and provides communications and opportunities for Aboriginal teachers to work together on an on-going basis in order to increase their retention in the teaching profession.

Change Agents: School districts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education, BC Partners' Group on Aboriginal Education, Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation

The research participants reinforced the value of networks, mentoring programs, action research, and mechanisms that facilitated ongoing communication and collaboration for addressing issues related to isolation and marginalization. The only formal mechanism that exists for Aboriginal teachers to network is the BCTF's First Nations education specialist group that usually convenes an annual Aboriginal education conference. This group is led by an elected executive who volunteer their time to carry out the group's goals. More resources for coordination and implementation of mentoring and networking programs and research are required. The mentoring and networking programs need to happen at a school district level, then extend to a provincial level as appropriate.

Recommendations about data collection for tracking Aboriginal students in teacher education programs and transition to and retention in employment

The Ministry of Education has dramatically increased our understanding of student progress, special issues, and the performance of groups like Aboriginal students by creating and improving an individual student database that tracks performance and progress. The Provincial Education Number (PEN) has made analysis, understanding, and accountability much more achievable as it is possible to look at various aspects of performance.

Recommendation 10: The Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, in consultation with Aboriginal organizations, should work with post-secondary institutions to ensure they create consistent and thorough reporting databases to understand the paths, successes, and barriers of Aboriginal students in teacher education programs.

Change Agents: Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education, Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, BC Partners' Group on Aboriginal Education

We recommend that the post-secondary system adopt the use of the current PEN Aboriginal identifier for all BC students who have a PEN. This number could create a much better longitudinal picture of performance and trajectories. As well, the PEN now has robust Aboriginal identifiers—significantly better than the self-identification relied upon by most post-secondary institutions. This should become an integral element in the data plan of the Central Data Warehouse of the post-secondary system.

This will give the post-secondary system a common identifier with a reliable Aboriginal "flag." This is particularly important to those institutions that do not have the scale to set up a sophisticated data management system to track other than academic essentials for their students.

For non-BC students, or for mature students who were last in BC schools before PENs were reliable, colleges and universities should create a number that can be used in parallel with the PEN. It will be important that consistent effort be put into accurately identifying Aboriginal students as part of assigning this parallel number.

Recommendation 11: From the new Aboriginal database, the Ministry of Advanced Education should work with post-secondary institutions to create regular reporting similar to the Ministry of Education's *How Are We Doing?* report.

Change Agents: University Transfer/Arts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education, Ministry of Advanced Education

There is a lack of knowledge about the pathways, successes, and barriers facing Aboriginal students in post-secondary education. This undermines progress and accountability through a simple lack of information on which to hold anyone responsible or information sufficient to improve understanding.

The K–12 system has, through its data capture, analysis, and reporting initiatives, increased knowledge of the way in which Aboriginal learners progress in the system. This has led to a better understanding of critical issues the system must address and has set benchmarks against which progress, or lack thereof, can be assessed.

In contrast, the post-secondary system has partial information on Aboriginal identity. The information is captured in different and inconsistent ways across time and institutions. The effect of this patchwork of information is to make the analysis of patterns of progress

through even a single institution difficult. Across institutions, the differences in data collection make inter-institutional comparisons of administrative data misleading where it is possible at all.

Fundamentally, lacking reliable information on how many Aboriginal students take what courses and how well they do in those programs makes it difficult to set goals for which institutions can be accountable.

Recommendation 12: Create an Aboriginal teacher candidate and educator database system.

Change Agents: School districts, the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, the BC College of Teachers

The Aboriginal educator tracking system would include teachers on call and existing and new hires entering directly from other schools. This would require school districts, the BCTF, the BC College of Teachers, and teacher education programs to adopt provincially standardized processes and procedures to the extent possible, and create an Aboriginal Teacher Candidate Database:

- An Aboriginal Educator Human Resources Database (AEHRDB) would contain key Aboriginal human resource information for British Columbia's school districts. AHRDB provide a useful research database with the following types of information: demographics, employment type/status, etc.

If the data are collected as part of the College of Teachers' certification, an efficient, single-source process can result.

Table 1
Summary of Recommendations and Change Agents

RECOMMENDATIONS	CHANGE AGENTS				
1: Develop and implement an Aboriginal Teacher Education and Employment Policy and Action Plan to guide Aboriginal Teacher Education and Employment initiatives.		School Districts		Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	BC Partners' Group on Aboriginal Education / Ministries of Education and Advanced Education
2: Create personally oriented mentoring and recruitment initiatives for Aboriginal high school students through cooperative efforts among high schools, Band schools, teacher education programs, and Aboriginal communities/organizations.	Aboriginal Communities	School Districts	University Transfer/Arts	Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	
3: Financial support, in the form of bursaries and awards, and the waiving of registration fees, is highly recommended in order to alleviate the high costs of attending a college or university.	Aboriginal Communities		University Transfer/Arts	Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	Ministries of Education and Advanced Education
4: Establish or enhance teacher education programs that build upon Aboriginal knowledge, address Aboriginal K–12 student learning needs, and maintain family and community ties. These programs may be Aboriginal specific, and/or integrate Aboriginal knowledge throughout the program, and/or be joint initiatives between post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities and organizations.	Aboriginal Communities		University Transfer/Arts	Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	Ministries of Education and Advanced Education

5: Ensure teacher education programs address the wholistic needs of Aboriginal teacher education students and prepare them for the challenges they will face in the teaching profession.	Aboriginal Communities and Organizations	School Districts		Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	Ministries of Education / British Columbia Teachers' Federation
6: Ensure teacher education programs are responsive to the educational needs of K–12 Aboriginal learners. Transformative action plans need to be developed in the following areas: Aboriginal languages, special education, literacy, mathematics and science, and classroom management.	Aboriginal Communities			Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	
7: Teacher education programs should prepare Aboriginal students and graduates for their job search in areas such as interviewing and developing their knowledge of school district organization and hiring practices.		School Districts		Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	British Columbia Teachers' Federation
8: School districts should have Aboriginal teachers in numbers that at least reflect the Aboriginal student population in their district. To this end, districts should be held accountable for their Aboriginal teacher-hiring and retention strategies in pursuit of this goal.		School Districts			
9: Create an Aboriginal teachers' network that facilitates the development of mentoring programs, engages in action teacher research, and provides communications and opportunities for Aboriginal teachers to work together on an on-going basis in order to increase their retention in the		School Districts		Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	BC Partners' Group on Aboriginal Education / Ministries of Education and Advanced

teaching profession.					Education / British Columbia Teachers' Federation
10: The Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, in consultation with Aboriginal organizations, should work with post-secondary institutions to ensure they create consistent and thorough reporting databases to understand the paths, successes, and barriers of Aboriginal students in teacher education programs.				Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	BC Partners' Group on Aboriginal Education / Ministries of Education and Advanced Education
11: From the new Aboriginal database, the Ministry of Advanced Education should work with post-secondary institutions to create regular reporting similar to the Ministry of Education's *How Are We Doing?* report.			University Transfer/Arts	Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	Ministry of Advanced Education
12: Create an Aboriginal teacher candidate and educator database system.		School Districts			Ministries of Education and Advanced Education / British Columbia Teachers' Federation / BC College of Teachers

II. Methodology

The study used a mixed methods approach comprised of discussions with Faculty of Education administrators, interviews, a survey, and examination of post-secondary student databases, Census data, and previous research applicable to this study. A project Steering Committee assisted with the planning process, suggested names of educational professionals to interview, approved the survey, and gave feedback on the first draft of the research report. Members of the Steering Committee included representatives from public school districts, university teacher education programs, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, and the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education.

When the study began, the Ministry of Education sent an information letter to the Deans of BC Faculties of Education asking them to help the study team acquire Aboriginal student and graduate data. Members of the study team met with representatives of the Faculties of Education to discuss the research project and to seek their help in sending the survey to current Aboriginal teacher education students and graduates.

Information from the in-depth interviews with educational professionals shaped the survey that was sent to Aboriginal teacher education students and Aboriginal teachers. The Steering Committee suggested 39 names of educational professionals who had extensive work experience with public school districts or teacher education programs for interviews. Twenty-three (23) educational professionals agreed to participate in the interviews. The findings of the interviews contributed to the development of the survey questions. The interviews also comprised the main unit of analysis for the Indigenous wholistic analysis.

The Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educational professionals had in-depth knowledge and extensive work experience in Aboriginal education, in particular with Aboriginal teacher education students and Aboriginal teachers. Some had over 25 years of experience. They were teachers, principals, superintendents, university faculty, and university administrators. The interviewees were asked about helping and hindering factors that Aboriginal people experienced while accessing and completing teacher education programs, in recruitment to teaching and the early teaching years, and in retention in the teaching profession.

An Indigenous wholistic framework was used to analyze the interviews and some of the survey responses (see Figure 2). Many Indigenous cultures use a circle to symbolize a wholistic approach to individual human development and well-being of the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual domains. The concentric circles of individual, family, and community symbolize the inter-relationships and responsibilities among each entity. Helping and hindering factors associated with the four major phases of (1) access to college/university for teacher education programs; (2) completion of teacher education programs; (3) recruitment to the teaching profession; and (4) retention in the teaching field are placed in one of the four domains (spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual) for the purposes of analysis. Their placement in a particular domain provided a lens in order to appreciate the dynamics and impact of these factors.

The survey probed the experience of BC's Aboriginal teacher education students and educators as they moved through the aforementioned transitions and stages in their educational and professional lives. These stages and transitions illuminated the paths taken by the survey sample of Aboriginal educators (see Figure 1 on page 26). The teacher education programs were the main source of survey distribution. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) also mailed out 350 letters to Aboriginal teachers listed in their database, inviting them to contact Edudata if they wished to complete a survey. The research team also attended a provincial Aboriginal education conference at the beginning of the study to give information about the study.

Table 2
Project Surveys

University/College	MAILED	SENT OUT
University of Victoria	20	**?**
Simon Fraser University	20	**?**
Okanagan University College	20	7
Malaspina University-College	20	17
University of Northern British Columbia	20	**?**
Thompson Rivers University	20	17
University of British Columbia	32	32
Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP)		
Current Students	42	42
NITEP Graduates	218	218
British Columbia Teachers' Federation Mail outs	8	8
Total	**420**	**341**
Returned as Undeliverable		
NITEP		8
Malaspina		2
Total		**10**
TOTAL		**331**

Out of a total of 420 surveys mailed to different agents, 331 were known to be delivered to potential respondents. The study team received 65 questionnaires back, giving an adjusted response rate of 20%. A total of 152 surveys were distributed directly to universities and colleges for the purpose of being mailed to their Aboriginal teacher education students and graduates. These institutions reported sending out approximately 48% of the received surveys.

NITEP and BCTF surveys, totalling 268, were sent directly from Edudata Canada to potential respondents.

There are several notes about the nature of the data that are important for better evaluation of the results.

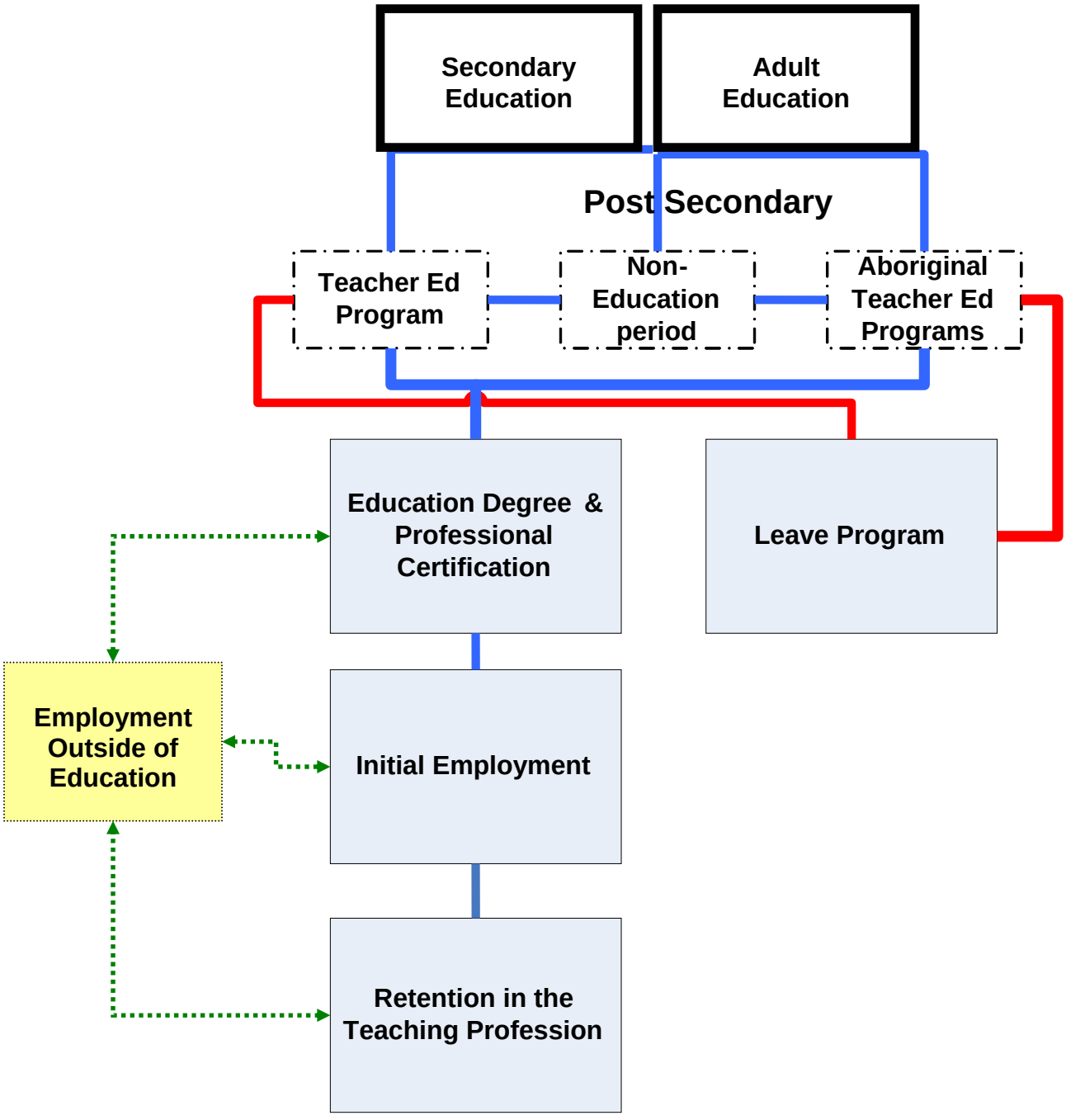
First, the administrative data are of quite uneven quality—ranging from excellent in the PEN-based information from the K–12 system, to the incomplete and under-reported data that many parts of the post-secondary system possess.

Second, the Census data are robust and thorough; however, the nature of responses to questions like Aboriginal identity have changed over time and great caution must be used in interpreting data from different time periods.

Third, the issue of self-identification is very important in the self-selection that is part of being on lists like the BCTF's list of Aboriginal teachers. We heard in the in-depth interviews about many teachers who were Aboriginal but chose not to self-identify. Those people are much less likely to be in the survey at all. While this is inevitable given the poor records on Aboriginal graduates of provincial education programs, we must be sensitive to the potentially biasing effect this has.

Finally, for the survey, with a total sample of 65, the confidence limits are very broad (±12.1% at the 95% confidence limit). This means there is one chance in 20 that differences of 12% are the product of chance rather than reflecting real differences between groups. To avoid the impression of undue precision, responses have been rounded to the nearest 5%. Tables may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

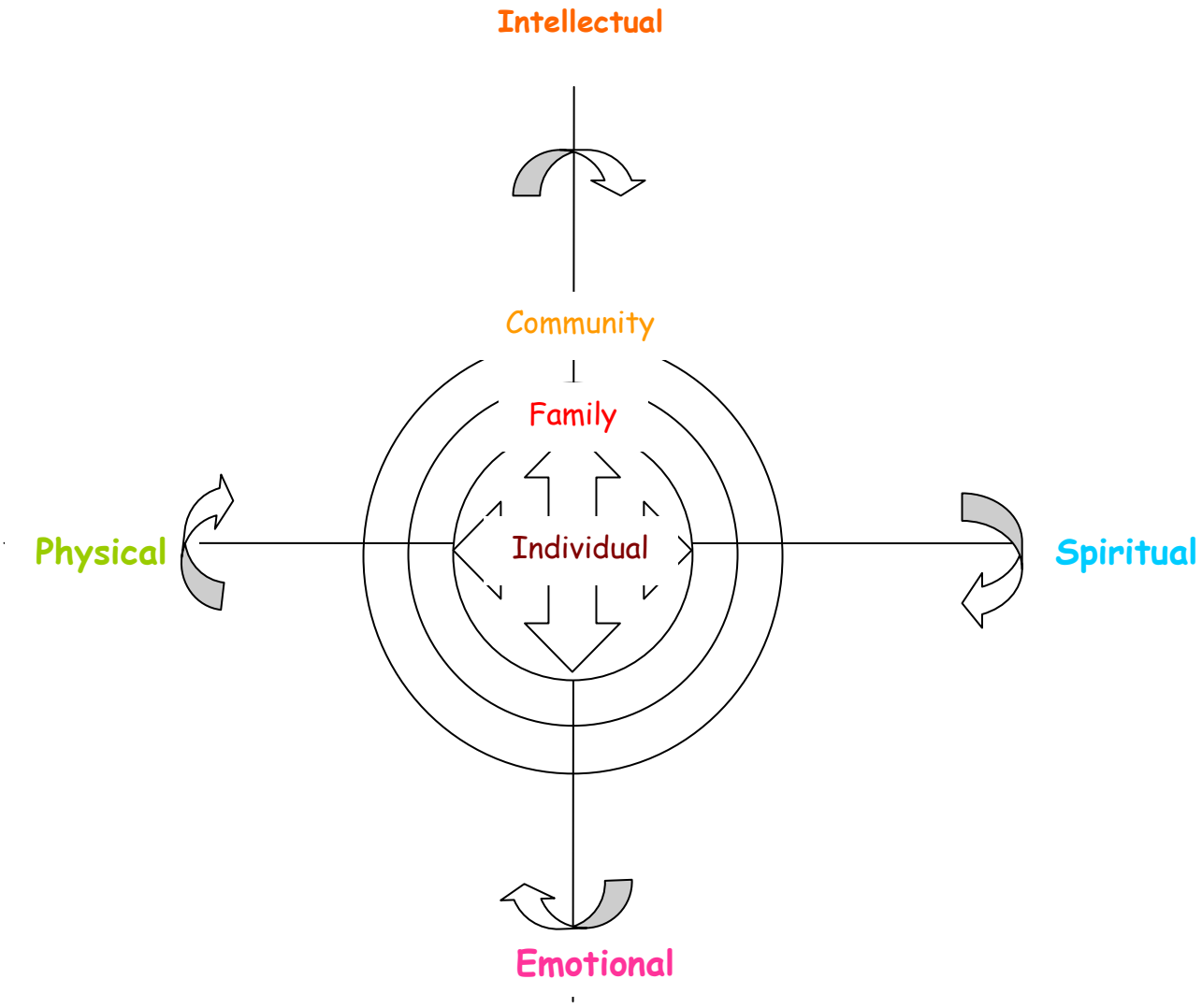
Figure 1
Framework: Student's Progress towards Becoming a Teacher



III. Indigenous Wholistic Analysis

An Indigenous wholistic[4] framework guided the analysis of the interviews and some of the survey responses[5] (see Figure 2).

Figure 2
Indigenous Research Methodology
A visual representation



[4] The word wholistic uses a 'w' purposefully in this document. Its spelling is applicable for Indigenous educational usage.
[5] The data analysis from the survey respondents follows this section. Examples from the survey contain both descriptive and qualitative data that provide more information about the helping and hindering factors.

At the University of British Columbia, Aboriginal programs such as the Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP) and units such as the First Nations House of Learning use this wholistic framework to guide the development and implementation of programs and student services. Many Indigenous cultures use a circle to symbolize a wholistic approach to individual human development and well-being of the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual domains. The concentric circles of individual, family, and community symbolize the inter-relationships and responsibilities among each entity. Helping and hindering factors associated with the four major phases of (1) access to college/university for teacher education programs; (2) completion of teacher education programs; (3) recruitment to the teaching profession; and (4) retention in the teaching field are placed in one of the four domains (spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual) for the purposes of analysis. Their placement in a particular domain provides a lens in order to appreciate the dynamics and impact of these factors. Limitations of this focussed analysis presentation include:

- a factor can have attributes that relate to more than one domain;
- placing a factor in one domain may limit its consideration in other domains;
- the inter-relatedness of the factors and domains may be overlooked because of the focussed presentation of each domain; and
- the subjective nature of the factors can be interpreted in different ways, readers may not agree with the placement of factors in particular domains.

Recommendations or suggestions made by survey respondents and interviewees conclude each phase of analysis. The helpful and hindering factors and research participants' recommendations form the basis of the study's thematic findings.

Readers are encouraged to view the wholistic analysis as one would look at a bouquet of flowers. Each flower can be appreciated for its particular beauty; each part of the analysis presents some aspect of a helpful or hindering consideration that needs to be understood. Together the flowers complement and contrast each other sufficiently to produce a combined beauty. Similarly, when the specific parts of the analysis are brought together and viewed wholistically, a deeper understanding of the four phases of an Aboriginal teacher career path occurs.

Access to Teacher Education Programs

A wholistic perspective about access to teacher education programs through high school, college, and university routes examines the relationships among the contexts of the individual, family, and community and systemic factors inherent in high schools and post-secondary systems.[6] The following example describes wholistic hindering considerations in order to provide a method of viewing the inter-relationship among factors in the wholistic framework. If Aboriginal students do not graduate from high school with an adequate skill set in mathematics, English, and writing (intellectual domain), they usually need to upgrade in these areas before they can be admitted to a post-secondary program or have tutoring in these areas while undertaking their teacher

[6] The elementary school experience was not included in this study.

education. Lack of self-esteem, lack of personal high expectations, and social/emotional problems (emotional and spiritual domains) may result from the academic failure that students experience. Colonization has continued to have an impact on Aboriginal individuals, families, and communities since the introduction of Western schooling. Teacher Education Programs and public schools often have not included the study of Aboriginal history, knowledge, and culture, nor the examination of colonization and its intergenerational effects (spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual domains) in meaningful ways through the core curriculum.

The inter-generational legacy of residential schooling is another structural factor that has an impact on the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of Aboriginal learners. Many research participants spoke of the colonization effects of residential schooling that continue to influence the attitudes that Aboriginal people have toward formal schooling. They also spoke about the inertia of the public school system to address its systemic barriers that hinder Aboriginal learners' success.

Spiritual

Helpful factor of Aboriginal specific programs respecting cultural values and beliefs

Although cultural and spiritual themes were not overtly present in the participants' responses about accessing teaching education programs, it was evident that family and community support, along with Aboriginal specific programs were important in creating a culturally relevant space and support network for students. The following individual indicates her choice for applying to an Aboriginal specific program:

> I felt there was a communal support system with more direct and immediate help available than in the regular [mainstream teacher education program]. The chance to learn more about the various cultural practices, beliefs, and values from different First Nations regions within BC and other out of province locations [was important].

Spirituality is a core part of Aboriginal culture, which has a wide range of meanings. It can mean honouring one's spiritual essence as a human being, respecting family and community spiritual teachings and practices, and acknowledging a metaphysical power. Having someone who has a shared understanding of an Indigenous perspective and who helps negotiate entry into Westernized higher education is an important cultural support for students. Faculty and staff who are culturally sensitized and programs that are culturally responsive facilitate access by creating an institutional environment where the Aboriginal student can maintain her cultural teachings that have a spiritual basis.

Emotional

Helpful relationships

A prevalent theme throughout each phase of the teacher career path is the importance of relationships (e.g., with peers, education coordinators, family, and community). In terms of access, key relationships with Aboriginal mentors and role models in both the K–12

schools and college/university systems, caring non-Aboriginal school educators and post-secondary coordinators, and family members who attended post-secondary institutions are helpful factors. Even though there are few Aboriginal people working in both the public school system and teacher education, those who are present have a significant impact.

Since the mid-1970s, the numbers of Aboriginal people completing teacher education programs with Bachelor of Education degrees has slowly increased. The Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP) at the University of British Columbia is in its 31st year and it has 320 graduates. Despite the small numbers, the impact of these individuals upon those considering teaching as a career is evident. The first generation of Aboriginal people who completed teacher education have created pathways for the second generation by demonstrating that Aboriginal people can succeed in post-secondary education, as noted by this educator: "[T]heir dad went, their uncle went, so 'I am going too. I am going to be a teacher…and when I'm finished this, I am going to get my Master's." It was also mentioned by several interviewees that an Indigenous educator in the school is not only a role model for First Nations students, but a role model for all. Having family and community support is essential in shaping students' aspirations for higher education and becomes another critical component of increasing access to post-secondary education.

Teacher-education coordinators are also important role models for students, specifically in assisting their access, transition, and retention through the post-secondary system. Their primary roles include being an advocate for students along with assisting them with the application process. Coordinators help alleviate stress that students experience during their transition into post-secondary (e.g., leaving home, insufficient finances, and family and community responsibilities). As an advocate for students, coordinators present student concerns to university administration and governance (e.g., changing admission policies, admitting students under special circumstances). In assisting students with application procedures, coordinators can clarify forms and other required documentation. Some responses noted that keeping in touch with potential students as they completed their applications was important in establishing supportive relationships and trust.

Community educators at the Band level may also play an important role in supporting Aboriginal students during their decision-making and application processes. They act as advocates for students within the community and at the governmental level.

Hindering impact of colonization and separation from family and community

The inter-generational legacy of colonization and residential school continues to have a negative influence on access to post-secondary education. Many of the interviewees consistently mentioned this factor, and as one respondent said:

> …the one area that people tend to read about, but don't understand, and don't put into action, is that there are huge effects on learning from our colonizing history…. [B]ecause of forced assimilation, because of the devaluation of our ways of knowing, of our cultures…the discontinuation of our social systems, our family systems, our languages…all have an effect on learning. We, as a society

> are not doing anything to help people to overcome those [effects that]…have a direct impact on access.

For years, the public school system has labelled Aboriginal students as having "special needs" (e.g., behavioural problems) and, as a result, many of these students now harbour a deep distrust of the system and suffer from low self esteem. The following survey participant indicated: "I did not like school. [I] felt I was 'dumb.' I was streamed [in]to the tech vocational course for getting a C in science. I was told this by the guidance counsellor."

Another barrier that deters potential applicants from even considering a post-secondary education is not having one's spouse/partner, family, and/or community support, if enrolling in a teacher education program results in geographical separation from them. This individual emphasizes the importance of the close connection to family and community:

> …for an Aboriginal student to leave the community, leave that network of supports and move to the city, is a huge barrier. It is a barrier in terms of finances, it is a barrier in terms of leaving the support network, and it is a barrier in terms of pulling yourself out of a family structure that is not always purely family-based, where you have responsibilities as an aunt or an uncle or a caregiver.

Physical

Helpful influence of community-based teacher education programs

Community-based programs were viewed as the most facilitating means for accessing post-secondary education. In addition to being located in or near Aboriginal communities, this type of program included Aboriginal community involvement in program decisions. This factor, placed in the physical domain, recognizes the physical land and place-based knowledge of Aboriginal peoples. Besides not having to disconnect completely from family and community, another benefit was that these programs positively influenced the community educational goals and priorities, as noted by the following individual:

> ...a really important highlight was that because the teacher education program existed in our community,…the community itself could be participants in the development of teachers for the school….rather than a person saying, 'I am going to have a career in teaching'…[she/he] was involved in [teacher education] to shape the education of a Nation. Because the Board of Education [had] a dream [to have] the teachers in the school be bilingual teachers, our language learning was directly woven into all of the teacher education courses. That was a real strength.

Many participants commented on the benefits of studying in their territory. Not having to leave home is an attractive option for those who do not want to relocate to go to school. By staying in or close to their traditional territory, students remain close to their support networks and are thus able to maintain important family and community responsibilities.

Maintaining a sense of "place" with their land-base allows students to remain attached to their families and cultural lifestyle, which in turn strengthens their Aboriginal identity.

Hindering influence of family/community separation, lack of finances, and high relocation costs to urban areas

Living away from home is problematic for many, especially if they do not wish to leave their territory to go to school. The move from a rural to urban setting is expensive, stressful, and disconcerting as they leave their family and community support networks. Many students experience cultural shock as they are not prepared to live in an urban setting. Finding adequate housing and setting up a new residence takes time and is costly. Often students do not have sufficient funds for the extra costs of damage deposits, moving, and purchasing basic furnishings. The following comments exemplify these issues:

> Going to UVic, or UBC, or SFU has a huge financial, social and emotional cost.
>
> Young students hear in many conversations about how much [post-secondary education] costs that they are discouraged from completing further education.
>
> The city can be a scary place. One example, I went to [a community based program] to do a few talks, and five out of seven students did not want to go to Vancouver [to complete their program]. I think [moving] creates a barrier, especially if they have families.

Intellectual

Helpful factors of Aboriginal specific programs, teacher education coordinators and personal contact during the admission process

Those who applied to an Aboriginal-specific teacher education program did so because Indigenous perspectives, cultural relevance, and Indigenous values/teachings were important to them. The benefits of an Aboriginal specific program are noted in the following quote:

> The structure of [*the Aboriginal program*] is conducive to student success. [*Our program space*] is friendly and welcoming. [This space] is theirs, they can just go and hang out and work together. I think having small classes is important. Having classes with all First Nations students…First Nations instructors, courses with First Nations content is really important…people feel that finally there is a place where 'I'm included in curriculum.' Cultural protocols are recognized. Cultural responsibilities are recognized….I remember [*an Aboriginal leader*] saying, 'people can't be expected to leave their culture and themselves at the doorstep – come into [*the university*] and then pick it up when they leave.'

Research participants also identified university teacher education program representatives as key resources if they provided consistent, positive, and caring assistance during the admissions process. Specifically, respondents appreciated their support in providing

program information, explaining the admissions process, and helping with parts of the process that were confusing, as demonstrated in this quote from one participant:

> The personal contact with the coordinator…has really encouraged people to come into the program. I remember one applicant saying that he really felt that he was needed and wanted in the program and that encouraged him to follow through with the application….Walking students through the process…right from the beginning, [and] keeping in contact, asking students where they are in the application process, has been really important.

One of the survey qualitative responses reinforces the positive impact of personal contact and assistance: "[The] info was overwhelming – [I] could have used some networking to find out the do's, don'ts, and quickies (the secrets!). [*Aboriginal unit*] leadership – [was] excellent – [they] helped with this."

Another beneficial aspect of personal contact with a teacher education coordinator is that the applicant gets to assess the appropriateness of the teacher education program to his/her needs and interests. Information about the structure, perspectives, and expectations of the program are discussed in admissions interviews.

Hindering factors: Inadequate math and writing skills and lack of knowledge about teacher education access routes

The lack of academic writing and mathematics skills was one of the most-often cited hindering access factors to teacher education noted by interview and survey respondents (see Figure 4). Academic streaming and having low academic expectations of Aboriginal learners in high school also limits students' access to post-secondary education when channelled into non-academic routes, which becomes a systemic issue as noted by this individual:

> In the education system, we are not doing a good enough job of holding high enough expectations of our kids, making sure that they know what the prerequisites are, believing in them and supporting them in the academic courses…. Aboriginal people say that people within the [public school] system have lower expectations for our kids; that they don't believe that they are capable of doing English 12, for instance, so they recommend that they do Communications 12…. The Aboriginal community sees it as giving up on the students. That is a systemic issue.

Lack of awareness of university or college admission requirements during high school can create future problems for students when they decide to apply to post-secondary education. High school counsellors and career preparation information are two sources of information that were not helpful in the high school system (see Figures 4 and 6).

Research participants' recommendations about improving access to teacher education programs

Interviewees and survey respondents made recommendations for improving teacher education access. The most often cited suggestion based on the survey question, "What suggestions do you have for the college or universities to make the admissions process more accessible for Aboriginal students" included maintaining a personalized approach by high school counsellors and teacher education staff. The following quotes show the positive effect of a personal approach and the concern about a lack of a personal approach.

> As long as it's personalized – like through [*Aboriginal specific unit*] – it's much easier than sitting behind 30 people at [*Faculty name withheld*].
>
> Counsellors at high school should go through the application process in class with students. Provide opportunities to address personal issues such as drugs or other counselling services.
>
> Have Aboriginal person help with the application and course selection. It was a very scary process for myself when I first arrived at the college.
>
> I would have found it more helpful if those from [*Aboriginal unit*] been able to spend more time giving comprehensive information; time to answer questions and not be in such a rush.

Many interviewees emphasized the importance of personal and persistent contact with high school students. They suggested initiatives such as a future teachers' club, a one week summer program similar to UBC's Summer Science Program,[7] a leadership program, and a mentorship program. Other suggestions included having more Aboriginal focussed teacher education programs available and "closer to home" so that Aboriginal learners did not have to relocate great distances. Other systemic mechanisms were suggested such as designating admissions seats for Aboriginal learners, which is currently in place at University of Northern British Columbia and University of Victoria and offering academic bridging programs such as those at Simon Fraser University, Malaspina University, and Thompson University.[8]

Completion of Teacher Education Programs

The following examples demonstrate a wholistic relationship among the prevalent helpful factors that influenced the completion of teacher education programs. Aboriginal-specific programs, such as NITEP at UBC and community-based cohorts, such as those developed

[7] High school students from around the province are selected to attend a one week campus residence program. Aboriginal university students mentor the high school students. Faculties provide science learning activities. This program is in its 17th year.

[8] These bridging programs are funded by the BC Aboriginal Teacher Education Consortium and have limited term funding.

at Simon Fraser University (SFU) are designed for the Aboriginal learner. NITEP offers a two-year regional field centre then students transfer to the UBC-Vancouver campus to complete their Bachelor of Education degree. SFU offers a community-based program in which students complete the Professional Development Program and received a standard teaching certificate. Its graduates can then complete their Bachelor of Education degree requirements at the Burnaby campus. Both teacher education programs set out to "Indigenize" their programs by ensuring Aboriginal leadership, content, perspective, culture, and application (spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual domains). Relationships with family and community are retained as much as possible by having the programs located closer to home (spiritual and physical) and including mechanisms to have Elder and community involvement in courses and program activities (spiritual, emotional, and intellectual domains). Belongingness occurs by having the programs steeped in Indigenous values/teachings and ensuring that coordinators and instructors closely associated with the teacher education programs are sensitive to Indigenous knowledge and are caring individuals.

The pressing hindrances or barriers to completing teacher education programs include: competing knowledge systems between Indigenous and Western; the difficulties of cultural expert expectations; the lack of understanding about Indigenous knowledge; racism; effects of colonization; separation from family and community; lack of finances; and lack of mathematics and writing skills.

Spiritual

Helpful possibilities of Elder and Aboriginal community involvement

Cultural understanding and support was very influential in students' successful program completion. Interview participants mentioned the positive impact upon students when Elders were involved in teacher education programs. However, survey results showed that Elder involvement is not a strong component of teacher education programs in BC (see Figure 8) and therefore remains only a helpful "possibility." Another important helpful possibility is the involvement of family and community within the post-secondary institution. Universities and colleges are doing slightly better in this area than in the question about Elder involvement (see Figure 8).

Hindering influence of racism

Racism is another pervasive hindering factor that is embedded in all aspects of the wholistic framework. Racism is placed in the spiritual domain because it affects the innermost spiritual core of a human being. Racism is certainly an emotional factor of which one's individual and collective cultural spirituality can help overcome emotional issues triggered by racism.

"Racism and media perceptions are not eliminated because one has attained higher education."

See Tables 17 and 18 for frequency and sources of racism experienced by survey respondents during high school and teacher education programs. The following quotes exemplify the scope and depth of the problem

> An area that pretty much all (Aboriginal) student teachers will talk about is racism, and the racism they have to endure, not just from other students, but from faculty too, from faculty attitudes.
>
> …the issues that cause pain, I don't think they have gone away at all. I think they are the same things that cause trouble and upset…it can be a student in a class saying some racist or dismissive thing. Or it can be embedded in…the chat in the course. Does it go away? I don't think so, unfortunately.
>
> So the practicums were lonely and challenging, frustrating and exhausting. I think in the staff rooms, I heard lots of racism during my student teacher time. I was the only First Nations student placed in schools, so it was difficult.
>
> A whole bunch of us went up the [school] steps and there were these non-Aboriginal boys ahead of me and it was very crowded, they were complaining. They said, 'Oh, don't worry about the Aboriginal kids they'll be dropping out within the next couple weeks.' That was a real eye opener…it was like, wow….it's systemic racism. That sense of belonging just wasn't there [for me]. It still felt the same way, you know, no different than when we were in high school.

Emotional

Helpful influences of positive relationships, creating a caring, respectful, and safe learning environment, and peer and coordinator support

Interviewees identified positive relationships with family, community, program peers, coordinators and/or faculty as one of the most helpful factors in students completing their academic program. Aboriginal role models are also an important component of relationships. These relationships and various student services, such as counselling, social and cultural activities facilitate a sense of belonging and create camaraderie amongst students, faculty, and/or coordinators, all which contribute to a beneficial learning environment. The following survey quote sums up the emotional sentiment about a comfortable environment: "[*The Aboriginal program*] – community site [is an] awesome way to start. [The] friendships and network [were] sustained throughout the rest of the years. Staff always helpful."

Peer/cohort support was valued by many participants. Fellow Aboriginal classmates have a shared understanding and history of the challenges and successes of completing a program. Peers provide emotional and physical support by sharing food, resources, and child-care. Fellow classmates also assist each other with academic work. A strong student organization within the teacher education program also builds a support network for many students. The opportunity to meet other cohorts was also important to some participants. Celebrating each others successes (e.g., birthdays, program achievements) was an important emotional support for some participants.

Hindering effects of lack of positive relationships and colonization

Conversely, in this specific context, the lack of positive relationships can become a hindrance in the completion of a teacher education program. Separation from family and community has a high emotional cost. Some interviewees commented that students often have to deal with the legacy of negative educational experiences (either their own or of previous generations) which makes it difficult for them to building trusting relationships with others or to overcome social-emotional problems. Based upon the previous discussion about the impact of colonization and school failure upon an individual's self-esteem and socio-emotional problems, teacher education has the additional responsibility of addressing these issues through its programs.

Physical

Helpful influence of community-based programs, cohorts, physical space, bursaries, and on-campus orientations

Interview participants often expressed the view that having a community-based teacher education program, whether for the full program or at least part of it, increased the likelihood of students completing their education degree. Being close to their home territory meant that students did not have to uproot their children or break ties with their family and community responsibilities and networks. The community-based aspect of the program not only met local community educational needs, but it also provided another crucial support network for students.

> The highlight for me in the first two years was the fact that I got to stay in my home territory and I went to NITEP with a group of people, mostly women. I was the [youngest]. I found the camaraderie in the class very close. The other thing I enjoyed was the fact that the second year students were there as well and they were supportive and encouraging to us. I had instructors who were all very good and very committed to ensuring that we were successful in our coursework. We also had a tutor who was supportive and not threatening to me because I found writing to be a struggle and I needed some extra support in the writing. We were in a safe class in a safe environment where we could say what we thought and our opinions were valued.

Many interview participants spoke about the lasting friendships and professional collegial networks that began in the program cohort. Others commented that having student space on campus where students could gather for intellectual, cultural, and social exchanges helped create a sense of belonging and place. Students use these spaces to share food and to support each other academically and emotionally. One such noted space was the First Nations House of Learning (The Longhouse) at the University of British Columbia. The Longhouse, which serves as a "home away from home", is a critical part of developing feelings of belonging and support within the NITEP program at UBC. A physical space that reflects Indigenous architecture reinforces the place of Indigenous knowledge in academe.

Though lack of finances in pursuing higher education is certainly a hindering factor, research participants attributed bursaries and access to part-time and summer jobs as contributing to the success of students. Another physical factor that helps students is advance visits to the campus for those who start their program at an off-campus location and then proceed to the main campus for the completion of their program. These visits help students become oriented to student services and to the buildings where they will eventually take their classes.

Hindering factor: Lack of finances

"Without Native Housing in Vancouver, my education would not have been possible due to a very tight budget!"

Lack of finances is one of the most often-cited hindering factors to students' completion of their program. Interview participants commented that First Nations Bands do not have sufficient funds to support those wishing to complete post-secondary education, which was reinforced by survey respondents. The additional costs of renting and setting up of an apartment are often not considered by funding agencies. Lack of adequate funding throughout the academic year is resulting in an increasing reliance on food banks. One teacher education coordinator recalls:

> [Lack of sufficient] finances is one of the biggest hindrances for students. Living on the poverty line…rising tuition…Band living allowance just doesn't cut it, especially when students transfer [to the teacher education site]. I just don't know how the students do it. A lot of the students use food banks. They are always worrying, especially if they have kids, [how] to feed their families….I think the use of food banks has really increased, even for single students. And I think there is a certain amount of shame involved in saying, 'You know what, I have to access a food bank.'

Intellectual

Helpful influence of Aboriginal courses, Aboriginal faculty, and extended practica

Aboriginal courses offered throughout the teacher education program were the most-cited helpful factor by interviewees. The following individual speaks to the positive influence of the First Nations studies courses in the NITEP program.

> [In] the First Nations studies courses, I was able to research my history, my culture, and my language, because without those, I felt incomplete as a human being, as a student. So NITEP opened that door…. It helped my identity…the word 'wholesomeness' comes to mind; I felt wholesome.

Having culturally relevant curriculum taught through an Indigenous pedagogy helps students develop a sense of belonging and ownership of the program, and contributes to building students' self-esteem. The role of Aboriginal faculty who bring a shared knowledge of the traditional and colonized history of Indigenous peoples to the classroom is paramount to creating a culturally sensitive and critically relevant pedagogy.

Varied and numerous practicum experiences were viewed positively by research participants, especially if the students were able to experience a variety of schooling and educational settings so that they gained an appreciation of the range and depth of knowledge that a teacher needed to have. An extended practicum of one school term (i.e. Sept–Dec) was invaluable to some participants.

Hindering factors: cultural expert expectation, and competing knowledge discourses

Research participants often noted the difficulty that Aboriginal pre-service teachers faced when placed in the "cultural expert" or "Aboriginal representative" role in their classes. Non-Aboriginal faculty not sensitized to the complexities of this challenge may unwittingly expect Aboriginal students to answer any question that arises about Aboriginal people, their culture, and issues especially if they do not have the appropriate knowledge. The following individual aptly describes this problem:

> [Aboriginal students] have to be the experts in every class they take. They have to either be the expert, or they have to…stand as a representative of everything that is happening in the news…if a group is demonstrating somewhere, or blockading the road, or trying to exert pressure on government, then all of our students become representatives of that. If people are feeling angry toward those actions, then they will direct it towards the students. Our students…can't be just students. This burden is placed on their shoulders, which can make things very stressful.

Participants also felt that non-Aboriginal faculty often did not know how to incorporate Aboriginal content into their courses so that Aboriginal students who were in the course felt comfortable about the professor's pedagogy. One educator who has worked with Aboriginal students for many years said, "…there is still a problem with professors not having any sense of First Nations history…all those painful kinds of experiences people have in their classes where First Nations statistics are bandied about that are so hurtful…The land-bridge stories that go against people's traditions…all of that is in first year courses."

Participants' discussions of competing discourses between Western and Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of knowing pervaded the interviews. Tensions arise when there is a limit of course time and the program or instructor does not see the value of including Indigenous knowledge, when non-Aboriginal students resist studying Indigenous matters, and when a particular discipline/subject area does not accept Indigenous knowledge within that field. One educator talked about the resistance to accepting Indigenous science:

> There is resistance to incorporating Indigenous knowledge into university curriculum. These disciplines have been established over hundreds of years and many battles fought over turf as it relates to this or that subject.

Another educator characterized these tensions as resulting from competing discourses, "…the individuals [Aboriginal students] are at the confluence of a variety of competing discourses,…there are discourses about mainstream curriculum, colonial

education…reclaiming tradition…all of these – the conflicts and struggles all come out at any moment."

Recommendations from research participants about improving completion of teacher education programs

When asked the question, "Overall, have you any suggestions about ways in which the intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs of Aboriginal students could be better met in your program?" the majority of survey responses recommended the need for Aboriginal faculty and staff who were positive leaders and helpful.

> [Aboriginal unit] were excellent and we had a home away from home…[with] other Aboriginal students, made it easier to be away from family.
>
> Have as many Aboriginal staff and support staff present to assist Aboriginal students when the need arises.
>
> [Need] resident Elders: my first program had them. They were a great support. My B.Ed did not and I truly missed their counsel and support.

Another survey question asked, "Looking back on your teacher education, what things do you think should be emphasized more in the training?" The suggestion given most often was about classroom management. An additional question asked respondents to identify topics that were not part of the teacher education program that should be taught to teacher education students. The responses varied with little agreement, except for a few who noted Aboriginal culture and issues.

The most often cited recommendation for improving teacher education programs from the educational professionals was to have more Aboriginal content and perspective incorporated into teacher education programs for all students, either through a core required course and/or "woven throughout the program" in a "planful and meaningful way." Some mentioned keeping up to date on Ministry of Education's expectations and new curricula. Specializations related to First Nations languages and Indigenous knowledge approaches to areas such as special education, counselling, and urban education were recommended. Joint teacher education degree programs between universities was another suggestion made by a few.

Recruitment to the Teaching Profession and the Early Years of Teaching

This section discusses recruitment to the teaching profession and the early years of teaching. In the wholistic analysis framework, the relationships among place, individual, family, and community provide contextual understanding of the helpful and hindering factors presented below. Place can be the school, school district, or Aboriginal community, each of which has its administrative, political, social, cultural, economic, and

historical contexts. A newly graduated or recruited Aboriginal educator is influenced by relationships, particularly with other teacher colleagues and community members that help or hinder the navigation through the systemic barriers and opportunities of a "place." Helpful recruitment factors were community involvement in recruitment (e.g., welcome feasts, families hosting new teachers), teacher involvement in community activities, forming a collegial network with other Aboriginal educators in the school, and a school with an inclusive atmosphere. Job search skills, persistence in job searching, maintaining professionalism, and understanding the hiring organizational structure were also helpful. Hindering factors identified by participants were the limited availability of teaching positions, difficult teaching assignments, not being accepted by the First Nations community, and the teacher-on-call process (TOC) (i.e., difficult for new teachers to have their name posted to a TOC list, sometimes difficult to become established as a TOC within a district if one doesn't have previous contacts, etc.).

Spiritual

Helpful relationships with Aboriginal families and communities

Some interview participants talked about their experiences in rural Aboriginal communities where welcoming feasts or food baskets were given to new teachers at the start of the school year. One community paired a family with a new teacher to share meals during the year and attend community events together. These examples portray a caring community that wants teachers to feel welcome and helps them to become involved in the community's activities. Showing respect and caring towards others is a basic Indigenous teaching at the core of the spiritual domain. Teachers who become involved in the community's activities demonstrate respect and caring, which helps to establish meaningful relationships with the extended family of students that teacher may have in the classroom. One community-based educator said:

> One thing that almost all communities in [*location withheld*] say, if teachers get involved in the community-type activities that'll make it – it'll be easier for them in the long run. It might be hard at first but in the long run, they'll start developing a network and people will start saying, 'Hey, we can trust that person.'

Hindering influence of colonization upon community beliefs about Aboriginal teachers

A number of the educational professionals talked about the difficulties that Aboriginal teachers face when they return to their own community or move into a new Aboriginal community. It was suggested that teacher education programs need to better prepare Aboriginal students to face this difficulty.

> I've heard from many young teachers who were not accepted professionally by the Aboriginal communities. Often, these young people hadn't even thought that they would have to face this and so they go back really unprepared.

Emotional

Helpful collegial relationships and allies

Many interview participants spoke about the importance of creating a collegial support network of other Aboriginal teachers within the school, or outside the school if no other Aboriginal teachers were present. The teacher education cohort from which one graduated was cited most often as the network the individual relied upon. Sometimes the new teacher education graduate called his/her former coordinator to ask advice. In some cases, a new teacher paired with an experienced teacher created an effective mentoring relationship. One educator remembers, "…when I first started teaching there was a teacher here that took me under her wing. She was an experienced teacher and she said, 'I'll help you as much as I can and then the rest is up to you.'"

Another teacher education coordinator said

> …the networking system is really important…once people are actually out there [teaching], the grads tend to notify people they know [from their teacher education program] and say 'this job is happening at this school' or 'I'm teaching grade 3, has anybody out there got any ideas for me?' Sometimes the grads still contact me and say, 'I need some help about…' It's that whole personal contact thing that happens.

The need to establish and use allies to combat hostility and blame associated with some district positions was noted by an individual with many years experience in teacher education and public schools:

> …I say this to [Aboriginal teachers] who become consultants and coordinators in their districts: 'They are setting you up – now everybody can unleash their irritation and resentment at you, so the district doesn't have to worry about it! Don't go into these situations alone; you have to have a support group. Don't let them set you up. It is easier not to let other people position you if you have allies who can help to support you in these positions…and you can do the same for your allies…you can confirm each other's perceptions and build the perspectives that are advantageous rather than being put in your place by others who wish to…blame you.'

Hindering influence of not acquiring teaching jobs in public schools or getting difficult teaching assignments

The interview participants often spoke about the difficulty of new teachers getting classroom teaching jobs in public schools. They also felt teacher education programs needed to forewarn pre-service teachers about the difficulties of getting teaching jobs in the public school system. Their concern was focussed on the emotional impact on the teacher education graduate. They did not want them to leave their programs with unrealistic job expectations and then face bitter disappointment because they were unable to attain classroom-teaching jobs in a school district immediately after graduation.

Declining public school enrollments resulting in fewer teacher hires and the length of time one needs to serve as a teacher on call to become eligible for a classroom position are two barriers that contribute to new teachers' dismay at not getting jobs.

Many interviewees talked about the stress that new teachers experienced when placed in very difficult teaching assignments. One educator articulated the vast responsibilities given to these new teachers:

> …one of the problems is that the jobs [new Aboriginal teachers] get are too difficult for first year teachers…. [They are] hired as the First Nations Coordinator for [school district] and suddenly they are dealing with the children in the system that are having trouble, they are dealing with the parents, they are dealing with teachers who want curriculum materials, they are teaching First Nations studies courses, and on and on…. Then the [school district] seems surprised when the person becomes overloaded. It's crazy.

Another person recalls:

> [Aboriginal teachers] have been asked to do learning assistance or special needs, when they don't have the background. There is the assumption that because the majority of the kids in those programs are First Nations [they should teach them]….I think that happens in admin positions too. I [recall] one instance where the grad had one year of teaching experience and then became a principal. I don't think you can have the background to do all the principal [responsibilities] unless you have had the classroom experience.

Physical

Helpful mechanisms for acquiring teaching jobs

Interviewees gave examples of systemic mechanisms that facilitated the appointment of Aboriginal teachers. The BC Ministry of Education's "targeted" funding for Aboriginal education initiatives often includes positions used to hire Aboriginal teachers. Knowing the provincial numbers of teaching positions funded and filled through "targeted" funding would be helpful data. Some school districts apply to the BC Human Rights Commission to request an exemption from the teachers' collective agreement to hire Aboriginal teachers based upon employment equity. Even though these two mechanisms are helpful, they result from unsuccessful efforts to move Aboriginal knowledge and Aboriginal teachers from their marginalized place in the public school system.

Hindering systemic factors of the teacher-on-call (TOC) process and being fast-tracked to administrative positions

"It's difficult with no background knowledge of [the] district. It's difficult, I believe, to get past TOC. . ."

Systemic problems stemming from collective agreements that require teachers to fulfill teacher-on-call positions hinder the hiring of Aboriginal educators. The length of time that one is a TOC may vary from one to ten years (British Columbia Teachers' Federation Aboriginal Teacher Survey (2002). The same survey

indicated that 65% of Aboriginal teachers spent one-two years as a TOC. The length of time required to obtain a full-time classroom teaching job is a hindrance placed in the physical domain because of the length of "wait" time that this systemic issue causes. Single parents usually need full-time employment after graduation. Those who received student loans also need to start paying them shortly after graduation. One survey respondent said, "It's hard to get a full-time classroom teacher job in our current education system. I'd like to be working in a public school, but [I] cannot afford to be only on the TOC list." An educator recounts her fellow teacher education graduates' experience with TOC:

> When I graduated, there were 19 of us grads. One that I know stayed in the Vancouver area, and was a TOC for two years, and then she got hired on by the Vancouver school board, and she got a class. Most [Aboriginal] grads that I know are usually single parents and they need a secure job; therefore, TOC'ing does not work for them. Not too many grads follow that route. It does not work for them. The one who got a job after two years of TOC'ing, actually ended up going back to her home community to teach at the local college. Not that many [Aboriginal] grads end up in the public schools. Another graduate was a TOC. Fortunately, her husband worked, she never did get a secure job.

Another educator discussed the limitations of the public school teachers' collective agreements, which does not apply to Band schools: "It's much tougher to get into public schools than into [Band schools]. Public schools are saying, 'Yes, we want more First Nations teachers' but there are union rules [TOC] that are obstacles." Another person reinforced the TOC barrier that led Aboriginal people to seek employment in Band schools: "…being a teacher-on-call…is a major barrier to getting into the classroom. People may give up or not want to continue being on the sub list. They will go somewhere else, to a Band school, where they get on right away." A survey respondent shared this same view: "Getting hired in the public system in [a city] and TOC is difficult for everyone. Work in other educational capacities has more opportunity."

Another systemic problem mentioned by many of the interviewees was fast-tracking Aboriginal educators into or hiring them directly into administrative-leadership positions. This hiring action left them with very little or no classroom teaching experience, which could limit their future career progression to upper-level school district leadership positions, as indicated in the following quote.

> I see a number of [Aboriginal] people not end up in the classroom. They become itinerant teachers, resource teachers or they get pulled up through the system into higher-level positions, perhaps positions of big responsibility. But they don't get the classroom experience and plus they don't ever become the principals or the superintendents because they haven't gone that route…. We really need them in the classroom, not just for the students but also for their own careers because if you don't pay those dues in the education system, you don't move into those other positions.

Intellectual

Helpful knowledge that leads to teaching positions: teaching portfolio, interview preparation, and teacher's rights and responsibilities

Education professional interviewees stressed that a new teacher seeking a job in the public school system needs to have an excellent teaching portfolio and needs to be thoroughly prepared for the interview process. One interview participant who has interviewed many Aboriginal teachers for jobs talked about the importance of demonstrating knowledge of subject area teaching and knowledge of pedagogy. This interviewee noted that Aboriginal teachers sometimes focus the discussion on the contextual issues confronting Aboriginal learners that precludes them from saying how they would use curriculum and pedagogy or how they would make the learning environment welcoming and inclusive. However, survey results show that Aboriginal teacher education graduates believe they have the necessary pedagogical knowledge required for teaching in today's classrooms, as indicated by one question that asked if the teacher education program gave graduates practical tools (e.g., lesson planning. See Figure 10).

Being knowledgeable about the school district's organizational structure and the local teachers' association can be useful to applicants. Understanding the learning priorities of the school district, knowing which type of administrators are involved with the interviewing and decision-making process, and knowing the local teachers' association policies are important sources of knowledge. Knowing one's rights and responsibilities through the local and provincial teachers' associations proved to be very helpful to a number of research participants.

There were examples of individuals who used the teacher-on-call process for attaining full-time teaching positions. One participant said that she did well on the TOC list. She acknowledged that she was often given the most difficult teaching assignments. However, she demonstrated that she could handle difficult classes; therefore, she was often assigned to classrooms which other TOCs would not take.

Hindering influence of systemic barriers that marginalize Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal knowledge

Two issues that research participants consistently identified were that newly hired Aboriginal teachers should know the pitfalls of various positions they accept and that the public school system needs to recognize and change the systemic barriers that exist within its structures, which marginalizes Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal knowledge.

Targeted funding positions may be perceived as not being part of the core teaching group of the school or school district, which results in marginalization, as indicated by this educator: "…in some ways the targeted funding that the province has is a bigger foot in the door for Aboriginal people to get hired. The negative side of that is you're almost pigeon holed into those roles: not hired as that normal, core teacher."

The marginalization of Aboriginal knowledge/courses is reinforced by a survey question that asked participants to indicate their level of agreement of disagreement with this statement: "A lot of other educators in the education system don't look on First Nations courses or languages as being an important part of the education system." Of 48 valid responses, 75% said they agree/strongly agree, 10% were neutral, and 15% said they disagree/strongly disagree. The following quote from a senior school district leader further illustrates the marginalization of Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal knowledge:

> Another barrier that exists with teachers is…I hate to harp on it but…the First Nations language and arts teachers and courses…are not seen as true courses. They're like add-ons. They're not the maths, the sciences, and when a regular classroom teacher who is Aboriginal comes into the system, they tend to be looked upon…[as if they will] teach the courses that are add-ons. So, that's a barrier, especially if you are the first Aboriginal teacher going into that school.

Recommendations from research participants about improving recruitment to teaching

In response to the question, "What should school districts do to improve the recruitment of Aboriginal educators?" most said to find ways to hire more Aboriginal teachers, which ranged from developing an equity policy, having Aboriginal people on the hiring committee, making the hiring of Aboriginal teachers a district priority, and actively recruit from teacher education programs.

"Talk to the education coordinator of the First Nation and recruit there as they do in the public schools. Create a strong bond, trusted path, and they will dare to walk in."

A number of the educational professionals suggested that teacher education programs include the development of a teaching portfolio and practice interviews to help Aboriginal teachers in their job search.

Retention in the Teaching Profession

The multiple roles that Aboriginal educators are expected to perform and that many take on include being a teacher, being an advocate for Aboriginal learners, sensitizing and teaching non-Aboriginal teachers, being an Aboriginal cultural expert, being a change agent for improving Aboriginal education, helping Aboriginal parents with matters that go beyond the education of their children, and helping Aboriginal communities in many different ways. Sometimes these roles result in isolation, systemic racism, and stress overload, thereby hindering the retention of the few Aboriginal teachers who teach in public school districts.

The interviews revealed that retaining Aboriginal teachers in the classroom had been facilitated by several factors that crossed the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual domains. For example, a teacher's strong cultural identity, personal motivation, love for children, involvement in the community and professional associations, and maintaining life-long professional knowledge were all helpful factors

for retention. Other helpful factors were strong support networks with peers, especially other Aboriginal teachers.

Spiritual & Emotional

Many of the helpful and hindering factors of the spiritual and emotional domains were closely interrelated; therefore they have been placed together for discussion purposes. For example, one recurring theme throughout the interviews was that a strong cultural identity and self-worth helped Aboriginal teachers remain in the teaching profession with the confidence and ability to deal with difficult assignments, politics, and other stressors.

Helpful mentors, networks, and personal motivation

The theme of relationships, particularly in terms of mentorship, support, and networks was prevalent in many participants' discussions about teacher retention. Mentoring came in the form of teacher-to-teacher or principal-to-teacher relationships. Some participants commented that the principal's leadership influences the school environment greatly; therefore, having a principal who was supportive of Aboriginal education and First Nations teachers was important in retaining teachers. One participant shared an example of various groups working together to integrate Aboriginal culture across the curriculum. This support involved the district, school administration, fellow teachers, Aboriginal Bands and communities. In this case, all these people working together created a sense of belonging, and helped foster effective working relationships. Another factor important in supporting the retention of Aboriginal teachers was their relationship to the children. A love for children and for teaching, in addition to being an advocate for improving learning for children, provided internal motivation for many of the participants to continue in the teaching profession.

Hindering systemic factors about seniority rules of the collective agreements and isolation

The seniority rules of the collective teachers' agreements present systemic barriers to retaining Aboriginal teachers. Many interview participants witnessed the phenomena of Aboriginal teachers being "last hired, first fired" when funding cuts or decreased student enrollments occurred. One person remembered:

> …there are many stories where our young people, our young teachers would get hired, and then because of the seniority rule they're the first to go…. I think that it's devastating for our young teachers to go through that. In one school district where they said they were going to make a commitment, they hired six young teachers whom I think were dynamic, amazing teachers, and then they all went without a job at the end of the school year. That has to be devastating to anybody, but I think particularly to our people who have a hard time getting jobs.

Another hindering factor was feeling isolated. Often there was only one Aboriginal teacher in a school. Extraordinary expectations were placed upon this teacher, such as being the cultural expert or solving all Aboriginal students' problems. Some felt that they were further isolated when they took up the advocacy role for the students, while others

felt they were responsible for teaching non-Aboriginal teachers about Aboriginal issues without any additional support. Many interview participants felt that the school system did not make any concerted efforts to improve these isolation effects, which they felt, if addressed, would improve the retention of Aboriginal teachers. One person said, "[Aboriginal teachers] are not supported in the system. It's not by design [if they are supported]; it's by chance when people are supported." The following statement further characterizes the complexity of isolation:

> There are certainly major issues around isolation, so teachers do feel alienated. Where you've got maybe one [Aboriginal] teacher at every school…camaraderie is missing. How do we develop a sense of relationship with each other when we are on our little islands? How do we come together? The [Aboriginal] teachers I've talked to have felt discriminated against; they felt they are not empowered. I would like to say, 'Look, this is the public education system in which its design should be to meet the needs of all learners and I should feel like I'm a part of that system. I don't want to be here to say that that system is wrong…and what's my role in changing it?' I think that so often when we get into discussions with First Nations teachers, we're constantly talking about how it is either a racist system or a neo-colonial system and the only way to make it here is to collapse my values and blend in and not bring my identity forward. I think that is a huge waste of talent and energy.

Physical

Helpful expectations that motivate and inspire

One educator felt that the expectation placed upon him to contribute to the advancement of Aboriginal education inspired him to complete a teacher education program, enter the teaching profession, and continue his teaching role. The expectation was from an Aboriginal educational leader who believed in his potential and abilities and who told him he would be in a position to make a difference at the community level. He said that through this leader's encouragement, his own horizons had been expanded, not in terms of "crystallizing a vision but being part of a vision of Aboriginal education." The expectations to become a teacher and to improve Aboriginal education can be inspiring, as noted in the example above, but they do add extra pressure to Aboriginal teachers. Some interviewees also felt that hiring local teachers to work within the community was also beneficial in retaining teachers since they lived and worked within their support network.

Hindering pressure of expectations results in extraordinary responsibilities for Aboriginal teachers

Interviewees and survey respondents reported that Aboriginal parents believe that those who have advanced education have the skills and knowledge to help them with personal matters and with issues related to their children. They also said that Aboriginal community leaders want more help with addressing pressing community educational needs. An often-voiced concern was that Aboriginal communities placed numerous and difficult expectations on their own teachers than they did on non-Aboriginal teachers, as

indicated by this statement: “Your people are harder on you as a community member than they are on a non-community member.”

One survey question asked about the level of agreement or disagreement about expectations, which received a high agreement rating. Of 48 valid responses, 85% indicated that they agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “Classroom Aboriginal educators are expected to do more than other educators – they are expected to be expert on all Aboriginal issues and act as advocates for Aboriginal students as well as teach,” while 10% were neutral, and 5% disagreed/strongly disagreed. One educator describes her experience of being placed in the cultural expert role:

> I was surprised that I was put into [the role of expert] by virtue of who I was…an Aboriginal young professional by my peers. I became a cultural expert instantly and that concerned me a great deal because I couldn’t be a cultural expert for all Aboriginal people or spokesperson for all Aboriginal people.

When Aboriginal teachers are expected to take on multiple roles of cultural expert and Aboriginal advocate, the result is that some non-Aboriginal teachers and administrators step away from their responsibilities. Some interviewees observed situations where non-Aboriginal teachers asked the Aboriginal teachers to contact their students’ parents in order to tell the parents about problems their child was having in the non-Aboriginal teacher’s classroom. The observance of the lack of Aboriginal men in the teaching profession is another hindrance in that such an absence discourages other Aboriginal males from seeing themselves in education as a viable career path.

Intellectual

Helpful professional knowledge for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers, and increasing Aboriginal knowledge in all teacher education programs

Attending conferences and engaging in continuing professional development were suggested ways to keep up to date with the innovations in curriculum and pedagogy. These professional development activities also served to help teachers deal with stress and to maintain collegial relationships with colleagues in schools throughout the province. Participation in provincial educational specialist associations, Aboriginal education organizations, and British Columbia Teachers’ Federation initiatives were viewed as ways of gaining knowledge about various institutions and teachers’ rights and responsibilities. Engagement in making institutional change felt empowering to some individuals, even though they acknowledged that making critical changes is slow and difficult.

Another helpful-knowledge related factor was having non-Aboriginal colleagues who knew about Aboriginal history and culture. A number of interview participants mentioned that non-Aboriginal educational colleagues, in Kindergarten to Grade 12 and teacher education programs, who were sensitized and knowledgeable about Aboriginal history and culture contributed in significant ways to Aboriginal teachers’ retention. They acted as allies, support, and change agents for Aboriginal education. One problem was that there were too few non-Aboriginal educators with this knowledge and agency. The

results of one survey question reinforce the belief that there should be a least one mandatory course for all pre-service teachers. Of 48 valid responses, 90% indicated that they agreed/strongly agreed that a course should be compulsory, 5% were neutral, and 5% disagreed. Along with one other question, this item received the highest level of agreement throughout the entire survey (see Figure 11). Some interviewees mentioned that Aboriginal knowledge should also be "woven throughout the teacher education program."

Hindering influence of systemic racism that marginalizes Aboriginal teachers

Initial interviewees often talked about Aboriginal educators being marginalized and disrespected by other teachers who perceived them as less capable or believed they got a teaching position "because they were Aboriginal." A few survey respondents noted that they did not identify themselves as Aboriginal when applying for teaching positions for these reasons. One participant characterized these perceptions as part of systemic racism:

> …it goes back to systemic racism and how as educational professionals, we have to do more or go above and beyond to prove our credibility.
>
> I still don't get measured against the same standard as everyone else. I am made to feel like I have preferential treatment because I'm First Nations.

Another agreement or disagreement survey statement questioned the perceptions of Aboriginal teacher education programs: "Aboriginal teacher education programs are not respected in the education community." Of 49 valid responses, 55% said they strongly agreed/agreed, 25% were neutral, and 20% said they disagreed/strongly disagreed. Many of the interviewees mentioned the problematic nature of perceptions that Aboriginal-specific teacher education programs were not "as good" as general teacher education programs. Perceptions of this nature contribute to further marginalization of Aboriginal teachers.

Recommendations from research participants about improving retention in the teaching profession

In response to the question, "What should school districts do to improve the retention of Aboriginal education?" more respondents said that supports, mentoring, and networking along with validating the strengths and contributions of Aboriginal teachers were important for retention.

The educational professionals also gave strong endorsement to establishing and maintaining a support group or network for Aboriginal teachers. This type of support starts at the school level with leadership from the principal. Many felt that school districts needed to be responsible for developing mentorship and support programs for new and continuing Aboriginal teachers. It was also suggested that Aboriginal teacher education programs could provide opportunities for alumni/cohorts to gather to share and discuss their challenges and successes.

"Celebrate the excellent job that most teachers do, not only Aboriginal ones…. The sooner that excellence in teaching is acknowledged—and we do not teach for this—and valued by parents and the public in general, the higher the profile teaching will have for all teachers of whatever origin. Thirty-eight years in the classroom – nine in First Nations Schools. I have not generally been identified as a person of Aboriginal descent but that does not change who I am. The recognition by students and parents for the caring job I do has been the reason I continue, after some 38 years in the classroom."

Some concluding stories and thoughts

Stories and perspectives told by three Aboriginal educators who have vast teaching experiences in the public school system reinforce the many helpful and hindering factors that were presented in the wholistic framework analysis. Aboriginal life experience stories invite the listener/reader to make meaning of them by engaging spiritually, emotionally, physically, or intellectually. The relationships among place, individual, family, and community may enter the engagement.

This first story is from an Aboriginal educator who has spent 30 years in the education profession and who has worked in a variety of positions, mainly in public schools. In response to the question, "Was there any particular time that you can recall that cemented your commitment to staying in the teaching field?" this person said:

> I guess it was way back when I worked as home – school coordinator, childcare worker, teacher aide …before I even went into teacher education. I had a lot of encouragement from a couple of non-First Nations teachers who just said, "My goodness you are good at what you do, you need to be a teacher." I was encouraged to pursue teacher education. So that's how things got rolling.
>
> And then it goes back to some personal issues, as well. Some stuff happened in my life, in my family. Then I just decided that, somebody tried to take control of my life, and now I am just going to take it back and move ahead.
>
> I remember the first classroom position I got. One-third of my class was First Nations and just seeing that connection - when I told them I was First Nations and when I told them about my crest; what a difference it made. What a difference it made.
>
> [Now], 30 years later I am still hearing and seeing what it means to our kids when they have First Nations teachers who are teaching First Nations content and the First Nations language.

The second educator has worked in the public school system as a teacher on call, transition high school teacher, area counsellor, alternate school teacher, and regular classroom teacher for almost ten years. The following story is in response to the enduring attachment question posed this way: "Was there a point of attachment to teaching where you say, no matter how hard it gets, this is where I want to be and where I want to stay?"

> I think what happened for me was my first year, not the subbing part, not the area counsellor part, but my first year in the alternate program where I had a

> continuing contract. I had kids who were amazing. They were really challenging, nobody wanted to work with them, but I just loved them. I just loved them. And I still do, I'm still in contact with some of them.
>
> This one time the kids said to me, you know [*name withheld*] – 'How come you're always smiling all the time, you're always smiling and seem so happy all the time. Are you stoned?' And I'm thinking, 'No, I'm not.' But I said, 'I do love coming to work every day.' They said, 'Yeah, we know that about you.' And they said, 'but you're going to sick of it, you're going to sick of us.' I said, 'No, I'm not.' I think it was that little challenge.
>
> The kids would start to tell me their stories. I felt good there. I think that's where the attachment happened. No matter what [other difficult barriers were placed before me I said to myself] 'I'm here for these kids, it doesn't matter what happens.' But it was because of those kids, that's what made me attach; my relationship with them. And it wasn't just them, I coached Grade 8 girls' basketball, I did all kinds of stuff in that school, it was the kids that hooked me.

The third Aboriginal educator, who has spent at least 25 years in the education profession, reinforces important considerations about hopes for future Aboriginal teachers and unfinished work for the public school system in order to have more Aboriginal teachers entering and staying in its schools. In response to the question about remembering a critical incident or time that cemented one's enduring attachment to teaching. This individual said:

> I would hope that we are now in an era where our young teachers can be in teaching because they love teaching and that they can practice their profession. I think that for the most part, those of us who have been in Aboriginal education are there for a greater reason than teaching—fortunately. I think that if people wouldn't have entered the field with a great commitment, something that's consistent with our way of being, [they would not have stayed]. I don't think that we choose a profession, really. I think that that responsibility to do what needs to be done for the community, the greater community not just the [specific] community, gets placed [upon you].

This same individual had a critique of the term "enduring attachment" as it applied to teaching in the public school system that reflects many of its hindering systemic effects.

> Attachment. I bet if you talk to people who have been in education all their lives that they are there in spite of all the barriers that have been thrown at them. People are survivors. That term, 'enduring attachment', for me, feels like it's coming from a Western way of thinking. [It seems] that, somehow we have a choice, and I think for us it's how persistent can you be in staying in your profession, in spite of all the barriers. How can you stay attached to your profession and endure everything that they've thrown at you to become unattached to it.

The experiences and perspectives of all the research participants have provided a rich and vast overview of what helped and what hindered Aboriginal peoples' access to teacher education programs, completion of these programs, recruitment to teaching appointments and their early years of teaching, and retention in the teaching/education profession. The next section continues an in-depth examination of the survey responses in relation to the education and career paths of Aboriginal people.

IV. Survey Results

Introduction

This section of the report relies principally upon a survey conducted among currently registered and former education students who attended BC post-secondary institutions or who teach in the BC school system.[9] This survey was designed after the in-depth interviews with key respondents in the education system, and was approved by the project Steering Committee.

In addition to the survey, this section will refer to data from the in-depth interviews, earlier surveys conducted by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF), as well as data from the 2001 Census and the Ministry of Education.

The structure of the survey was designed to probe the experience of BC's Aboriginal educators as they moved through a series of stages and transitions in their educational and professional lives. At each stage or transition, the questionnaire was designed to understand that experience and look at barriers that the respondent confronted. The research looked at:

- The high school experience
- The transition to post-secondary, including extended periods out of the educational system before proceeding with further education
- Post-secondary experience
- The transition to employment after post-secondary
- The progress (or lack of progress) to long-term retention as an educator

These stages and transitions were designed to illuminate the paths taken by our sample of Aboriginal educators and to put the obstacles they faced into the context of their career and educational trajectory.

We will begin with the characteristics of the Aboriginal educators who responded to our survey. This will serve both to show the diversity of the respondents and to give us a basis for comparison with other measures of BC's Aboriginal educators and population.

Demographics

The respondent sample of 65 educators proved to be very diverse, reflecting the diversity of Aboriginal educators in British Columbia.

The first question asked about the respondent's Aboriginal identity. The most common response was First Nations (status) with almost 75%[10] of all responses. This was followed

[9] The details of the process used to contact potential participants are outlined in Appendix S. One important reminder about this survey is the fact that it is being conducted almost exclusively among those who made it through the education system. In that sense, they succeeded within the terms of that system and may be less prone to criticizing the system.

[10] With a total sample of 65, the confidence limits are very broad (±12.1% at the 95% confidence limit). This means there is one chance in 20 that differences of 12% are the product of chance rather than

by First Nations (non-status) at 5% and Métis at 20%. These numbers show slightly more First Nations (75% versus 69.6% in the census[11]) and slightly fewer Métis respondents (20% versus 26.0% in the census) than the most recent census; however, the correspondence to the Aboriginal population is still fairly close.

Women outnumbered men among the respondents by 85 to 15. This sample is slightly more female than the overall provincial average for teachers (68.3% female, 31.7% male),[12] and more female than the most recent Census data for teachers in British Columbia (69.3% female, 30.7% male) but may well reflect a higher participation rate among Aboriginal women in education.

The Aboriginal educators who responded to the survey represented all ages. With the inclusion of current students, 5% of them were under the age of 25. The largest group (35%) was between 35 and 44, while sizeable groups were 45 to 54 (25%) or 25 to 34 (20%). In comparison with all teachers, the sample of Aboriginal educators does not show the huge bulge of teachers between the ages of 45 and 59 (54% of all BC teachers in 2004/2005).[13]

To look more closely at the representativeness of the Aboriginal educators who responded to the survey, we can compare the age distribution of the sample (with current education students removed to enhance comparability) to the Ministry of Education figures for all teachers in the public school system (just cited) and to the results of a custom tabulation of the 2001 Census.[14] The results are displayed in Figure 3 below. They show the age distribution of 'All Public' schoolteachers, 'All Aboriginal' teachers in BC from the 2001 Census and, finally, the 'Aboriginal Survey' respondents from this study.

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reflecting real differences between groups. To avoid the impression of undue precision, responses have been rounded to the nearest 5%. Tables may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

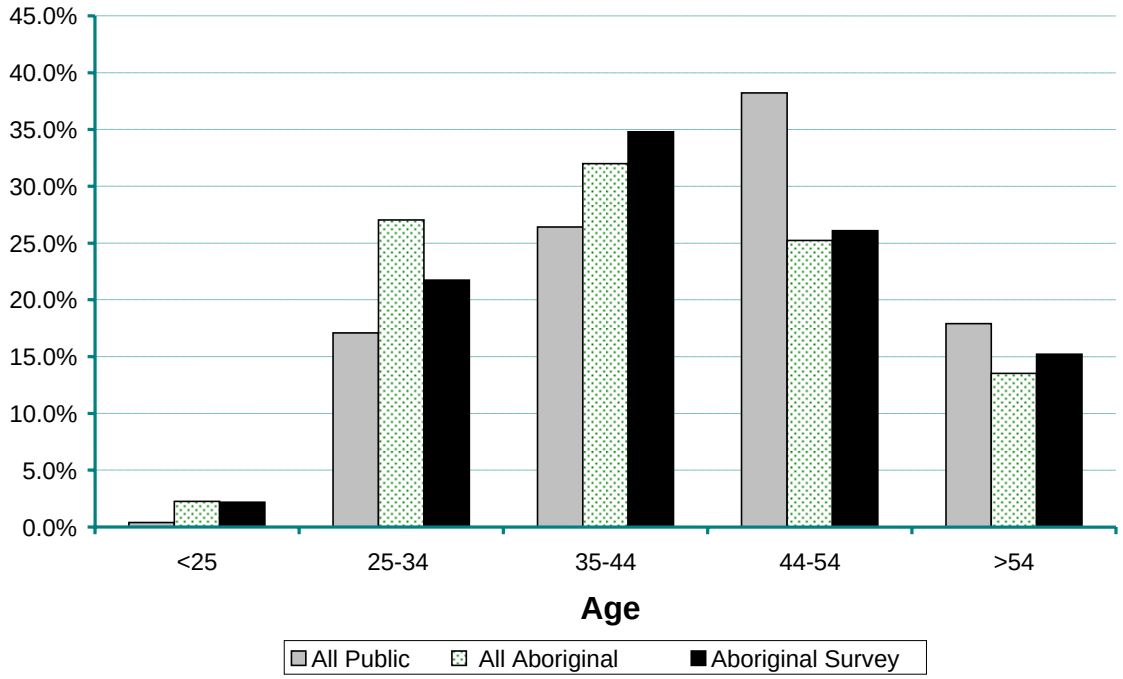
[11] The 2001 Census data come from a very useful BC Stats publication series on Aboriginal results from the Census. The specific report, BC Aboriginal Identity Population, discusses the counts for and differences between 'Aboriginal identity' and 'Aboriginal ancestry.'
www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen01/facts/cff0108.PDF

[12] B.C. Ministry of Education Standard Report 2063, Average Gross Salary of Educators (Base plus all Allowances) by Gender and Position within District (September 2000).

[13] Information Department, BC Ministry of Education Average Teacher/Administrator Age by School District (February 2005) http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/keyinfo/pdfs/ave_age.pdf

[14] The 2001 Census tabulation looked at the age distribution for Occupational Code Category E13 (Secondary and elementary school teachers and educational counsellors) among Aboriginal respondents in BC. Unlike the Ministry number, the Census includes both private and band schools. The survey sample differs from the other two measures in that it potentially includes a number of retired teachers. If we assume that 1 or 2 respondents in the 55+ age category of the survey are retired, it makes the results for the sample remarkably close to the age distribution from the Census.

Figure 3
Age Distribution of BC Educators



While the Aboriginal populations are not identical, they are very close. They confirm that the Aboriginal educator survey sample is very similar to the Census count of Aboriginal educators in terms of age distribution. Further, the comparison shows that, just as the Aboriginal population is young and growing rapidly province-wide, the Aboriginal educators overall and in the sample are significantly younger than all currently employed educators in the province.

Where Were They Raised?

When asked in what province they were raised, 80% of respondents said BC while 20% said they were raised in another province. The preponderance of BC-raised Aboriginal educators should not be a surprise since the Canadian Aboriginal population has relatively low inter-provincial mobility. Further, the surveys were distributed to potential respondents primarily through BC university and college faculties, creating an inevitable BC bias in the selection of potential respondents.

The respondents were asked where they were raised and spent most of their time through primary and secondary school and were given the following options:

- in or near a major centre like Vancouver, Prince George, Kamloops, or Nanaimo
- in or near a smaller city or town like Terrace, Campbell River, Quesnel, or Pemberton/Mount Currie
- in a small or isolated community

The most common response was "in or near a smaller city" (40%), followed by a major centre (35%), and finally small or isolated communities (25%). This is less urban than the province as a whole, however it does more closely reflect the Aboriginal population of BC.

Respondents were then asked whether that community was on or off a reserve. A solid majority (75%) said the community was off-reserve, while 25% said the community was on-reserve. Remove the non-status and Métis respondents and approximately 30% of status respondents were raised on-reserve. This contrasts with the overall provincial data that has just under 45% of "Registered Indians" living on-reserve.[15]

Family Experience with Post-Secondary Education

As a final question on background, respondents were asked whether anyone in their immediate or extended family had attended college or university. Half (50%) said that someone in their immediate or extended family had attended a post-secondary institution. Because of the inclusion of both immediate and extended family, there is no easy comparison to the whole provincial population.

One of the reasons for asking this question was to ascertain whether having a family member who had attended a post-secondary institution made a difference to young people as they tried to gain information about attending post-secondary. The findings showed that respondents who had a family member attend college or university had only a small tendency to say that they had less trouble getting information about applying to college or university than those who did not.

The real difference between the groups was in response to whether they had used family members for assistance or information in applying to colleges or universities. For those who had experienced family members to turn to for advice (particularly those who went directly to post-secondary after high school), those family members were the most helpful source of information (30% of respondents said they were "very helpful"). For the others, 50% did not use family members at all for advice or assistance, and only 10% found family "very helpful."

Overall, this shows that having extended or immediate family to turn to for the benefit of their experience with applying to post-secondary institutions is a preferred route. For those without post-secondary experience in the family, there are other sources of information that can be and are pursued. Overall, the admissions process is slightly more difficult for the latter group. Having experienced family members makes the admissions process easier, but others certainly compensate.

[15] BC Stats, 2001 Census Fast Facts: BC Aboriginal Identity Population p. 2.

Education Paths

Although this report will look at the high school experience of survey respondents in more detail later, the following section outlines briefly the educational paths taken by survey respondents.

First, 85% of respondents report finishing high school 'in a regular high school program,' while only 15% report "attending a course like Adult Basic Education (ABE) to complete high school course work."

The transition to post-secondary was not quite as direct however. There was an even split between the half who went directly to college or university after completing high school and the half who took time out for work or other things. For those who took a period away from schooling after high school graduation, the time periods varied widely. Table 3 summarizes this.

Table 3
Time between High School Graduation and Beginning Post-Secondary Education

Time (Years)	Percent
Went directly to post-secondary	50
1	15
2–5	10
6–14	15
15–25	10

Reasons for Delaying Post-Secondary

To better understand this transition, a number of follow-up questions were asked of survey respondents who had more than one year between leaving high school and entering a post-secondary institution. Perhaps the most revealing information came from the simple open-ended question that asked, "What was the main reason you did not go directly from high school to further education?" The responses tended to fall into three basic groups.

For the first group of respondents, their education experience through high school had been difficult and they had no desire to continue, as exemplified in this response: "I wanted out of school so bad and couldn't think about leaving one (high school) to go to another one (post-secondary)." Others talked about "years of stigmatic training from residential schools", "I lacked confidence", or "I felt I was a failure academically." For this group of learners, their schooling experience in high school had undermined them and deterred them from pursuing further education.

The second group were undecided about their future and had typically worked and raised families. Their responses gave a sense that other things simply happened that took

priority rather than further education. Some of these respondents talked about personal issues that affected them. These ranged from the death of a mother and the need to raise eight siblings to the aftermath of the residential schools and its psychological impact.

> *"I had attended university or college in two-to-three-year spurts, often ten years apart. Many students like myself attend college directly after high school then find it is not the way they want to go right away and take a few years off."*

Finally, the third and largest group were respondents who simply had not decided what they wanted to do and often needed to mature. "[I] wasn't sure what my 'calling' was." "I needed time to mature and get to know what I really wanted." "I was not interested in my career at the time."

These responses reveal a combination of typical reasons for delaying schooling – indecision about one's future, the desire to take some time out, and so on – mixed with issues like racism and a hostile school environment that particularly affect Aboriginal learners.

Although many respondents who did not go directly to post-secondary indicated that their reason for doing so was that they were not ready, the survey also asked a specific question on this issue: "[l]ooking back, do you think that you were better able to deal with college or university because of the time and experience gained by waiting to take further education?" Responses were overwhelming: 85% said they benefited from the delay.

While this does not mean that none of these learners could have gone straight to post-secondary and succeeded, it does point out the individual differences between respondents and the diverse appropriate paths that are taken.

Access to Further Education in the Community

Turning back briefly to the transition from high school to post-secondary, the survey results offered further information about the experience of respondents. The survey asked whether respondents had to leave their community to attend the post-secondary program of choice. Those able to stay in the community at the beginning of the program were then prompted to answer a follow-up question about whether they were able to complete their program in the same community.

The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4
Did You Have to Leave for Your Post-Secondary Program?

	Percent
Stayed in community for full program	25
Stayed at first, had to leave to finish program	15
Had to leave for all post-secondary education	60

Table 4 shows that three-quarters of the respondents could not complete their post-secondary education without leaving their home community. There are significant financial issues that arise when a student has to leave their home community to take further education.

Not surprisingly, there was a tendency for those Aboriginal students who had been raised primarily in major centres to be able to attend and complete their program in their community. Those who were raised in a small or isolated community were most likely to have to leave (75%) for all their post-secondary education. Additional financial burdens are obviously part of having to leave one's community to attend school. This is one of the barriers which location imposes on Aboriginal learners.

Where Did They First Attend College or University?

The survey participants were asked about their initial registration in college or university. Their responses reflect the diversity of the provincial education system and of Aboriginal teachers who have gone through that system. The most frequently mentioned response was UBC/NITEP, although that accounted for only 30% of all responses. As NITEP has been the dominant, specialized program for Aboriginal educators for three decades, this dominance is to be expected.

Beyond UBC and NITEP, there is a remarkably broad set of post-secondary experiences. Almost every college, university-college, or university in the province is represented. In addition, almost 10% attended Alberta schools, while the more unusual responses include an American university and a Quebec CEGEP.

Looking at the programs in which respondents were first registered, the dominant response was 'education' or NITEP, jointly accounting for almost a third of responses. Given that almost a third of respondents came through the NITEP program, this is hardly surprising. There is a broad mix beyond that, however, with three different groups: Adult Basic Education (ABE) or University Transfer (15%), general undergraduate programs (35%), or more specific certifications like "aviation technology" or "dietary service technician" (15%).

These responses make two important points. First, the respondents are not dominated by NITEP graduates, despite that program's prominence as a well-established and large

program designed for Aboriginal educators. Second, as is demonstrated through the survey responses, there are many diverse paths which bring Aboriginal educators to teaching. Some go directly through NITEP or a similar program, while others take different paths, but ones that are fairly typical for all educators. Finally, some come from rather unexpected backgrounds and experiences.

Degree Completion at Many Ages

The in-depth interviews conducted during the course of this research study revealed that many Aboriginal educators may have begun post-secondary education but then left for varying periods of time. The surveys showed a very broad range of times between when the respondents completed high school and when they received their highest degree or certification, however, what the results did not reveal are as direct a measure of time between high school completion and their first certification as a professional educator.

Aboriginal educators come from a range of diverse educational experiences. The survey asked respondents to list the program(s) they were attending or had completed. While almost all respondents listed some form of education degree, there were also a number of other primary degrees. For example, 15% mentioned a BA, and 5% mentioned a BSc. For a complete listing of respondents' programs, see Appendix S.

With the range of respondents from current students through well-experienced teachers, there was an equally broad array of educational certifications. The sample ranged from students currently taking their first degree, through to almost one-quarter who have Master's or Doctoral degrees.

Table 5 below calculates the age at which each respondent received his or her highest degree.

Table 5
Age when Highest Degree was Completed

Age	Percent
21–25	15
26–30	20
31–35	10
36–40	15
41–45	20
46–50	10
51+	5

Because some of the respondents are currently students, the degrees of some of the younger respondents refer to high school certificates or similar forms of pre-professional certification. The most striking thing about this table is the diversity of ages represented.

This table substantiates the impression heard throughout the personal interviews that there is often a lengthy time before Aboriginal learners begin their professional education.[16]

After this overview of the survey respondents, this report will now look in detail at their educational experiences and transitions on the path to becoming educators.

High School Experience

What Sort of High School Did Respondents Attend?

The following tables offer a quick picture of the types of schools respondents attended. Overall, they attended public high schools across a wide range of sizes, but with relatively few fellow Aboriginal students.

Table 6
Type of High School Attended

	Percent (multiple responses permitted)[17]
Public school	85
Band school	5
Other	15

When looking at the low percentage for Band schools, we should remember that some Aboriginal students may begin their education at Band schools and move into the public system for high school because band schools do not all offer high school completion.

Table 7
Size of School: How Many Students in Grade 12?

Number	**Percent**
≤ 50	30
51–200	40
≥ 201	30

[16] There is one important caveat to this observation. Canadian education degrees differ from virtually all other forms of university education in that many educators pursue further certification in mid or late career. Graduate degrees in most areas tend to be granted at the beginning or prior to career employment. In so far as the highest degree reported in Table 5 is a graduate degree, the age skew of the respondents is not unusual.

[17] The total percentage exceeds 100% because respondents were asked to mark all the types that applied to them through their time in high school.

Table 8
Aboriginal Student Presence in Your High School

Description	Percent
Substantial Aboriginal majority	10
Many Aboriginals, many non-Aboriginals	5
Many Aboriginals, but more non-Aboriginals	20
Few Aboriginals	70

Tables 6, 7, and 8 show that the Aboriginal educators who responded to the survey come from a variety of schools that broadly reflect the current Aboriginal student enrollment in BC. Earlier work in this study[18] revealed that Aboriginal students as a group are enrolled overwhelmingly in the provincial public system. As well, while there are a number of school districts that have very substantial proportions of Aboriginal students, these districts tend to have fewer students overall. Conversely, many Aboriginal students come from the larger school districts, like those in the Lower Mainland where the proportion of Aboriginal students is low. As an example, there is the seeming paradox of having the second largest number (2,727) of Aboriginal students in Surrey (SD 36), a school district with a low proportion (3.8%) of Aboriginal students.

Collectively, Tables 6, 7, and 8 reveal the following points:

- The sample who responded to the survey broadly reflects Aboriginal students in the province.
- While discussions of issues related to Aboriginal students and educators sometimes generalize a picture of those students coming from relatively remote, small schools, many Aboriginal students come from major urban centres.
- There is a geographic skew. Aboriginal students are more likely to attend smaller, less urban schools than their non-Aboriginal counterparts; however, the graduate of a remote, small, largely Aboriginal school is in a small minority among Aboriginal graduates. The modal Aboriginal student from the survey attended a mid-sized or large urban school in which they were part of a small minority.

Rating Their High School Experience

All of the respondents were asked to assess the performance of the high school(s) they had attended. The assessments covered a range of academic, social, and cultural topics. For each of the following issues, respondents were asked how good a job their high school had done:

[18] From the "Looking at the Distribution of Aboriginal Students and Teachers" analysis of the distribution in the BC system.

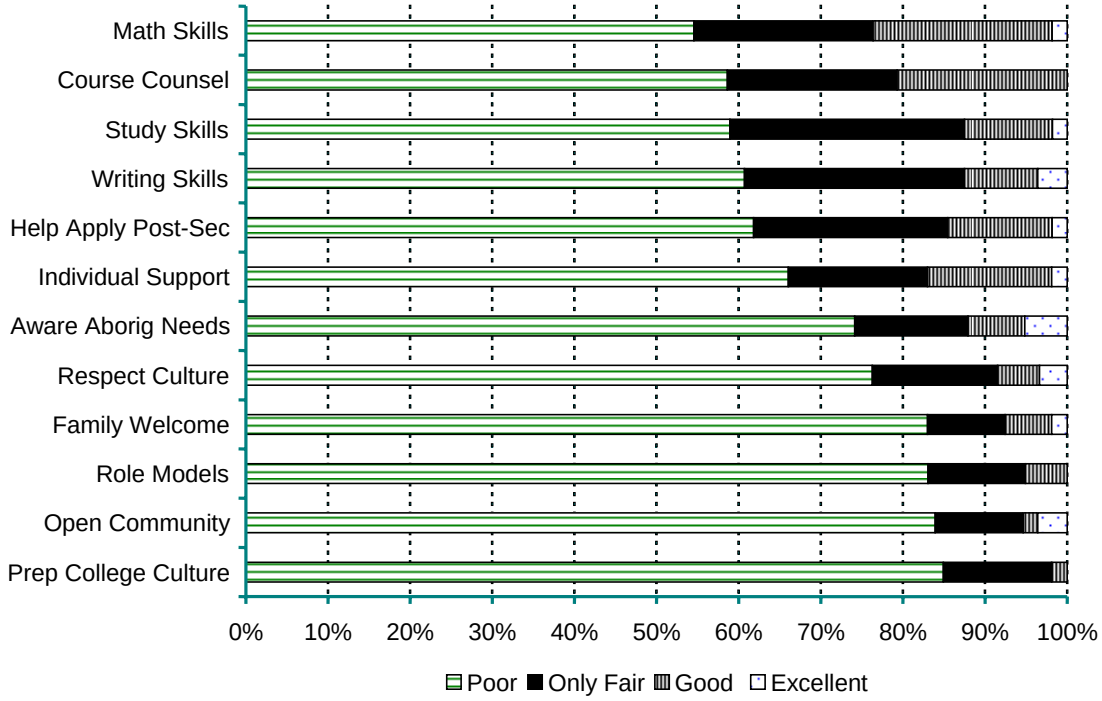
- Being aware and sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal students.
- Ensuring that Aboriginal students had the writing skills needed for college or university.
- Ensuring that Aboriginal students understood what courses they needed to take in high school to be eligible for university or college courses they might want to take.
- Creating a climate of respect for Aboriginal culture.
- Ensuring that Aboriginal students had the math skills needed for college or university.
- Helping Aboriginal students deal with the application process for college and university courses.
- Providing strong role models for Aboriginal students.
- Ensuring that Aboriginal students had the study and learning skills needed for college and university.
- Being open to the whole Aboriginal community and working with parents and community Elders.
- Providing individual counselling and support for Aboriginal students.
- Preparing Aboriginal students for the cultural and social changes faced when going on to college or university.
- Making immediate and extended family feel welcome and at home in the school.

The results were very discouraging.

The majority of respondents rated their high school with the lowest possible rating ("poor") in every one of these areas. In the least bad area (ensuring Aboriginal students had the math skills they needed), 50% said "poor."

The results are summarized in Figure 4.

Figure 4
Rating High School Performance



Any discussion of the high schools' performance must keep in mind the overwhelmingly negative assessments. Any aspect that is "better" is only so in the context of the overall poor assessment. Even in the context of very poor overall assessments, Figure 4 shows a clear division between two different types of issues.

Of the 12 variables assessed, the six variables which receive the worst ratings reflect cultural sensitivity and openness or awareness of some of the unique challenges facing Aboriginal learners. In contrast, while given poor ratings, the six variables that look at either specific skill sets (e.g., "study skills") or activities that would be part of all students' experience (e.g., dealing with the college application process) receive the least bad ratings.

Looking at these ratings using factor analysis, respondents could be broken into two groups: those who rated their high schools very low across all variables, and those who rated their schools very low for culturally sensitive variables but gave fair ratings for general attributes or specific academic skills.

"The experiences that created success were the individual teachers themselves, not the school climate. Out-of-school factors like youth mentors helped as well."

Although the sample sizes were small, there was a consistent tendency for the high schools with relatively few Aboriginal students to be rated much more poorly on the variables related to cultural sensitivity and openness to the Aboriginal community. A comment from one respondent who had attended a largely non-Aboriginal school summed up the issue for some; when asked, "What could the school do to improve the achievement and success of Aboriginal students?" she replied, "Recognize that Aboriginal people exist!"

In contrast, there was no consistent pattern that differentiated the high schools in terms of their performance on the more narrowly academic goals like promoting math or writing skills.

As a final facet of looking at high school experience, respondents were asked whether they had an educational professional at school who was particularly important to them or who served as a role model. Two-thirds (65%) said there had been such a person; however, when asked whether that person was Aboriginal, only 10% of the respondents said "yes."

Overall, in contrast with the commonly held view of educators as people who liked school and who entered the profession to share their positive experiences with others, the Aboriginal educators in the sample had highly unsatisfactory experiences.

Racism and Respect for Aboriginal Cultures

As mentioned above, some of the lowest ratings the survey respondents gave their high schools were in the areas of cultural respect and sensitivity. One survey question went beyond an unsupportive climate to ask specifically, "Do you believe that Aboriginal students faced racism in your school?" Those who said there had been racism were then asked how frequently racism occurred.

Responses are summarized in Table 9.

"It made me more determined to prove them wrong – and I did. It made me extremely determined that they would not subject my children to the same racist treatment."

Table 9
How Frequently Did Aboriginal Students Face Racism in Your High School?

Description	Percent
There was no racism	25
There was an occasional incident	20
Racist incidents occurred once a week or less	15
Racism was an everyday occurrence	45

There was no consistent pattern for schools with a higher or lower proportion of Aboriginal students to have more or less racism. Overall, these data show that the respondents attended schools, which, for the most part, showed little cultural sensitivity and where Aboriginal students faced racism.

The Transition to Post-Secondary

As stated earlier, survey results showed an even division between those who went directly to post-secondary and those who took more than a year out before making the transition. Similarly, only a minority of Aboriginal educators were able stay in their home communities, either to start or complete their training.

The Paths of Those who did not go directly to Post-Secondary

In looking at the transition to post-secondary, the first step will be to focus on the students who took more than a year out between high school and post-secondary education. When these learners returned, they took three different paths in equal numbers:

- 1/3 went to a college to enrol in university transfer academic courses
- 1/3 enrolled directly in a university program
- 1/3 did a high school equivalency or completion course

In the in-depth interview phase, there had been some discussion about the experience and future potential of encouraging teachers' assistants or support workers to become teachers themselves. To pursue this topic, this group was asked whether any of their post-high school employment had been in the school system. Ten percent (10%) of those who did not go directly to post-secondary (or 5% of the whole sample) said they had been employed in the school system. While this is not an insignificant number, there are fewer teachers who have pursued this path than some had assumed in the in-depth interviews. This raises the issues of barriers and the degree to which they keep people in positions like teachers' assistant from being able to pursue further studies and get more senior credentials.

The Admissions Process

Consistently during the in-depth interviews, participants talked about the difficulty in applying to post-secondary programs and the importance of outreach on the part of the program coordinators/staff as a way to counteract this difficulty. There was particular concern over the difficulties faced by those who had been out of the formal education system for some years, as they would not have easy access to the support and counselling available to high school students. Both direct entrants to post-secondary and those who took an indirect path were asked how difficult it had been to get needed information and application forms.

The results are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10
How Difficult to Get and Fill out Application Forms

Difficulty	Direct Entrants	Indirect Entrants
Very difficult	5	5
Fairly difficult	30	15
Fairly easy	50	60
Very easy	15	25

Table 10 shows that concern about the application process was only shared by a relatively small minority among the survey respondents. It was particularly interesting that those who did not go directly to post-secondary found the process to be less difficult than those who went directly. It may be that the complexity of bureaucracy and forms in everyday life prepared those people for the university application process.

Despite these rather optimistic results, the in-depth interviews still revealed concerns about the difficulty in making the leap to post-secondary. If the formal application process itself was not the barrier for respondents, then perhaps more scrutiny needs to be placed on the social, financial, and cultural barriers that have to be surmounted. In that context, the repeated emphasis in the in-depth interviews on the importance of personal contact with the institution and its people may reflect cultural and personal rather than systemic barriers.

Sources of Information and Advice

The following section deals with the various sources of information about applications, programming, and funding for post-secondary education. Both those who went directly from high school (direct entrants) and those who spent more than a year out (indirect entrants) were asked whether they used each of the following sources of information and, if used, how helpful they were.

- Staff in the program you applied to
- The admissions office at the college or university
- A Band education counsellor
- Family members
- High school counsellors or teachers
- Educators you knew in your community
- First Nations or Aboriginal support office at the college or university

While there were slight differences between the descriptions used for the direct entrants and the indirect entrants, the results are broadly comparable. These are displayed in Figures 5 and 6.

Figure 5
Indirect Entrants: How Helpful and Informative when Applying?

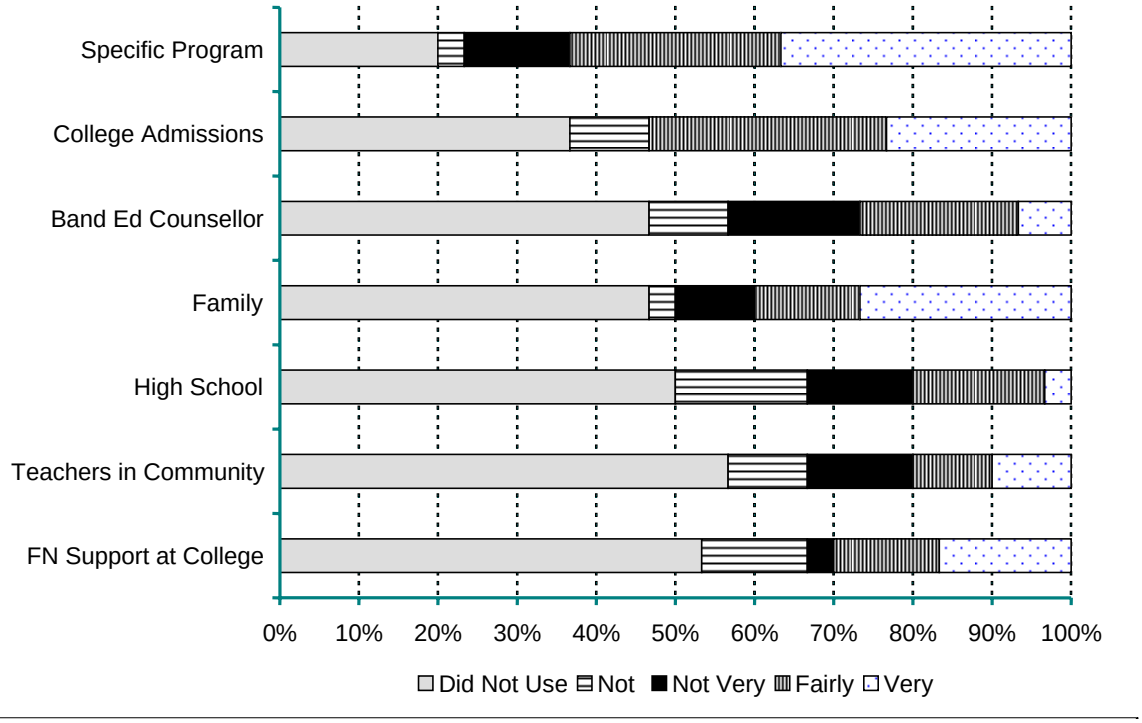
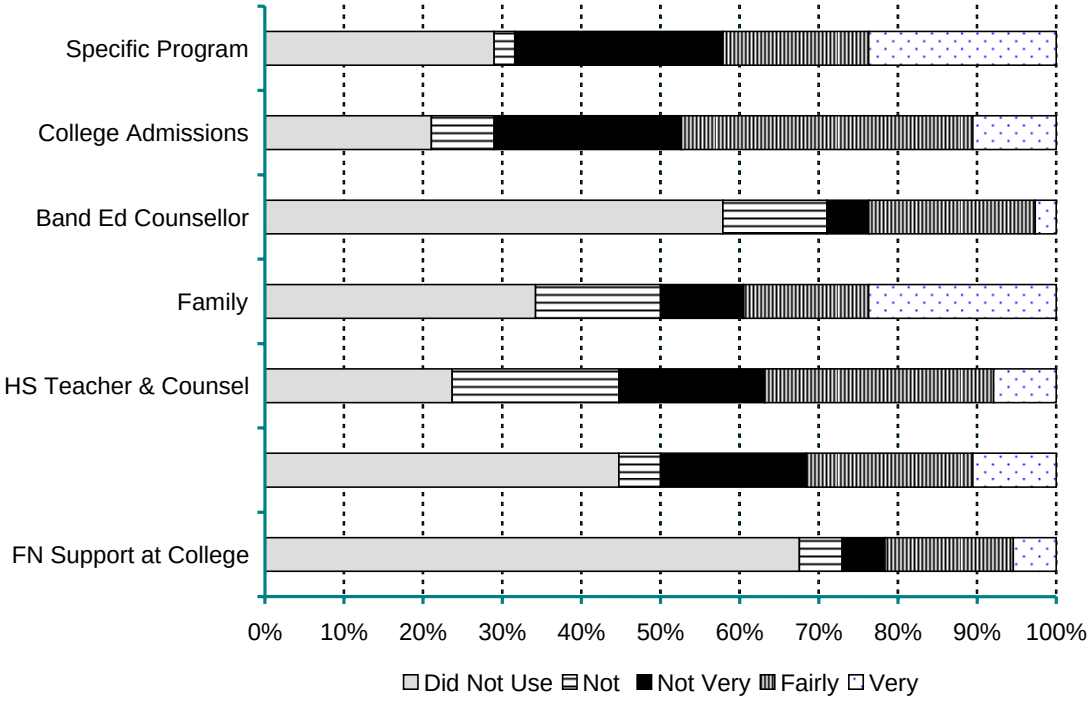


Figure 6
Direct Entrants: How Helpful and Informative?



Both the similarities and the differences between these Figures 5 and 6 are informative.

Looking at those who had been out of the education system for some time, the importance of the program to which they had applied and the helpfulness generally ascribed to people in that program is readily apparent. This is hardly surprising since the indirect entrant has often spent a period of time before deciding what to do. Once that decision has been made, the indirect entrant is more likely to be focussed on a specific program than on education in general.

In contrast with that approach, those going directly into post-secondary from high school focus more on the educational structures and institutions as a whole. Their principal sources of information are the general admissions offices at the institution and the advice and supervision of their high school organization – the teachers and counsellors.

While about half of those who had been out of school for some time did use their high school or school district for some information, it was of limited utility. The surveys revealed that a minority of indirect entrants went to educators they knew in their community for advice, it turned out to be about the same proportion as for the high school students who went directly to post-secondary. Band education counsellors were

more likely to be consulted by those who had been out of school, although they were not seen to be particularly helpful.[19]

The responses about "family members" are particularly interesting. For indirect entrants, half did not consult them; however, they were easily the most helpful and informative of all the groups tested. A similar pattern, although less polarized, is apparent with the direct entrants. This underscores the advantage in having a family member (whether immediate or extended family) who has had exposure to post-secondary education.

In a larger sense, the strength of informal networks can be very powerful and important. This report shall subsequently look at some of the importance of networks and social capital in the section on teacher retention.

Institutional Information Sources

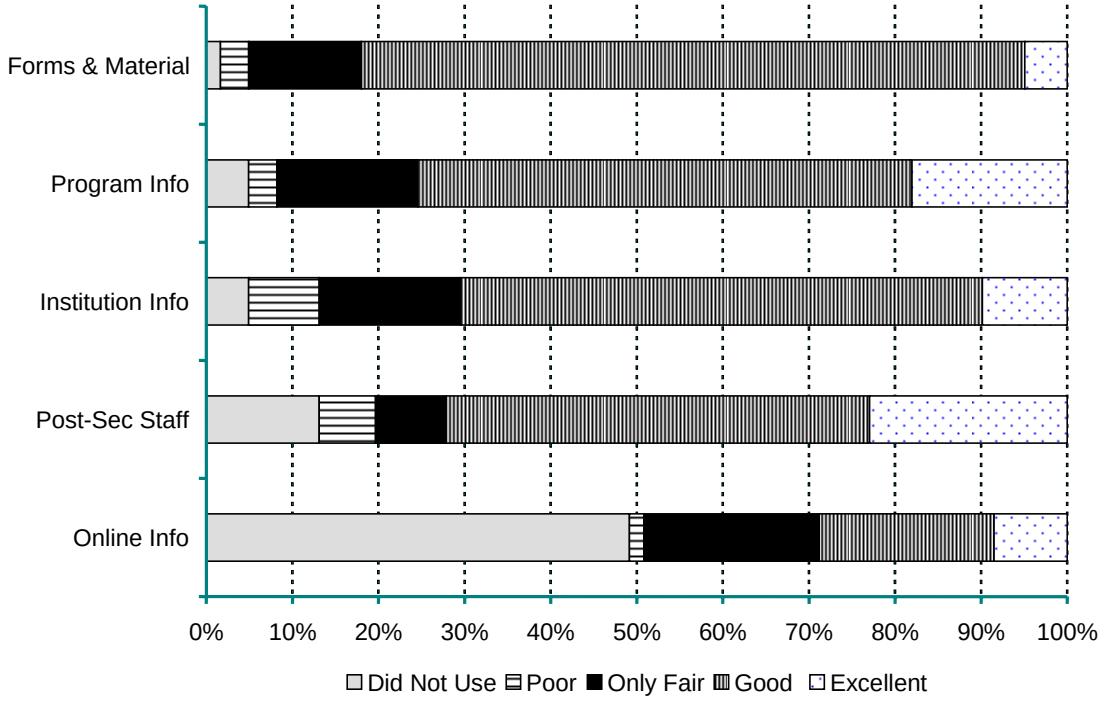
All respondents were asked about the clarity and usefulness of a number of post-secondary institutional information sources. These included:

- Information and material from the university or college as a whole
- Information and material from the program or department you applied to
- Written materials and forms you had to fill out
- Online information from the college or university
- Staff at the university or college whom you spoke to about your program or application

The results are summarized in Figure 7.

[19] Because there are non-status respondents and Métis, the numbers who approached a Band counsellor are depressed. If we consider only status Indian respondents, they were on a par with the specific program staff among indirect entrants. While frequently consulted by that group, they still received low marks for being helpful and informative.

Figure 7
Assessing Admission Information Sources



First, despite apparently low rates of utilization for online information, it must be remembered that the internet did not even exist when many of the respondents first attended a post-secondary institution. Factor out those who did not use online information and, for those who did use the internet, views are polarized. A higher proportion of users rated it an "excellent" information source than any source other than the institution's staff. On the other hand, it is also the clear winner of the "only fair" rating. Unfortunately, it is not known whether this is based on assessments of colleges' and universities' early attempts at websites, many of which were difficult to navigate and use.

Looking at the other ratings, there are a number of general points:

- The institutions tend to get solid, if not glowing, ratings—at least 70% rate each source as either "good" or "excellent."
- Specific information (e.g., program) does better than generic information (e.g., university-wide).
- Personal contact does better than impersonal information.

Interviews and Admissions Testing

In the in-depth interviews, a number of participants talked about admission interviews as significant obstacles and the writing or numeracy testing as potentially stressful. The survey asked respondents whether they had to go through those screenings and then asked those who had done them how difficult and/or useful they were.

Table 11 below reveals how common it was for respondents to undergo these screening procedures as part of their application process.

Table 11
Did You Have Admission Interviews / Tests?

	Interviews	Writing / Numeracy Tests
Yes	45	50
No	55	50

The results showed that interviews and written testing are not used as alternatives to each other. Respondents given a written test were far more likely to be interviewed. Conversely, if there was no interview, respondents were less likely to have a written test.

Overall, 35% of respondents had both written assessments and interviews, 40% had neither, 15% had only written assessments, and 10% had only an interview. Table 12 looks at the assessments of these procedures by those who experienced them.

Table 12
How Difficult Were the Admission Interviews / Tests?

	Interviews	Writing / Numeracy Tests
Very difficult	0	10
Somewhat difficult	30	35
Not very difficult	40	30
Not at all difficult	35	30

These results may be something of a surprise since the in-depth interviews had often mentioned the admission interviews in particular as a stressful and difficult barrier for applicants. These results would seem to indicate that there is some degree of difficulty, however, they are not seen as being particularly daunting.

Finally, those who had taken the tests or done an admission interview were asked whether the experiences had been “useful for [them] and for the program.”

Table 13
Were the Admission Interviews / Tests Useful?

	Interviews	Writing / Numeracy Tests
Yes	95	85
No	5	15

Interestingly, there was no particular relationship between finding the interviews or the written test difficult and thinking that they were useful or not.

Despite the attention paid to the interview process, in particular during the in-depth interviews with education professionals, there was nearly universal agreement that it was useful to the program and its participants. While support for the writing and numeracy skills testing was not as strong, it too enjoyed widespread support. Overall, these processes were seen as reasonably difficult, but useful.

This section of the survey closed with an invitation to make suggestions that would "make the admissions process more accessible for Aboriginal students." Despite the general approval of the materials and the admissions process noted above, this section produced one of the largest volumes of detailed suggestions. (See Appendix S for a detailed list of responses.)

While a summary cannot do full justice to the responses, they tended to follow into a number of areas:

- The student's preparation for the academic requirements of the program is critical—work on it at high school and in university preparation courses.
- Have checklists and detailed guides (TRU/UCC is mentioned as a model).
- The opportunity for one-on-one and small group contact is very useful in getting over initial concerns and for imparting informal information.
- Make it clear to students what resources are available to them.

The Post-Secondary Experience

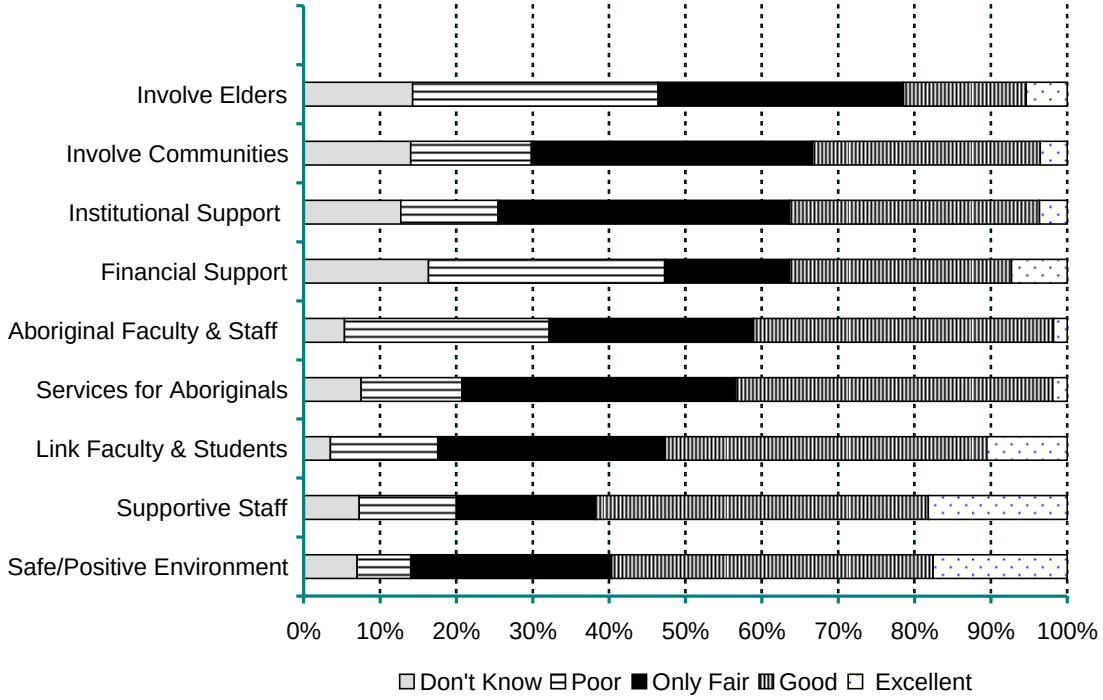
In this section of the survey, respondents were asked to assess the overall performance of their university or college to "create a better learning environment for Aboriginal students." The issues addressed were:

- Involvement of Aboriginal communities in the education of Aboriginal students
- A safe and positive learning environment created for Aboriginal learners
- Strong bonds created between faculty members and Aboriginal students
- Services focussed on the unique situations of Aboriginal students

- Faculty members, counsellors, and support staff effective in supporting Aboriginal student success
- Financial support to supplement limited funds available from Band councils
- Strong and consistent support from the institutional administration, programs, and personnel
- Involvement of Aboriginal Elders in the education of Aboriginal students
- Appointing Aboriginal faculty members and student service staff

The results are summarized in Figure 8.

Figure 8
Institution's Overall Performance



The ordering of these various factors in the post-secondary experience of an Aboriginal student is revealing.

First, what might be considered the core academic mission of a college or university—a good learning environment, a supportive and accessible staff—is reflected in the areas that received the best ratings from respondents. For the three top-rated factors, a majority of respondents rated their experience “good” or “excellent.” As a point of comparison, a majority of these same respondents gave a “poor” rating to all of their high school’s performance on analogous measures. While there are certainly elements of the post-

secondary institutions' performance that need improvement, respondents' experiences in post-secondary represented a huge improvement over their experiences in high school.

The lowest ratings tended to go to the two areas that looked at involving the broader Aboriginal community. For both "involving Elders", and "involving Aboriginal communities in the education of Aboriginal students", less than a third of respondents gave the institution an "excellent" or "good" rating.

In between the strengths in the core academic areas and the relative weakness in outreach to the broader Aboriginal community lay a number of broad measures of support for Aboriginal students as individuals. The institutions were seen to be doing a relatively good job at linking faculty with Aboriginal students[20] or providing services focussed "on the unique situations of Aboriginal students", with less positive assessments of institutional and program support.

There were two measures that stood apart from the others. First, "financial support" for Aboriginal students by the institution produced the most polarized response: 40% said it was "good" or "excellent" while 30% said it was "poor." Only a few gave the "only fair" response. This may reflect a basic division between those students who had a difficult time financially and those who did not. The other somewhat less polarized question assessed "appointing Aboriginal faculty and student services staff." While 40% gave "good" or "excellent" ratings, 30% said "poor."

How do Programs Designed for Aboriginal Students Differ?

The overall assessments highlighted strengths and weaknesses of the institutions. Given that many of the respondents went through programs like NITEP, which are designed specifically for Aboriginal learners, it may be useful to look at how their experiences and assessments differed from those who graduated from general teacher education programs.

First, it would be useful to look at some of the characteristics of the 40% of all respondents who attended a "program designed specifically for Aboriginal students." These students came disproportionately from small schools and ones that had significant proportions of Aboriginal students. While these attributes might seem to point to schools in remote communities, there is tendency for students from remote communities to have taken Aboriginal programs.

On four of the dimensions, there were no significant differences between those who attended general versus Aboriginal-specific programming. These were:

- Safe and positive learning environment
- Supportive and effective staff
- Institutional and program support
- Financial support

[20] This is one area in particular where it would be very useful to have a comparison with the general post-secondary student population given the widely-reported dissatisfaction of university students in terms of the non-availability of Aboriginal faculty.

These are all general institutional aspects of a college or university's general programming and, as such, these were the sorts of core functions that institutions tended to be rated most highly on. In this case, the respondents had similar reactions whether or not they were in, or had been in, a program geared specifically towards Aboriginal students.

In contrast with these general functions, there were some differences between the two groups of respondents in terms of the two variables that most directly involved outreach to the Aboriginal community. For the questions regarding "the involvement of Aboriginal Elders in education" and "involvement of Aboriginal communities in the education of Aboriginal students", those who had attended Aboriginal programming were much less likely to say they "didn't know" or to give the institution a "poor" rating. These differences should not be surprising since a core function of those programs is their outreach to the Aboriginal community.

Finally, for the range of questions involving general support for Aboriginal students—services focussed on Aboriginal students, bonds between Aboriginal students and faculty, and appointing more Aboriginal staff—there was a mild but consistent difference. For both groups of respondents, the "good" or "excellent" ratings were similar; however, students who were not in Aboriginal-specific programs were more likely to give the institution a "poor" rating. In essence, there were more Aboriginal students enrolled in general Education programs who were unhappy with personal relationships and support services for Aboriginal students.

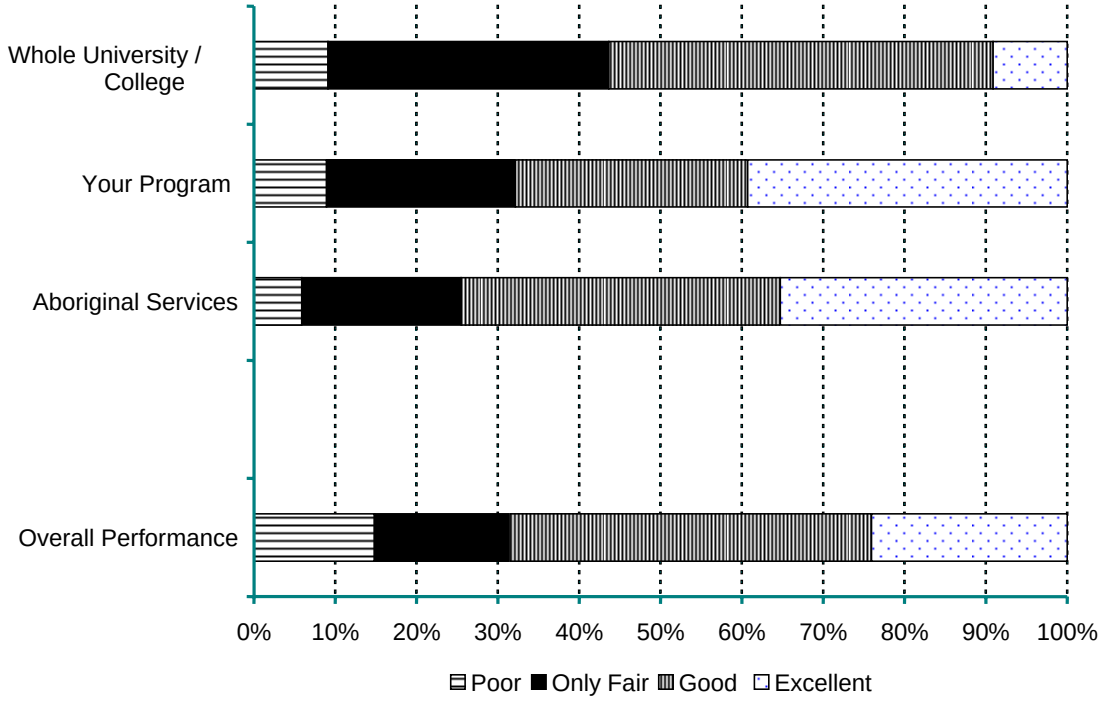
In the in-depth interviews, participants talked about students who "fell through the cracks", and who did not know about or avail themselves of the support available at the university. These differential ratings may reflect the experience of just that group who did not have the advantages of scale and focus that seem to make the Aboriginal programming more supportive.

Creating a Sense of Community for Aboriginal Students

Many of the in-depth interviewees discussed the importance of creating an environment that would encourage Aboriginal students to flourish and at the same time could ease the transition from their home community to the sometimes-alien environment of the college or university. The survey probed this by asking respondents to assess how well their program had done in helping to create/promote a strong sense of bonding and support among Aboriginal students on campus, and also to assess the "sense of Aboriginal community" created by the program or department, the institution as a whole, and by the "Aboriginal student services program."

Figure 9 summarizes the results.

Figure 9
Creating a Sense of Aboriginal Community



Before exploring the differences between the various aspects of this underlying theme, it should be noted how positive these results are, at least in comparison with the experience of the respondents as they went through the secondary system. Two-thirds said, in response to the overall question, that the school did a "good" or "excellent" job at creating "a strong sense of bonding and support among Aboriginal students in [their] program."

The school, as a whole, got few "excellent" ratings; however, the overall result was an experience that received high marks. The institutions should get credit for developing programs and agencies that can foster community. In essence, the school can claim success even if its activities are delivered by specific programs rather than by the school as a whole.

"I would have [liked] more time for sharing with fellow students. I would have preferred less stress as a result of funding, bureaucracy problems and having more one-on-one support in direct help when finances were a challenge to get on time – all this had a direct effect on how I felt."

Figure 9 also highlights the strong performance of the Aboriginal student services programs. In contrast to their peripheral role in the admissions process for most of the respondents, they are the leader in fostering a sense of community.

Finally, there is an interesting difference between those respondents who were registered in Aboriginal programs and those in general programs. They were about the same in their rating of the efforts of the school as a whole. They also had similar ratings of Aboriginal student services, although those in general programs were much more likely to say they "didn't know", indicating lower levels of usage of these services.[21] The big difference was in rating the efforts of their program or department. Those in Aboriginal programs were much more likely to give "good" or "excellent" ratings (90% versus 45%). The biggest difference was not, however, in any of the three specific elements, but instead in the overall assessment of the school's performance.

Table 14
Performance Creating an Overall Sense of Bonding and Support

	Poor / Fair Job	Good / Excellent Job
In Aboriginal program	50	50
In general program	90	10

Table 14 clearly shows the substantively different experience of Aboriginal students in a program that is designed specifically for them. For some students, this difference may affect their ability to thrive in the post-secondary environment.

The Teacher Education Program

The survey had a battery of questions assessing the teacher education program specifically. One of these was a summary question asking respondents to assess the teacher education program in "creating a safe and respectful learning environment for Aboriginal students." The responses were positive, with 75% of respondents giving an "excellent" or "good" rating.

For comparison purposes, a parallel question was asked about the performance of the university or college.

[21] This is a strong argument for active outreach to Aboriginal students who are not in Aboriginal programs. In the open-ended questions and the in-depth interviews, respondents sometimes discussed the fact that many students did not know about the resources available to them.

Table 15
Comparing the Teacher Education Program with the Overall University: Performance Creating a Safe and Respectful Learning Environment

	Overall University	Education Program
Excellent	15	25
Good	45	50
Only Fair	20	15
Poor	10	10
No Answer	10	5

Table 15 shows only minor differences between the assessments of the overall university or college and the assessments of the education program.

There are a number of comments to make about this. First, it shows that the respondents did not make a sharp performance distinction between the school and their specific program. This may have arisen from their detailed view of what was most immediate and important to them—their own program—that informed their overall view of the institution. Secondly, it revealed they were usually pleased with the general aspects of their education.

In addition to this general assessment, respondents were asked to assess performance through a series of questions that fell into four categories:

- Practical advice and training for finding and holding a teaching position
- Issues related to Aboriginal education
- Academic support
- Personal healing

This report will look at performance in each of these areas.

Practical Advice and Training

The practical training assessment included four questions where respondents rated the performance of their teacher education program:

- Giving you the practical tools for teaching in today's schools (e.g., lesson planning, classroom management, etc.)
- Ensuring that the students get realistic experience working in classroom settings that reflect the range of settings they are likely to experience when working
- Teaching students about the ways in which schools and school districts are organized and run
- Helping students with job searching, writing resumes, and practice at job interviews

The results are summarized in Figure 10.

Figure 10
Practical Education Assessments

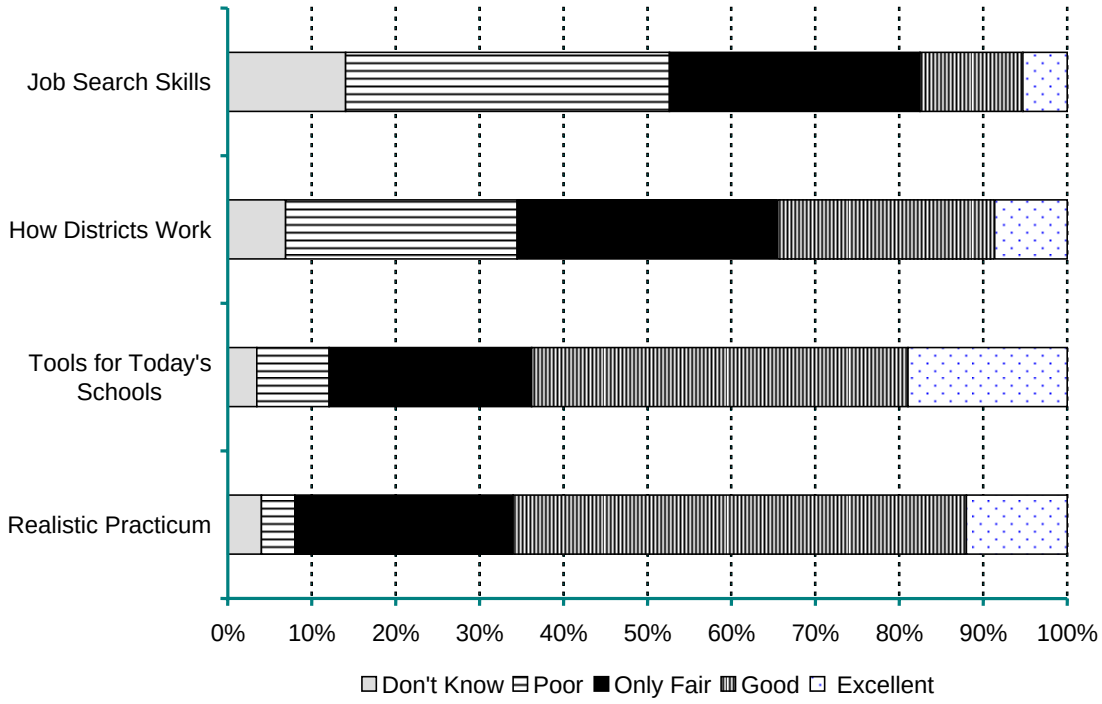


Figure 10 shows strong approval of the practical aspects of classroom teaching. Both in ensuring practicum settings that reflect the reality of what classroom teachers will face in the future, and in providing practical tools for teaching, two-thirds of respondents gave their program a “good” or “excellent” rating.

On the other hand, the numbers were more than reversed when it came to preparing students for the job search process itself, or teaching them about the operations of their likely future employer—the school district. On these two measures, three-quarters gave the program an “only fair” or “poor” rating. Particularly given the increasingly tight job market graduates are sure to face in the future, these very pragmatic skills can only become more important if new Aboriginal educators are to deploy their training and skills at the front of a classroom.

One additional practical question was asked, although it was more focussed on the individual than the other questions covered under this topic. Respondents were asked to assess the program’s performance “providing tutoring and academic support in areas such as writing and math.” The responses were not particularly strong (25% “good” or “excellent”, 15% “poor”) and 25% did not venture an assessment. This pattern is

consistent with some respondents caring about the issue while others did not think about it much—perhaps viewing it as an individual rather than a departmental issue.

Aboriginal Roles and Issues in Education Programs

There were a number of survey questions that asked for assessments of the education program's preparation of students for situations facing Aboriginal educators, or for the program's own performance on this score.

The four questions were:

- Having First Nations/Aboriginal studies courses as an integral part of the program
- Providing positive Aboriginal role models within the program
- Preparing students for the range of expectations on Aboriginal educators — whether as a lone Aboriginal educators in a large urban school, or teaching in an Aboriginal school
- Ensuring that students are trained for the teaching assignments that Aboriginal educators often find themselves assigned to (e.g., counselling, special education, First Nations studies)

The results are summarized in Figure 11.

Figure 11
Preparing for Aboriginal Issues in Schools

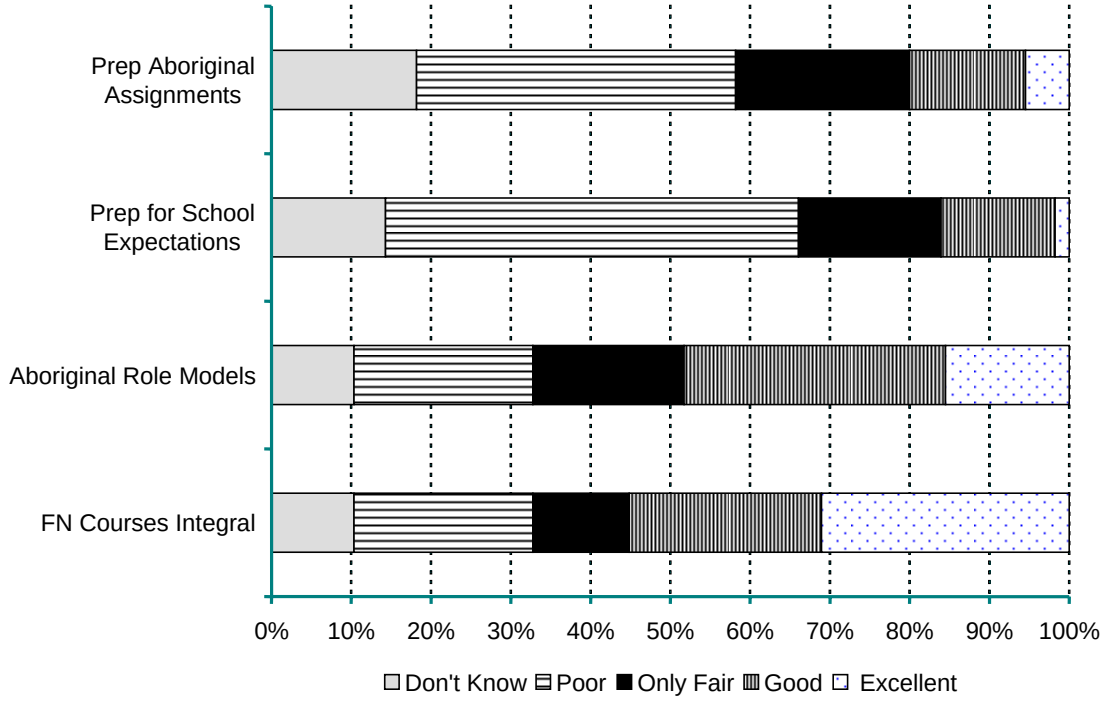


Figure 11, like Figure 10, shows a bifurcation between the more general training and education in the programs and those immediately practical aspects associated with what will occur in the schools. The programs are rated fairly highly for making First Nations or Aboriginal studies integral to the program, and for having Aboriginal role models (particularly among those who took a program designed for Aboriginal students).

"There are still many stereotypes about Aboriginals being taught and insinuated. Apparently some of the educators need some educating re: Aboriginals!"

In the in-depth interviews, participants talked about the lack of specific training of Aboriginal teachers to prepare them for the additional pressures and expectations that would most likely fall on their shoulders. Whether it was having to be the advocate/expert/resource on all Aboriginal issues, or being disproportionately assigned to certain types of roles in support of Aboriginal students, the interviewees noted that few new teachers were aware of what was likely to face them. The quantitative results supported this view: solid majorities said that the education programs do an "only fair" or "poor" job on those issues.

Personal Healing

The survey asked respondents to assess their teacher education programs in terms of:

- Helping students deal with the personal effects of the residential schools
- Including ways to a personal healing path

The results show different ratings and high levels of non-response ("don't know").

Table 16
Dealing with Personal Healing: Education Programs Performance

	Helping Deal with the Effects of Residential Schools	Support Personal Healing Path
Excellent	0	0
Good	25	20
Only Fair	20	20
Poor	35	35
No Answer	20	20

As Table 16 shows, the ratings are mediocre. At the same time, one-fifth of the respondents have not expressed an opinion. The responses to these two questions were strongly correlated—that is, responses to one question were very similar to the responses to the other. This pattern is consistent with some of the respondents caring deeply about the issue and wanting or needing help, while others do not want or feel they need support. It is also possible that this is seen as a role for the university as a whole or a group like Aboriginal student support services to work on.

Racism in the College or University

As in the examination of racism in the respondent's high school, the survey asked a battery of questions on racism in the post-secondary institutions.

The first, overall, question paralleled the question that was used to probe racism in high schools. Table 17 shows the results for the college or university and compares those with high schools.

Table 17
How Frequently Did Aboriginal Students Face Racism?
Your Post-Secondary Institution and High School

	High School (%)	**Post-Secondary** (%)
There was no racism	20	25
There was an occasional incident	15	35
Racist incidents occurred once a week or less	15	20
Racism was an everyday occurrence	45	15

While any incident of racism is deplorable, this comparison repeats an earlier finding: that the post-secondary education experience was much better than high school. Despite this, one-third of the respondents reported consistent or recurring racist incidents.

In addition to asking in general whether the respondent had experienced racism while at college or university, the questions probed the source of the racism and asked about racism from non-Aboriginal students, faculty, and the institution as a whole. The results are summarized in Table 18.

Table 18
Did You Experience Racism from…?

	Yes (%)
Professors or faculty	35
Non-Aboriginal students	55
The institution	35

The responses to these three questions are strongly correlated. That is to say, an individual who experienced racism from one source (e.g., faculty) was much more likely also to have reported experiencing institutional racism or racism from non-Aboriginal students.

Those who had experienced some form of racism were then asked whether they had brought it to the attention of anyone from the university or college. Forty percent (40%) said they had brought it to the institution's attention, while 60% said they had not.

For the minority who did bring an incident to the attention of the institution, very few were satisfied with the resolution of the issue. Just over half (55%) said that the college

or university did a "poor" job handling their concern. A further 35% said the handling of the incident was "only fair."

To look more deeply into the incidents of racism, the results for those in "programs designed specifically for Aboriginal students" were compared with those of students in general teacher education programs. There was no difference on responses for experiencing racism from a faculty member; however, there was a small difference on both experiencing institutional racism and racism from other students. In both cases, there were marginally fewer incidents of racism for those in Aboriginal programs.

The study also compared the experience of those who attended a "program delivered at a community location" with those who attended programs at main campuses.[22] Respondents reported no difference in institutional racism or racism from other students between the two types of location. Respondents who attended community campuses did, however, report more incidents of racism from a faculty or staff member.

Overall, while the situation is not as dire as the respondents reported for their high schools, still almost two-thirds of the respondents reported having experienced racism from at least one source while at college or university. Of those students, only a minority reported the incident and almost none of those respondents felt that the institution did an acceptable job in handling their concerns. Given that level of dissatisfaction with complaint handling, it seems likely that the relatively low percentage who brought their concern to the institution reflects a lack of confidence in the institution's response, rather than a lack of concern over the incident.

The Financial Situation of Aboriginal Students

"I was non-status. I paid my own way through university. Being First Nations made it more challenging. That is, student loans, minority in Education classes."

During the in-depth interviews, some of the participants expressed concern about the financial obstacles facing Aboriginal students, particularly because so many had to leave home to attend school. A short battery of questions looked at financial concerns and access to loans.

The dominant response describing the respondents' financial situation was "some financial problems", reported by 55%. A further 20% had "serious financial problems", while 10% had "few" and 15% had "no financial problems." Despite concerns in the in-depth interviews, Aboriginal status (status vs. non-status vs. Métis) did not make a large difference in responses to this question.

Government-Financed Student Loans

A solid majority (75%) of the respondents received Band funding to attend university or college. Among respondents who described themselves as "First Nations (status)", the proportion with Band funding exceeded 90%.

[22] While students in Aboriginal programs are more likely to attend programs in community locations (at least at the beginning of the program), these community campuses also include many non-Aboriginal students.

While most received Band funding, 70% of those who did so reported that it was not "sufficient to cover expenses while at college or university."

A slim majority (60%) said they had applied for a student loan through the government-financed student loan program while at college or university. The application rate was higher (70%) among those who said they had "some" or "serious financial problems" while at school. For those who did not take out a loan, most (55%) said this was "because [they] really didn't need to take out a loan."

As a final question on loans, the respondents were asked, "How difficult or easy were the government financed student loan application forms to understand and use?" Just over half (60%) said they were "very" (15%) or "fairly easy" (45%) to understand. Only 10% said the loan applications were "very difficult."

Although the questions differed somewhat, there was a comparison in the questions on how difficult it was to get the information and "fill out the application forms" for the college or university. When compared, the respondents said the loan applications were marginally more difficult than the admissions applications.

Personal and Community Responsibilities

In addition to financial burdens, the in-depth interviews had mentioned that many Aboriginal students faced additional personal or community responsibilities. The respondents were asked about the range of responsibilities summarized in Table 19.

Table 19
What Responsibilities did Aboriginal Learners have as Students?

	Percent
Care for dependent children	30
Extended family responsibilities	25
Community responsibilities	20
Cultural responsibilities	25
None	45

As one might expect, there were wide differences between those who went directly from high school to post-secondary and those who spent more than one year out before post-secondary. Very few direct entrants had children or family responsibilities, though just fewer than 20% had some "cultural responsibilities." The differences can be summarized by looking at those who said they had none of the responsibilities asked about. Among those who had taken more than a year out of school, 80% said they had at least some of the responsibilities listed; among those who had gone directly to post-secondary, 70% said they had none of the responsibilities.

Because Aboriginal students are more likely to have taken time out of their studies, and

to be older than their non-Aboriginal counterparts, they are more likely to have additional responsibilities. The findings of this survey are consistent with a BC Colleges and Institutes study of recent Aboriginal graduates.[23] That study found that Aboriginal students were somewhat older that non-Aboriginal graduates, and that they were more likely to have dependent children. Forty three percent (43%) of the Aboriginal graduates in that study were either single parents (21%) or part of a couple with children (22%). This compares with on overall 22% for non-Aboriginal graduates (7% single parents, 15% couple with children). While these two studies are not exactly comparable (one is largely of university graduates while the other is of College and Institute graduates; one asks about parenting while a student, the other asks about parenting approximately a year after graduation), they both point to the same conclusion: Aboriginal students are more likely to have responsibilities for dependent children than do non-Aboriginal students.

"[I] cared for a younger brother, continued to advise [and] counsel extended family members, participated in family and community ceremonies, [and] participated in community service and advocacy work."

In summary, there are a number of factors relating to age and geography that are more likely to make attending post-secondary education more difficult or expensive for Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students.

Recruitment to the Profession

During the in-depth interviews, issues related to the transition from post-secondary education to enduring employment as education professionals were frequently discussed. These issues fell into three broad areas:

- The barriers to getting initial employment as a teacher
- The additional pressures on an Aboriginal teacher
- Discussions of career paths that led away from the classroom[24]

The survey probed these issues.

Initial Entry into the Profession

Despite the concerns about education graduates leaving the profession, 95% of the respondents said they became employed in the field of education directly on completion

[23] BC College and Institute Aboriginal Former Student Outcomes. – 1999, Centre for Education Information Standards and Services 1999.

[24] This last issue extends beyond the question of looking at different career paths within education or within a school district—as an example, the difference between being in a classroom and being an Aboriginal resource person or administrator. A number of those interviewed talked about their view that education programs had been receptive to Aboriginal college and university students before other programs. As a result, it became one of the principal pathways to a post-secondary education. After graduation, the real need in Aboriginal communities for trained people in a number of leadership roles meant that trained teachers often assumed other important leadership roles. While from the narrow perspective of Aboriginal education, this may seem like a loss, it is equally a gain for the larger Aboriginal community.

of their teacher education program.[25] Those who were not directly employed in education said that they subsequently became employed in the field. Further, they report relatively short time periods (one to two years) before entering teaching.

Table 20 below shows the respondents' age when they first entered the education profession.

Table 20
Age When First Employed in Education

	Age (%)
≤ 25	25
26–30	30
31–40	25
≥ 41	20

Table 20 does show a tendency for Aboriginal teachers to become educators at ages that reflect the fact that many enter post-secondary later in life or take an extended period to complete their education. On the other hand, it also shows a fairly even division between those who begin teaching before age 30 (55%) and those who start after 30 (45%). While the student who moves directly from high school, through post-secondary, to begin teaching in a steady and uninterrupted progression is in a minority, neither are they a complete rarity.

What Was Initial Employment Position?

Most of the education program graduates gained employment in the field of education either immediately upon graduation or within a few years. Tables 21 and 22 look at the situations in which the graduates were employed.

[25] There is some bias in the self-selection by respondents to a mail survey; however, even if it is assumed that there is some under-representation of those who did not enter the profession, the 95% still means that the overwhelming majority of graduates do enter the profession.

Table 21
Initial Employment Position in Education

	Age (%)
Classroom teacher (full-time)	65
Teacher on call (TOC)	15
Teacher support	0
Other	20

The "other" category includes a range of employment in the education profession. Most are linked to Aboriginal education, although others are in Adult Basic Education (ABE). One example – an ESL teacher in Korea – is also a wonderful reminder of the range of activities in the real world.

Table 22 compares the respondents' reporting of what kind of high schools they had attended with their place of initial employment as educators and with the overall distribution of Aboriginal students in BC.

Table 22
Type of High School Attended and Place of First Employment

	School Attended (multiple responses permitted)[26]	**BC Aboriginal Student Distribution**[27] **(%)**	**Employed By (%)**
Public school	85	86.5	50
Band school	5	8.6	35
Other	15	4.8	20

The three columns are not exactly comparable since the "other" category for employment could include jobs that were not in any type of school. Similarly, the "attended" column permitted and had a number of multiple responses. Despite these caveats, this table tells a story also heard in the in-depth interviews: many Aboriginal graduates end up teaching in Band schools because it is easier for them to get employment there and many Band schools are actively recruiting Aboriginal teachers. If employment opportunities were neutral between the two types of schools, it might be assumed that Aboriginal teachers

[26] The total percentage exceeds 100% because respondents were asked to mark all the types that applied to them through their time in high school.
[27] See Table 26 for details about data sources. This column also confirms again the representativeness of the survey sample. The schools attended by the survey respondents is quite close to the overall distribution of Aboriginal students – particularly given that Band schools will be somewhat under-reported because some of them do not offer high school completion.

would be hired in a proportion that was about the same as their origins—the type of high school they, themselves, attended. Similarly, it might be argued that the public school system should hire the same proportion of Aboriginal teachers as they enrol Aboriginal students. Instead, the results show that far more graduates are employed in Band schools[28] than had attended those schools or than represents the proportion of Aboriginal students in the province. Whether from a preference for teaching in Band schools, active recruitment from those schools, or systemic barriers to becoming a teacher in the public system, what is not open to question is the fact that Aboriginal teachers are disproportionately employed in Band schools.

Respondents were also asked whether their initial position was paid for with "targeted funding" used to hire Aboriginal educators. Ten percent (10%) said they had been initially hired into such a position.

Although it covered the "majority of their career" rather than just initial employment, the educators were asked a final question about the kind of educational situation in which they were employed. They were asked to report on the number of Aboriginal colleagues with whom they worked or were in regular contact with.

Half (50%) said there "were few if any other Aboriginal teacher/educators" to work with. Thirty percent (30%) said there "were some other Aboriginal teachers/educators" with whom [they] had regular contact and professional dealings. A final 20% said they "were among a significant group of Aboriginal teachers/educators." Once again, there was an approximate comparison of the school the Aboriginal educators came from and the situation in which they later found themselves employed. An earlier survey question asked respondents about the presence of other Aboriginal students in their high schools (see Table 8 on page 64); when these results were compared with the results of the professional Aboriginal-colleagues question, an interesting comparison emerged. The results are shown in Table 23.

[28] One partial explanation for this difference may lie in the fact that some Aboriginal students attend Band schools through their earlier years of schooling before going to a public secondary school.

Table 23
Number of Aboriginal Students in High School Attended versus Number of Aboriginal Colleagues in Place of Employment

	School Attended	Employment Situation
Few Aboriginals	70	50
Some/Many Aboriginals	30	50

Table 23 roughly parallels the situation we saw in Table 22: the respondents were likely to be employed in situations where there were more Aboriginal professional colleagues than there had been fellow Aboriginal students in high school. It seems that, while the in-depth interviews discussed the isolation of the Aboriginal teacher, this seems typically to be a continuation of relative isolation in their secondary school rather than a new experience for them.

"Provide support for the Aboriginal educators once they are in the field. We are often alone, alienated, and very misunderstood."

Finding a Job

While the study looked at the initial employment of Aboriginal educators, there were also questions on the difficulty that these new educators had finding employment. The survey asked respondents whether they felt it was harder or easier for Aboriginal educators when looking for their first job in the education system. The responses were evenly divided: 45% said it was about the same for an Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal teacher, 30% said it was harder for an Aboriginal, and 25% said it was easier for an Aboriginal educator. Looking at the year the respondents received their degree, there was no apparent pattern that would indicate a change over time.

Respondents were then asked to explain why they had responded that finding work was harder / the same / easier for Aboriginal educators. The majority of responses had been that it was "about the same for all educators" and those reasons tended to fall into two categories. First, some respondents wrote about a fair or balanced hiring process:

- The interviews I went to were fair – [they] asked the same questions.
- I had the same credentials and did well in my interviews. Some got hired and some didn't. I did.
- In my experience, the interview process is the same for all teachers.
- [My] personal experience [was] similar to that of other teachers (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal).

Others talked about the fact that finding a job was difficult for everyone:

- …my non-Aboriginal friends were also struggling to find work, and [they] relocated to new communities to find work, as I did.

- It's hard to get a full-time classroom teacher job in our current Education system.
- Getting hired in the public system in Vancouver and TOC is difficult for everyone.

For those who felt that getting a job was more difficult for an Aboriginal educator, two themes emerged: racism and a lack of respect for the specialized courses that many new Aboriginal teachers had taken.

- Systemic racism i.e., Mickey Mouse program! Not properly aligned with the 'regular' program!
- Colour
- Race-related
- Because public schools remain closed to Aboriginal teachers.
- They might think the Aboriginal programs are watered down.
- Because we are 'specialized in First Nations education' and it's not a specialized area.

Finally, those who thought it was an advantage to be Aboriginal cited either a recognition on the school district's part that they needed Aboriginal teachers or the fact that they could apply to Band schools.

The Situation of Aboriginal Educators

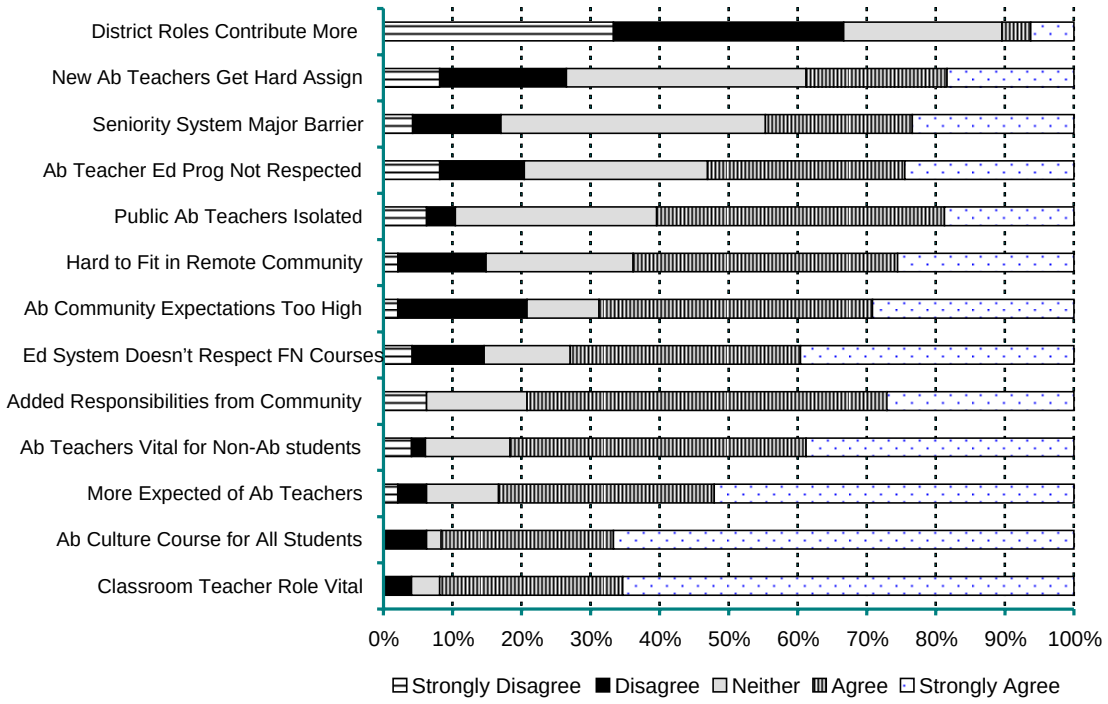
During the in-depth interviews, many participants discussed the pressures facing Aboriginal teachers. Whether cross-pressured by the school and the Aboriginal community, expected to be an expert on all things related to First Nations, or asked to teach in some of the most difficult situations, there was wide-spread concern about the position of these teachers. A series of statements about these issues were given in the survey and the respondents were asked to agree or disagree with each one. The statements were:

- Beginning Aboriginal educators are often given difficult teaching assignments like special education classes that make it hard for them to succeed as new educators.
- Many Aboriginal educators feel extra pressure to succeed as educators because of their community's added responsibilities for them.
- Aboriginal educators in the public system often feel isolated from Aboriginal colleagues and their community.
- Aboriginal educators can make a bigger contribution in resource roles serving Aboriginal students in the district, rather than by being a classroom educator.
- A lot of other educators in the education system don't look on First Nations courses or languages as being an important part of the education system.
- People in the Aboriginal community expect too much of Aboriginal educators – they expect Aboriginal educators to solve all the education system's problems.
- The current seniority system for moving to permanent status from being a TOC is a major barrier to Aboriginal educators' staying in the public system as classroom educators.

- Aboriginal Teacher Education programs are not respected in the education community.

The results are summarized in Figure 12.

Figure 12
Issues for Aboriginal Educators



The level of agreement to almost every question confirms the importance of many of the issues raised in the in-depth interviews.

The five questions with the highest level of agreement reflect two themes:

- The importance of an Aboriginal presence, as a teacher in the classroom and in the curriculum, for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students alike
- The load on Aboriginal teachers from both the educational system and the Aboriginal community

The first point was often expressed in very positive terms. In response to both the in-depth interviews and the open-ended survey questions, the answers often reflected on the advantages to everyone of having First Nations or Aboriginal courses more central to the provincial curriculum.

The load on Aboriginal teachers, particularly new teachers, reflects both the education system and the expectations placed upon them and which they place upon themselves. Typical comments included:

- "You're expected to be an expert in FN [First Nations] issues right away and are looked on to solve all behaviour concerns of FN children."
- "Recognize that they are educators—not social workers."
- "Many Aboriginal educators take on bigger responsibilities in terms of their 'Aboriginal' community. They end up sitting on committees and boards with little or no leadership training."

While a plurality agree that "Beginning Aboriginal educators are often given difficult teaching assignments like special education classes that make it hard for them to succeed as new educators", the in-depth interviewees reflected on the challenge that Aboriginal teachers face in their early years. They juggle the load of being a new teacher with the additional demands they place on themselves or have placed on them as they are inevitably turned to for advice or support on Aboriginal issues.

In the end, the responses reflect the issues that all educators face compounded by the unique demands and perceptions faced by Aboriginal educators.

In closing this section, it may be useful to review the overall position of Aboriginal educators. The 2001 Census offers a consistent measure of Aboriginal presence in the education profession. Table 24 shows the census results for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators.[29]

Table 24
Number of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Educators in BC

	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal Percentage
K–12 Teachers	1,210	48,010	2.5%
School & Guidance Counsellors	234	2,595	8.3%

Table 24 shows both the general under-representation of Aboriginal teachers in general and the disproportionate channelling of Aboriginal educators into counselling and related roles outside of the classroom[30]. If one were to say that Aboriginal educators should

[29] These results are drawn from a custom tabulation conducted by Statistics Canada and are not available from Statistics Canada's publications.

[30] A number of the in-depth interviews and consultations with stakeholders pointed to the hiring of Aboriginal educators into "district roles" or counselling positions as a way school districts tried to compensate for the systemic barrier presented by the current system of TOC seniority leading to eventual permanent employment. Since many new Aboriginal teachers lacked the social and family networks that facilitate gaining hours as a TOC, some districts hire Aboriginal teachers into non-teaching roles to ensure some Aboriginal representation.

mirror the Aboriginal population in the province, then educators should be 4.4% Aboriginal— almost double the current number. If teachers at the front of classrooms are to mirror the identity of their students, then Aboriginal teachers should be over 8% of all teachers—better than a three-fold increase.

Overall, the experience of Aboriginal educators in the education system reaffirms their position as outsiders within the system. Even when hired as TOCs by a school district, typically their lack of social network and personal contacts with current teachers makes it especially difficult for Aboriginal educators to accrue the seniority required to move to regular staff status. As the current surplus of new teachers further increases, these informal barriers will increase.

In response to these difficulties, some Aboriginal teachers take up positions in Band schools while others accept district positions where they do not face years of TOC status before becoming regularly employed. In turn, some districts try to solve their under-representation of Aboriginal educators by hiring directly into district and counselling roles, which may be useful, but does not address the issue that not enough Aboriginal teachers are classroom teachers.

> *"Our programs should be giving individuals an opportunity to examine the gifts they bring to teaching. Help them understand how they can fit in, how they can live in our society as a bicultural person. Understanding "the system" is a daunting task and is something that takes time. We need to help Aboriginal pre-service teachers find their way through that system. Aboriginal teachers need to know that their culture…is one of our gifts. When "the system" doesn't honour our culture – we feel rejected. We need to find other ways of feeling validated. I think this is one of the reasons many Aboriginal teachers leave. I believe the system has to change and we can do that but not when we are outside of it. Change will happen with hard work "inside" it."*

V. Data on Aboriginal Students and Educators: Limitations and Lessons

One of the clearest examples of the invisibility and marginalization of Aboriginal students in the post-secondary system is the difficulty in finding information on Aboriginal students outside the programs specifically designed for Aboriginal students. This is more than a simple shortage of data: information that is critical to understanding how Aboriginal students are progressing through our educational system are simply unavailable or collected in such a way as to make policy-relevant comparisons impossible.

In preparing this report, it rapidly became apparent that the data on Aboriginal students and educators were very inconsistent as one moved from issue to issue. This brief overview is meant as an introduction to the data that are available on Aboriginal learners and Aboriginal teachers in the education system in British Columbia. This section of the report will, therefore, serve two purposes: giving a statistical overview of what we do know about Aboriginal education, and pointing out the issues of data quality and consistency that limit our ability to use the data for meaningful analysis or prescription.

Administrative Data on Aboriginal Students and Educators

This section of the report will discuss the current state of information relevant to looking at Aboriginal students and Aboriginal teachers within the education system, particularly the teacher education system. In doing this, it is important to bear in mind that the information on Aboriginal students and teachers can be used in two different ways: for purely descriptive purposes, and for goal setting and measurement of change.

It is one thing to have a general description of Aboriginal outcomes; however, it is far more useful in policy terms to be able to follow the educational progress of different individuals who take different programs and courses. This can only occur if it is possible to track an individual's progress through the system using their administrative records.

Issues with Aboriginal Data

To understand the issues confronting users of data on Aboriginal learners and educators, a number of different issues must first be examined.

Size of the Aboriginal Population

While there are a large number of Aboriginal peoples in BC (approximately 200,000), the population is still small enough (around 5% of the whole population) that general purpose surveys or similar forms of data collection are unlikely to have sufficient Aboriginal respondents for any detailed analysis. Researchers are often left in the position of having had a question asked on a survey and knowing the 'top line' results, but having little or no ability to analyze the data further.

As an example of this phenomenon, consider The University Presidents' Council (TUPC) reports on graduate outcomes. In the latest "Survey of Graduates,[31] of the five public BC universities, only 123 Aboriginal respondents (including 13 who graduated from Education programs) were included. This number of respondents means that very little more than simple descriptions of the results can be derived, despite having 6,500 respondents overall.

In practical terms, this means that only the most rudimentary information can be gathered on the educational path and outcomes for Aboriginal students in universities and colleges if current surveys are to be relied upon.

There have been some innovative ways to reduce this problem. As an example, BC Stats and Statistics Canada asked an Aboriginal identity question on the BC portion of the Labour Force Survey over the course of a year. With a monthly sample in the province of over 5,000, the repeated use of the Aboriginal identity question to new sample cohorts eventually yielded a large enough sample to produce accurate and robust labour force data on the off-reserve Aboriginal population in the province.

The problem with this kind of approach is that it is very time consuming and expensive. Further, this is feasible when one is looking at the whole population of the province, but is probably not feasible for a smaller population like recent education program graduates.

Problems of Definition and Identification

While the layperson may think it is straightforward to ask whether people are Aboriginal or not, this is not the case. As an example, the 2001 Census asked two different types of questions to determine whether the respondent was Aboriginal:

- **Aboriginal Ancestry/Origin** refers to those persons who reported at least one Aboriginal origin (North American Indian, Métis or Inuit) on the ethnic origin question in the Census. The question asks about the ethnic or cultural group(s) to which the respondent's ancestors belong.

- **Aboriginal Identity** refers to those persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, i.e., North American Indian, Métis, or Inuit. Also included are individuals who did not report an Aboriginal identity, but did report themselves as a Registered or Treaty Indian, and/or Band or First Nations membership.[32]

[31] TUPC, *2004 Survey of 2002 Graduates*, http://www.tupc.bc.ca/student_outcomes/publications/graduate_outcomes/ p.1.

[32] Definitions from Statistics Canada, 2001 Census Definitions, *http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/Products/Analytic/companion/abor/definitions.cfm*

In BC, the differences between using these two definitions are significant. There are 170,025 people who have an Aboriginal identity but 216,110 who report Aboriginal origin. When it comes to the informality of self-identification used in many of the surveys that interview post-secondary students or graduates, the sensitivity to the way in which the question is posed is likely greater.

"I never identified myself as from Aboriginal heritage."

In addition to differences accounted for by different wording of questions, there are also changes that flow from differing social values and norms. The increase in the population of Aboriginal people in BC between the 1996 and 2001 Censuses was partially due to an increase in the tendency of Aboriginal people to self-identity. Similarly, the rest of Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand have also experienced this increased willingness of Aboriginal people to identify.[33] In BC, the largest increase was in the Métis population, which went from 25,575 to 44,265 in the course of that five-year period. The bulk of this change is clearly due to the changed willingness to self-identify.

The point of these examples is not to argue that it is too difficult to gather reliable information on Aboriginal education in BC. Rather, it is to argue that gathering the data is not easy and that it is extremely important that the information be gathered in a systematic and uniform manner. If, for example, we want to compare outcomes for Aboriginal students in two different programs, it is important that the same definitions and data collection techniques are used.

While we have seen that there has been an increased willingness of Aboriginal people to self-identify, there are still many who will choose not to self-identify depending on the circumstance. In the in-depth interviews conducted early in this project, many of those directly involved in the education system mentioned the fact that they knew of teachers who were Aboriginal who chose not to self-identify and make their Aboriginal identity known. In these cases, the behaviour was ascribed to their desire not to be stereotyped or saddled with the extra burdens that often flow with being the only Aboriginal teacher in a school.

Overall, these observations should act as a significant caution to relying on administrative data that identifies individuals as Aboriginal without careful scrutiny as to how the data were obtained and what definitions were used.

This caveat certainly applies to the TUPC data. Equally, however, it applies to the Ministry of Advanced Education's Post-secondary Central Data Warehouse (CDW). In both cases, Aboriginal status is self-declared, but in ways that vary from institution to institution and program to program.

What, then, can be done if the Aboriginal proportion in the overall population is small and the administrative records are neither rigorous nor fully compatible with each other in terms of identifying Aboriginal students and graduates?

[33] BC Stats, Cautionary notes regarding comparisons of Aboriginal data between the 1996 and 2001 Censuses. p.1

A Model to be Emulated and Used

While the post-secondary information on Aboriginal students is not fully consistent across institutions, there is a model in BC for a consistent and uniform method of identifying students and gathering some basic information about them, including Aboriginal identity. The Ministry of Education has, for over a decade, been assigning a Personal Education Number (PEN) to students. The PEN is a number assigned to each student as they enter the British Columbia education system. This identification number follows the student through their K–12 education.

In recent years, the PEN has become better at identifying Aboriginal students and is now certainly far more accurate than the post-secondary system's reliance on self-identification. This accuracy arises in part from the school's financial incentive to report Aboriginal students registered in Aboriginal programming to the Ministry.

After initial problems with the PEN system, the Ministry now has worked out procedures to ensure the accurate and timely assignment and reporting of PENs.

The Provincial Education Number (PEN)

The K–12 part of the education system has the best of the data on Aboriginal education. The "best' arises from the substantial efforts which the Ministry of Education has put into creating a robust and consistent data base of students within both the public and private provincial schools by the use of a Provincial Education Number (PEN).

The Ministry's description of the PEN is:

> "a nine digit number assigned to each student as they enter the British Columbia education system. This identification number follows the student through their K–12 and post-secondary education. This number is used for multiple purposes including; the distribution of funding to schools, transition analysis between schools, districts and post-secondary education, exams and student reporting."[34]

This effective, nearly universal system of identifying students and maintaining core information on each of them has been the basis of much of the capacity of the system to understand what is occurring with students across the province. This is particularly important when it comes to understanding the progress of minorities within the system, as overall data trends can mask quite different outcomes for sub-groups within the population.

To understand the importance of the PEN for identifying barriers to Aboriginal students, we need only look at some of the materials that have already been produced by the Ministry of Education. Their flagship publication is *Aboriginal Report – How Are We Doing?*[35] This report has acted to bring focus and information to the debate about the performance of Aboriginal students in BC schools. The recent reports not only cover the

[34] www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pen/geninfo.htm
[35] www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/perf2004.pdf

basic topics like the number and location of Aboriginal students, it has reported increasingly over time on performance and barriers facing Aboriginal students.

While many of the issues highlighted in the report have been raised earlier by those involved in Aboriginal education, the factual basis the report provides have made their importance clear to all. As an example, the report makes abundantly clear how serious is the problem of Aboriginal dropout rates.

As another example, recently the report has started to examine an issue that many of the in-depth interview subjects raised: the high rate of assignment of Aboriginal youth as having behavioural disabilities. The factual base provided by the consistent data collection has not, of itself, resulted in an answer; however, it has made clear the nature and extent of the issue.

As a last example, of the utility of the systematic data collection, there was a recent report of one educator's identification of a problem leading to her working on changing the provincial curriculum to address the issue. As reported by the University of Victoria, here is a summary of the project.[36]

> In 2002, when [Dr. Lorna] Williams worked as director of the aboriginal education enhancements branch of the B.C. Ministry of Education, she discovered that very few indigenous students were enrolled in senior-level high school science—courses that are essential for entry into post-secondary education and science-related careers.
>
> "The statistics showed that the high school graduation rate of aboriginal students was increasing, but what was that graduation leading to? They weren't taking the classes that would get them into university. This creates barriers and limits their career opportunities."
>
> …In partnership with the B.C. Ministry of Education, they created the Aboriginal Knowledge and Science Education Research Project to determine why aboriginal high school students are under-represented in the sciences and to find solutions.
>
> Guided by Williams and [Dr. Gloria] Snively, 10 aboriginal and four non-aboriginal graduate students from UVic are working with First Nations elders, community leaders and educators to identify science content elements of aboriginal knowledge and determine the most culturally appropriate and effective ways of teaching and learning science.
>
> …Using case studies, field studies, surveys, informal interviews and ethnography (such as elder circles, songs and traditional stories) the graduate students are investigating topics as wide-ranging as how elders transmit ecological knowledge and wisdom, how science is taught through traditional storytelling, and how to use

[36] Reprinted from the Victoria Times-Colonist by the University of Victoria at http://communications.uvic.ca/edge/aboriginal-science.html

digital video as a learning tool for retaining and transferring aboriginal knowledge.

The results are being used by the Ministry, program planners and teachers to develop culturally informed science materials for elementary and secondary schools across the province.

While having a uniform and robust identifier like the PEN is the basis for the kinds of analysis that the Ministry can do, the range of topics that can be analyzed is aided by the existence of a number of standardized measures that are applied across the education system and that remain stable across time. The Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA), administered in grades 4, 7 and 10, tests writing, reading and numeracy skills. As well, there are a number of standardized exams in senior grades that are administered province-wide. Taken together, these offer a number of different measures of academic attainment.

Finally, there are a number of categories related to students' specific needs. We have already referred to the behaviour disability, but there are also categories like learning disability and gifted.

Taken together, we have a rich data source for better understanding issues that Aboriginal students face.

Already the Ministry has looked at the distribution and characteristics of Aboriginal students. Working with such basic data as completion rates and success at "gateway" courses like those studied by Williams and Sniveley, there has been a greater understanding of the issues that need to be addressed. In addition, the published Ministry data that look across school districts raise important questions. Here are just two examples:

1. Aboriginal students in special education behaviour disabilities group.[37] The most recent report in *How Are We Doing?* shows that there are enormously disparate rates of assignment of Aboriginal students to this category across school districts—rates run from 4% of Aboriginal students to 17%. Moreover, there appears to be virtually no correlation between the district-by-district assignment of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students to this category. In other words, different rates of assignment of Aboriginal students do not seem to reflect systematic differences in the way all students are treated district-by-district. Rather, there are differences in the manner that Aboriginal students are treated and the degree of difference varies widely district-by-district.

2. Six-year Dogwood completion rates.[38] Looking at district-by-district completion rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, we see the expected pattern with lower Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal completion rates in almost every district. Unlike the previous example, however, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal performance are correlated. That means that the better the non-Aboriginal

[37] How Are We Doing? www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/perf2004.pdf p. 11.
[38] How Are We Doing? www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/perf2004.pdf p. 27.

students do getting their Dogwood certificates, the better the Aboriginal students in the district do as well. District-wide improvements help Aboriginal students too. There is even an indication that, in the districts with the highest completion rates, not only are there the highest Aboriginal completion rates, but also the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal rates is smaller.

The richness of the data means that there are additional analyses that can be done. The completeness of the information makes it possible to look at different outcomes across school districts and even across schools. While it is important to control for variables like socio-economic status that affect outcomes, the scale of the data will permit that and enable us to identify and learn from schools that have particularly strong outcomes.

Even more promising is the opportunity to look at individual student performance over time. It may, for example, be possible to assess the long-term effect of various early interventions or programs. Similarly, we know that there is substantial intra-provincial mobility among the Aboriginal population. Being able to look at longitudinal data files will let us start to understand the impact of that movement.

To summarize what we found in the K–12 system:

- Creating a robust and useful data set requires a student identifier. Implementing such a system has significant benefits in terms of the information gathered and even administrative benefits. On the other hand, creating such an identifier requires real effort and probably incentives and enforced standards.

- The existence of the PEN, combined with an increasingly accurate Aboriginal identifier, allows us to identify issues, analyze them and design actions to improve the situation.

- The capacity for longitudinal information and comparisons across districts or even schools, creates more knowledge and lets us identify successful programs that may be copied elsewhere.

The Post-Secondary System

In contrast with the K–12 system, the post-secondary system operates with differing measurements and ways of identifying Aboriginal students. The data are sometimes collected for a single or restricted set of purposes and then not used or even available for related or more general purposes. As an example, in some programs, a number of admissions are set aside for Aboriginal students who self-identify and who might not otherwise be admitted to the program. These identifiers are not retained systematically and cannot, therefore, be used to learn how many Aboriginal students have been admitted or what their completion rates are.

The greatest consistency comes in areas where applications or admissions use a self-reported ‘flag’ for Aboriginal status. This self-reporting tends to underpin the output of the standardized reports of the Ministry of Advanced Education’s Central Data Warehouse.

There are a number of problems with this approach.

- First, we know that self-identification, particularly when it is not seen by the respondent to be a required or important part of the information requested, is not filled in consistently or reliably.

- Second, there will be bias in response rates across institutions and programs. At one extreme, consider the case of a program that is designed for Aboriginal learners. In that program, it is likely that every student will self-identify as Aboriginal. To Aboriginal students in a general program, the likelihood of self-identification will be significantly lower. This, in turn, will make cross-program reporting suspect. Similarly, different institutions will use different techniques and have different priorities for Aboriginal self-identification. This will mean that there are likely to be reported differences across institutions that reflect differences in the data collection instrument rather than differences in reality.

Given the weakness of the Aboriginal "flag" in the post-secondary institutional data, it should not surprise us that the institutions tend not to rely on it for tracking or analyzing the progress of their Aboriginal students. This became very clear during this project when the team talked with teacher education programs about Aboriginal students who were in or had graduated from those programs. In many cases, the information had not been collected in a systematic way. In some cases, the programs had no way of identifying or contacting Aboriginal graduates from their programs.

Given these problems, the institutions themselves have tended to turn back to self-identification for their own research on their graduates. For both the University Graduates Research and the survey of Colleges and Institutes Student Outcomes (CISO), the research is based on a general survey of graduates in which Aboriginal identity is determined once again by asking for self-identification.

Why does this matter? There are two reasons: first, the consistency and reliability of the information and, secondly, its usefulness in getting answers to questions about barriers facing Aboriginal students.

Starting with consistency and completeness, there seems little grounds for hoping that the current data are robust enough to meet the needs of BC's Aboriginal students and their programs. In one evaluation of the consistency of responses between the Ministry of Education's data, the post-secondary Central Data Warehouse, and the CISO data, the researcher looked at all the cases which had responses to the Aboriginal question in all three data sets (i.e., she excluded cases where that question had a 'no response' in any of the three data sets).[39] For the respondents who were shown on at least one of the data sets as being Aboriginal:

- 46% were flagged as Aboriginal on all three data sets,

[39] Thanks to Anne Kittredge of BC Stats for letting the project look at her work on this topic.

- 21% were flagged as Aboriginal on two of the data sets but non-Aboriginal on the third, and
- 33% were flagged as Aboriginal on one of the data sets and as non-Aboriginal on the other two.

The usefulness and richness of the K–12 data is the result of its being thorough and able to track students through their schooling. The post-secondary data tend, for example, not to be able to examine issues like the pathways taken by individual students. Particularly when Aboriginal students move from one faculty or program to another (of particular importance in the regular teacher education program where students typically start in Arts or Science and then move to education), their self-identification is often unknown to the new faculty. Some programs or departments have significant internal analytic capacity and can use the institution's administrative and entrance data to understand their students better.[40] This is, however, the exception. Programs rarely have the capacity to maintain detailed data on their students, let alone the resources to analyze their data systematically.

This is not only an issue for programs and faculties. There is also a tremendous disparity in the size and capacity of the province's post-secondary institutions. On one side, the three older universities have the scale that makes possible sophisticated, systematic data gathering. Further, these universities have sophisticated and experienced institutional analysis groups that regularly produce analyses for their universities.

What Needs to Be Done?

Given the unevenness of the current data and the difficulty that some of the institutions will have in creating and using reliable indicators of Aboriginal identity, we recommend that the post-secondary system adopt the use of the current PEN Aboriginal identifier for all BC students who have a PEN. This should become an integral element in the data plan of the Central Data Warehouse of the post-secondary system.

This will give the post-secondary system a common identifier with a reliable Aboriginal "flag." This is particularly important to those institutions that do not have the scale to set up a sophisticated data management system to track other than academic essentials for their students. More important from the view of Aboriginal teacher education, it will allow analysts to look at the movement of Aboriginal students between post-secondary institutions and between programs (both common features noted in the survey and in-depth interviews).

An initial step may well simply be to have the institutions report on PENs and use Aboriginal status as flagged in the PEN data. For a more thorough system and one that is more rigorous, it would be better to move towards something like the K–12's system for centrally administering the PEN. This should improve the quality of data capture (as it did in the K–12 system), and it will probably also make the data capture easier for the

[40] UBC's mathematics department is an extreme example of this. They produce detailed analyses of first year performances in physics and calculus using, among other things, region and high school of origin. http://www.math.ubc.ca/Schools/FirstYearCalculus/index.shtml

smaller and less sophisticated institutions as the protocols and data collection instruments can be created centrally.

This will not, however, suffice for the post-secondary system. There are three sources of students who will not have PENs:

- Students from Band Schools, other than those which choose to be part of the independent school group in BC
- Students from out of the province
- Students who were last in high school before 1993

Because of these cases, it will be important to create a protocol for students without PENs that ensures that they are given identifiers and that Aboriginal status is reliably captured at that time.

Aboriginal Teachers

Currently, the only organization that puts a consistent effort into contacting and keeping track of Aboriginal teachers in the province is the BC Teachers' Federation. Through their own initiatives and through such shared projects as ABNet, they have identified approximately 325 Aboriginal teachers in the province.

The only other systematic count has been provided by Statistics Canada in the Census. The Census identifies 1,210 Aboriginal K–12 teachers and a further 235 School and Guidance counsellors.

The divergence between these estimates is accounted for partially by the fact that the BCTF has few members in either Band or Independent Schools. The difference in the estimates is still very large and reflects the importance of creating reliable estimates for all Aboriginal teachers, including those who are not particularly public about their Aboriginal identity.

School districts are key to ensuring that Aboriginal educators become a greater presence in classrooms and that they are retained in the teaching profession. For there to be any significant accountability, or even measurement of their performance at attracting and retaining Aboriginal teachers, then school districts and the government will need to have far better knowledge about where Aboriginal educators are employed in the K–12 system. Whether through the College of Teachers, school districts, or the government, information is the necessary precondition to ensuring that Aboriginal educators are recruited, employed and retained in appropriate numbers.

VI. Looking at the Distribution of Potential Aboriginal Students

When looking at the geographic distribution of current and potential Aboriginal students, there is a paradox that is immediately evident: Aboriginal students are much more likely to come from rural or remote locations than are non-Aboriginal students; however, most Aboriginal students come from urban rather than rural or remote areas.

Urban versus Rural

As a first look at where Aboriginal students come from, the 2001 Census results offer the rural versus urban distribution for the Aboriginal population. Statistics Canada has a complex definition for "rural areas," one that is not the same as remote. The census definition[41] of rural area is the area that remains after the delineation of urban areas. In other words, Statistics Canada defines urban areas and whatever is left over is termed "rural."

Within rural areas, population densities and living conditions can vary greatly. Included in rural areas are:

- small towns, villages and other populated places with less than 1,000 population according to the current census
- rural fringes of census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations that may contain estate lots, as well as agricultural, undeveloped and non-developable lands
- agricultural lands
- remote and wilderness areas

This means that even major metropolitan areas like the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) can contain rural areas. Indeed, 2.7% of the GVRD residents and 9.6% of the Capital Regional District (CRD) residents are from "rural" areas within those regional districts. At the other end of the spectrum, the Bulkley–Nechako Regional District's population is 60.8% rural.

The following table compares the percentage of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who live in rural areas of BC. It also breaks the responses out by broad age categories to show how young adults, both Aboriginal and not, tend to move to urban areas—in part, presumably, for post-secondary education.

[41] The examples below are taken from Statistics Canada's detailed discussion of the definition of "Rural Areas." The details are available at:
http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/Products/Reference/dict/geo042.htm

Table 25
Percentage of Population Living in Rural BC by Age Group

Age Group	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal
Under 18	36.7	15.2
18–24	32.9	11.1
25–64	36.4	14.7
65+	46.3	14.1
Total (All Ages)	**36.6**	**14.4**

Overall, Table 25 shows that BC's Aboriginal population is two-and-a-half times more likely than the non-Aboriginal population to live in rural areas of the province.

The table also shows the tendency of young adults (i.e., 18–24) in both populations to leave rural areas for urban ones. In both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population, there is approximately a four percentage-point drop in the proportion that live in rural areas as one goes from youth to young adults. Looked at another way though, there is a quite noticeable difference between the two populations: approximately one-quarter of the non-Aboriginal young adults leave the rural areas, while only one-tenth of Aboriginal young adults leave rural areas.

To look at the difference in young adults moving to urban areas more closely, we can compare the overall mobility of young adults. The census asks respondents where they lived one year ago, and those results can be compared to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth. The results[42] show approximately the same overall rate of mobility among Aboriginal (14%) and non-Aboriginal (14.2%) young adults.

What, then, is happening? Young adults have about the same mobility, whether Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. At the same time, there is clearly a significantly higher movement of non-Aboriginal young adults from rural to urban areas of the province. This means that there is Aboriginal movement between rural areas, or from urban areas to rural ones at a higher rate than is true for non-Aboriginals.

College Regions and BC's Aboriginal Population

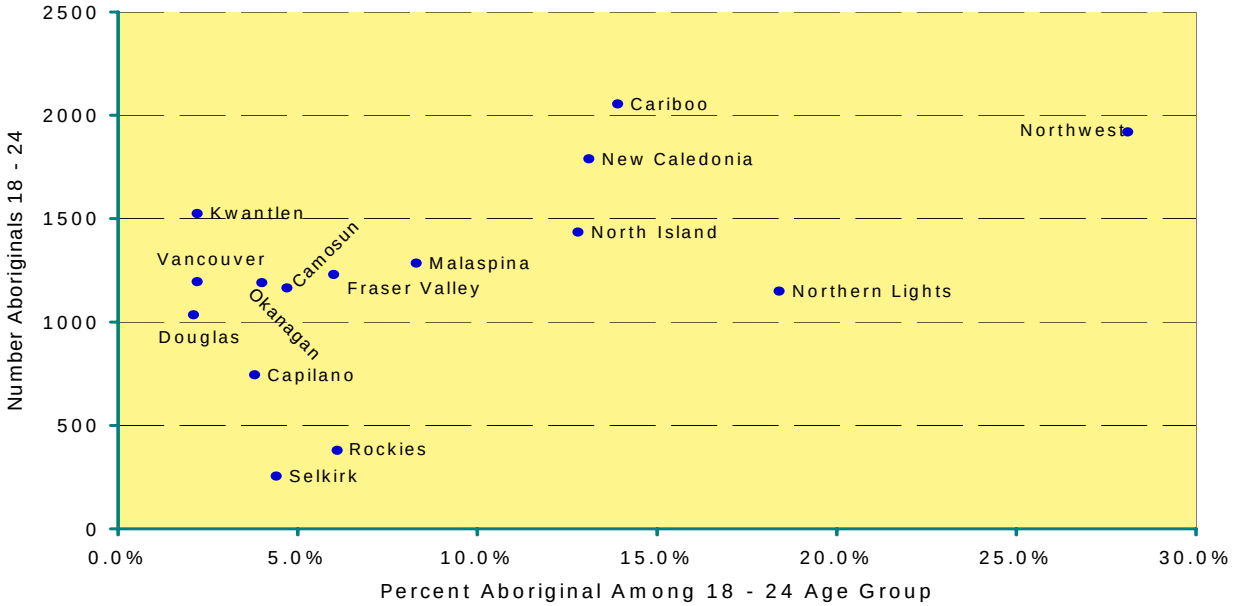
The Aboriginal population of the province is dominantly urban, but also far more rural than the rest of the population. While this simple dichotomy tells a lot about access to services like post-secondary education, it is also important to know more about where around the province the Aboriginal population is located. Fortunately, there are detailed

[42] BC Stats custom census tabulation. Mobility is defined as having moved within the past twelve months. That move is from one dwelling to another and does not necessarily mean that the move was from one community to another. Data available at: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen01/abor/p6Mobil.csv

data available by College Region,[43] a particularly appropriate level of geography to use because the colleges are charged with the delivery of post-secondary education.

Figure 13 shows the number of Aboriginal young adults (18–24) in each college region and the percentage of young adults who are Aboriginal.[44]

Figure 13
Young Aboriginal Population by College District



This figure shows each of the province's 15 college regions and compares each one's population of Aboriginal young adults in terms of both their absolute numbers and their proportion of the young adult population of the college region.

There are several important observations to be made from this figure:

- The major urban college regions (e.g., Vancouver, Kwantlen, Douglas) have relatively low percentages of Aboriginal youth in their catchment areas; however, their large enrolment means that there are still significant numbers of potential Aboriginal students for them to serve. While there are significant numbers of potential Aboriginal students, the challenge is to ensure that they are not overlooked in the very large number of students served by those colleges.

[43] This extensive data series can be accessed on the BC Stats website at: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen01/abor/aprof.asp#sum

[44] The choice of the 18–24 age group is not meant to imply that only that age group is of interest or attends post-secondary institutions. Rather, it merely is meant to ensure comparability across regions using a particularly important age group.

- Two smaller colleges serve the southeastern part of the province where there are relatively low percentages of potential Aboriginal students. In those areas, there will be a particular challenge to ensure that serving the Aboriginal population is a priority, despite their small numbers.

- Finally, there are the college regions with relatively high Aboriginal populations. Those college regions with relatively large total populations (e.g., Cariboo/TRU, New Caledonia) end up with the highest numbers of potential Aboriginal students in the province. They are closely followed by the smaller Northwest college region that has by far the highest proportion of potential Aboriginal students.

The surprising conclusion from this figure is: almost all college regions have broadly similar numbers of potential Aboriginal students in their catchment areas. Whether this results from a low overall population and a high Aboriginal proportion or a lower proportion in a densely populated area, almost every college region serves similar numbers of Aboriginal students. Every college region has a sizeable Aboriginal population to serve.

VII. Looking at the Distribution of Aboriginal Students and Teachers

Background

In in-depth interviews about the recruitment, training, and progress of Aboriginal teachers, several of the conversations turned to issues of where Aboriginal teachers came from and where they went after graduation. Their destination was of interest because it related to the question of whether Aboriginal students were likely to have Aboriginal teachers as role models.

Data Sources

At early stages of the project, it became apparent that some aspects of these questions could be answered using existing data sources.

First, on the student side, the BC provincial government tracks the number of Aboriginal students at a school and district level in both the public and private systems.[45] While this excludes students attending most Band schools, it does include the increasing number of students from reserves who are attending the provincial public school system.

As with many types of data, there are differences across data sources and definitional changes[46] that make the numbers less than perfectly comparable across time. On the other hand, the data are adequate for the purpose of this initial analysis.

Finding information about the characteristics of teachers is more difficult. Fortunately, the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) has conducted surveys of its Aboriginal members and holds information on the school district by which each is employed. This is the key to the geographic distribution of these teachers. Again, there are caveats about these data: they are self-descriptions and depend upon outreach mechanisms like the "snowball" technique (asking those who are known to be Aboriginal to suggest others who may also be) and publicizing the surveys through the Federation's newsletters and more focussed instruments like Abnet. Finally, the teachers are limited to members and associate members who are overwhelmingly in the BC provincial public school system. Independent schools are almost entirely excluded, while Band schools are wholly excluded.

[45] In this section of the report, all the data on students in the public and independent schools are drawn from Summary of Key Information 2004/2005, BC Ministry of Education. This report is available at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/keyinfo/pdfs/ski.pdf .

[46] In particular, there was a significant change after the 2002/2003 academic year. Beginning in the 2003/2004 school year, a student was considered Aboriginal if that student self-declared at any time in the period 2003/2004 and forward. Before 2003/2004, students were considered Aboriginal in any given year only if they self-declared in that year as Aboriginal on the Student Data Collection Form 1701. The result of this policy change was to increase the count of Aboriginal students above the trend line by approximately 1,500 students in the public system and by about 500 in the independent school system.

While the BCTF data probably identify less than half of the Aboriginal teachers in the province, they remain the sole data set generated on the location of Aboriginal teachers. Despite these limitations, there is good geographical information available on the teachers who are included and, therefore, comparisons can be made to the geographical location of Aboriginal students within the public system.

The Size of the Aboriginal Student Population

This section looks at the size of the Aboriginal population, its growth, and its distribution. The most striking result is the rapid increase in the size of the student population. Whether in absolute numbers, or as a proportion of all students in the province, the increase in the numbers of Aboriginal students is remarkable.

As a first step, it is worthwhile to look at the overall number of Aboriginal students in the various K–12 systems in BC.

There are three reported school types: Band schools, public schools, and independent schools. For the provincial public and independent schools,[47] the total included Aboriginal students who had identified themselves as being of Aboriginal ancestry (First Nations, status and non-status Indians, Métis, and Inuit) on the September 30th school report to the Ministry. As discussed earlier, recent changes in this count increased the number of self-identified Aboriginal students.

For the Band schools, the data are more uncertain. First, the most recent, widely available data are from the 1997–1998 school year. Second, the reported numbers themselves are quite unstable in comparison with any of the other data on students.[48] Finally, Nuu-Chah-Nulth students are not included.

Summing up all of the schools' totals, we can make the following conservative estimates:

[47] The independent schools present an interesting data issue in themselves. In the last decade, a number of band schools have chosen to become registered as independent schools within the provincial system. In our in-depth interviews, one proponent of this development cited the benefits to students of using the established provincial curriculum and having the external review process that is part of the provincial accreditation and review process for public and independent schools. The presence of band schools within the independent school category clearly increases the number of Aboriginal students in that group. Additionally, it means that there is some risk of double-counting Aboriginal students who can show up in federal data as attending band schools and in provincial data as attending independent schools.

[48] Consider the fact that the number of Band school students from 1993/1994 to 1997/1998 is listed for successive years as: 4,536 4,992 6,119 5,627 5,201. It seems unlikely that numbers this unstable are accurate given the demographic inertia in any school system.

Table 26
Estimate of Current Aboriginal Student Population

School Type	2003/2004
Band[49]	5,500
Public[50]	55,125
Independent	3,086
Total	63,711

The Band school is the average of the mid 1990s numbers and is probably well off the mark. On the other hand, those schools represent a fairly small portion of the overall Aboriginal student population.

Next, the Aboriginal student population is compared to the non-Aboriginal student population. The Ministry of Education 2004/2005 totals show 671,234 students.[51] Adding the population of the Band schools, the approximate total for students in the province is 676,750. This means that Aboriginal students account for 9.4% of all the K–12 students in the province.

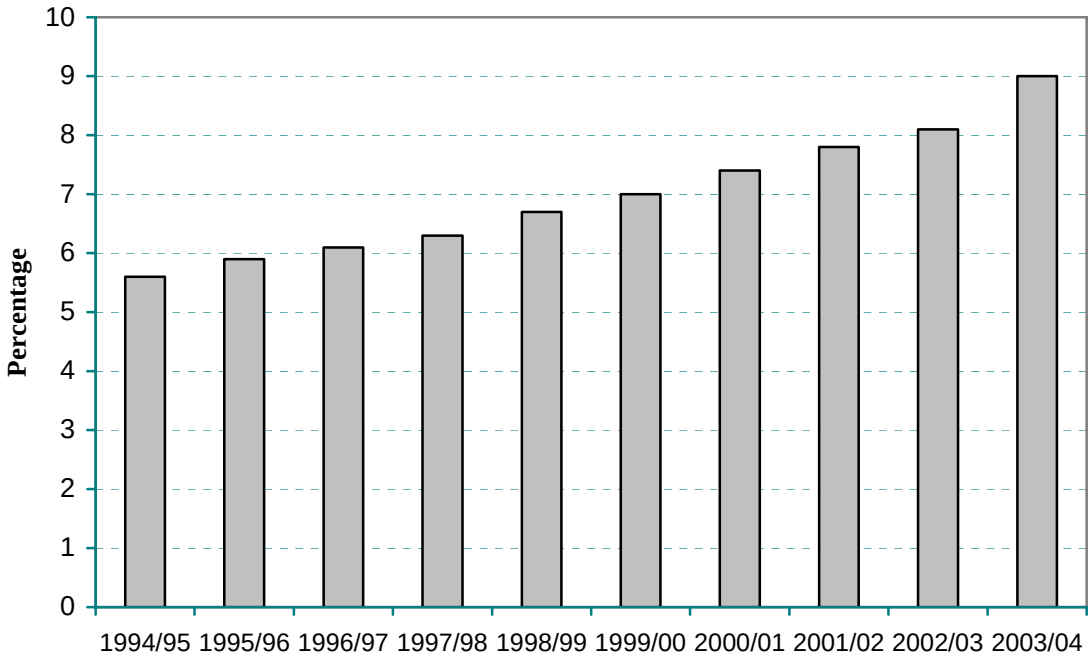
Another way of looking at this average of 9.4% of all students is to break it out by school type. In the absence of other information, it is assumed that the student population of Band schools is 100% Aboriginal. Aboriginal students in public schools account for 9.1% of students, while Aboriginal students in independent schools account for 4.8% of the student body.

The Growth in the Aboriginal Student Population

Due to the changes in the way students were counted as Aboriginal over time, it is difficult to get accurate growth rates. The Ministry of Education has, however, produced one data set that tracks self-identified Aboriginal students consistently from the 1994/1995 year through 2003/2004.[52]

[49] DIAND *Overview of DIAND Program Data* IMB/CIMD June 2000, p. 180. Average past five years.
[50] BC Ministry of Education website http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/keyinfo/pdfs/ab_students.pdf for both public and private schools.
[51] BC Ministry of Education, *Student Enrolment Reports 2000/2001–2004/2005*, p. 1. This figure includes both public and independent schools.
[52] This uses the old way of counting Aboriginal students that required them to identify each year in which registered, rather than the new system that allows for one-time self-identification and registration.

Figure 14
Aboriginal Students as Percent of Public School Students



These results are amazing. They show that the increase in self-identified Aboriginal students went from 5.6% in the public school system, to 9.0% within nine years. This is a 60% increase in just under a decade.

This growth is taking place during a period of overall decline in the number of students. The peak registration for students in the public system was 638,936 in 1997/1998, of whom 40,500 were Aboriginal. The overall public school population has declined in each subsequent year to stand at 606,401 students in 2004/05, of whom 51,500 are Aboriginal.

In contrast to the Aboriginal student population's increase of 11,000, the non-Aboriginal population has fallen by 43,000 from 598,000 to 555,000.

Where Are Aboriginal Students?

The BC Ministry of Education publishes a number of descriptions of the demographics and geographic distribution of Aboriginal students in the public school system. For a first overview, the following table looks at the distribution of Aboriginal students across four major regions and compares the 2003/2004 data to those for 1999/2000.

Table 27
The Distribution of Aboriginal Students by Region over Time

Region	1999/2000	2003/2004	Growth
North	11,729	12,849	9.5%
South Interior	11,323	13,317	17.6%
Island/South Coast	10,107	11,258	11.4%
Lower Mainland	11,563	14,013	21.2%

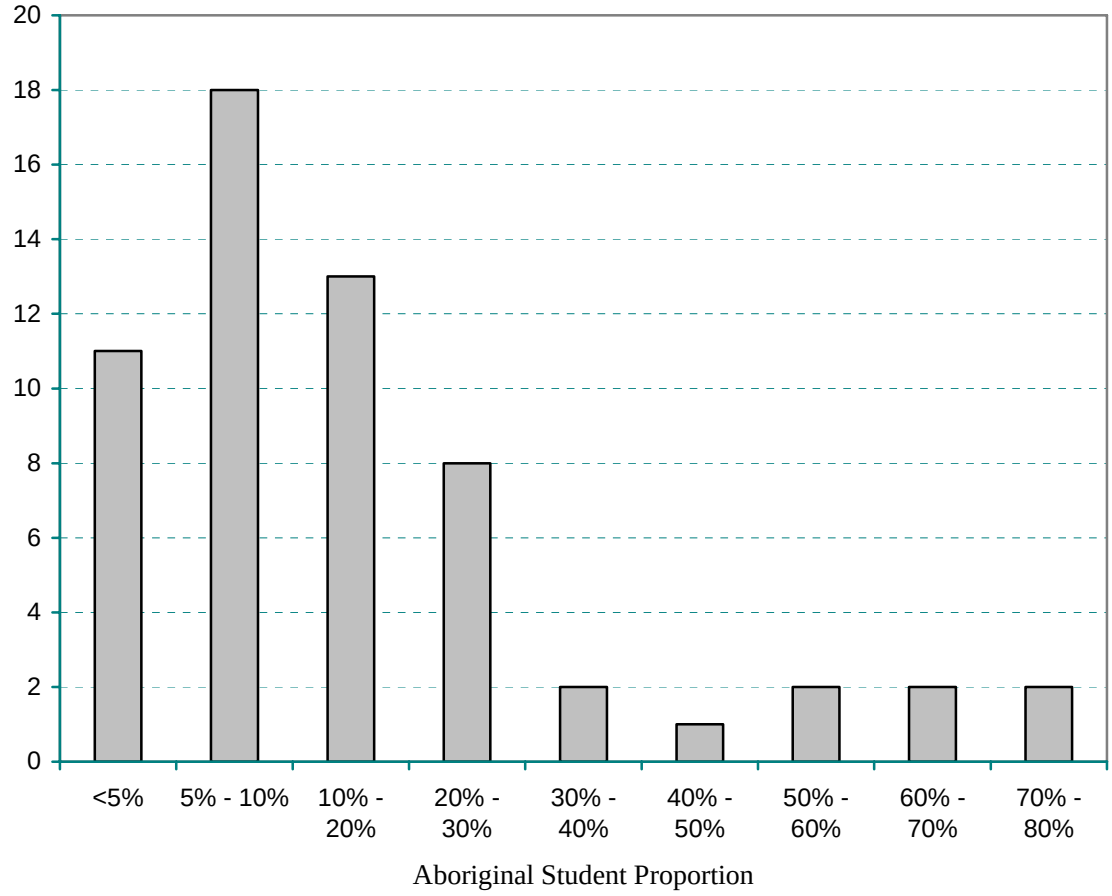
Table 27 highlights:

- Aboriginal students are surprisingly evenly distributed throughout the province.
- All regions of the province are seeing significant growth in the number of Aboriginal students.
- The Lower Mainland has the fastest growth rate and now has marginally more Aboriginal students than any other region of the province.

While the absolute numbers of Aboriginal students is surprisingly uniform across the four regions, the proportion of Aboriginal students varies markedly because of the differing size of the total student populations. There is an important reminder here: there are many Aboriginal students in the Lower Mainland, despite their being a relatively small percentage of the student population there.

There is an enormous range in the proportion of Aboriginal students at the school district level. Figure 15 below looks at each school district and compares its Aboriginal student count in 2003/2004 to the overall number of students.

Figure 15
Number of School Districts by Proportion of Students who are Aboriginal



While there are Aboriginal students throughout the province, the proportion of Aboriginal students varies widely from district to district. Figure 15 above shows a skewed distribution with the largest number of districts in the 5%–10% range. The more important part of the figure may be the "tail" of the distribution with six school districts where Aboriginal students are in a majority.

The large urban school districts in the Lower Mainland account for many of the districts with less than 5% Aboriginal student bodies. This is the other side of the data in Table 2. These districts are very large and, despite having low proportions of Aboriginal students, there are still large numbers of Aboriginal students. The issue here is to ensure that the Aboriginal students are not lost in the large numbers. To give an example, the Surrey School District has the second largest number (2,727 in 2004/2005) of Aboriginal students (trailing only Prince George), and yet, with 3.8% of its student body of Aboriginal ancestry, it is in the lowest category in Figure 2.

The Distribution of Aboriginal Teachers

The information thus far can serve to demonstrate where those future teachers may come from; however, the discussion will turn now to where Aboriginal teachers are found currently.

Having more Aboriginal teachers is not only good for the individuals involved, but can also bring greater sensitivity and more direct personal experience to the classroom. Aboriginal teachers in the classroom can also serve as powerful role models for the Aboriginal students in their schools, and serve as bridges to their communities.

Initial discussions stressed the importance of where Aboriginal teachers ended up in the education system. First, there was concern that they stay within the system. In addition, however, some interview participants expressed concern that the Aboriginal teachers might not necessarily be teaching where there were significant numbers of Aboriginal students.

Figure 16 below shows the number of Aboriginal students per Aboriginal teacher for most of the school districts. First some observations:

- While the BCTF has put a great deal of effort into finding these teachers, there is no requirement that teachers provide this information. As a result, the data should be viewed as high estimates of the student-to-teacher ratio, Instead of looking at the ratios themselves, the point of the data analysis is to understand better the geographical location of Aboriginal teachers in relation to the location of Aboriginal students.
- There are four school districts where the BCTF could find no Aboriginal teachers – Central Coast, Boundary, the Gulf Islands, and Campbell River. They were excluded from the figure because the ratio was meaningless. Peace River South was also excluded because, with 1,390 students and one teacher, the very large ratio made it difficult to graph.

Figure 16
The Aboriginal Student-to-Staff Ratio by the Proportion of Aboriginal Students in the District

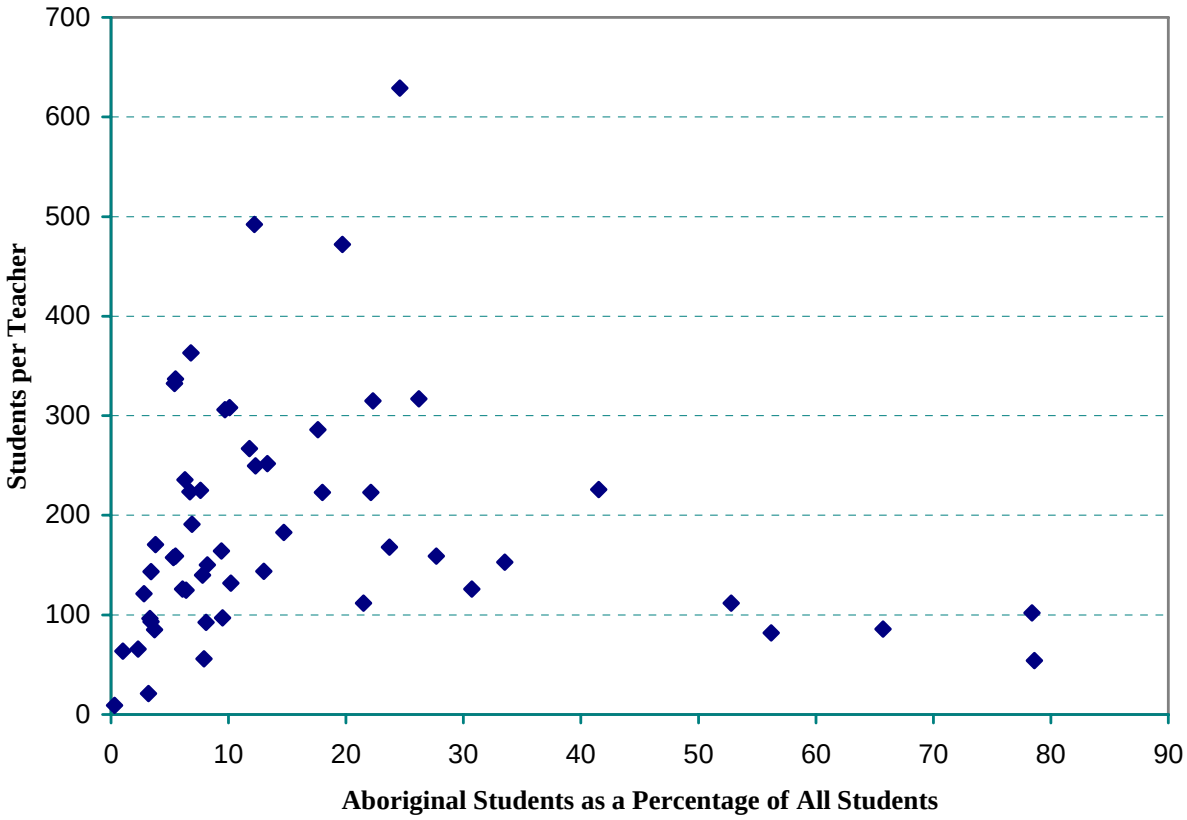


Figure 16 reveals a number of important findings:

- The school districts with very high proportions of Aboriginal students (>50%) — Queen Charlotte, Prince Rupert, Gold Trail, Stikine and Nisga'a — also tend to have below average numbers of Aboriginal students per Aboriginal staff member ratios. They succeed at attracting and holding Aboriginal teachers.
- The two school districts with very low teacher-to-student ratios are anomalies where there are also very few Aboriginal students. West Vancouver has three Aboriginal teachers and only 27 Aboriginal students; Arrow Lakes has 21 Aboriginal students and one Aboriginal teacher.
- The other school districts with low student-to-teacher ratios tend to be relatively urban and affluent — North Vancouver, Saanich, Richmond, Vancouver, Delta, Qualicum, and Okanagan-Similkameen are typical.
- The areas with high ratios of Aboriginal students per Aboriginal teacher tend to be from areas with significant but not dominant Aboriginal populations —South

Kootenay, Prince George, Howe Sound, Alberni, North Okanagan Shuswap, Quesnel, Peace River South, Nanaimo, Fraser Cascade, and Rocky Mountain — as well as the suburban districts of Maple Ridge and Langley. To this group, is added Campbell River with no Aboriginal teachers reported despite over 1,000 Aboriginal students.

Overall, Figure 16 seems to show two different sources for low Aboriginal student-to-Aboriginal staff ratios:

- Those districts with more than a 30% Aboriginal student population tend to have high proportions of Aboriginal teachers.
- The affluent urban areas in the Lower Mainland and Victoria also tend to have hired significant numbers of Aboriginal teachers.

On the other side, areas with significant but not dominant Aboriginal populations (10% – 30%) have widely varying patterns. Some have low ratios (e.g., Bulkley Valley, Vancouver Island-North), while others (e.g., Fraser-Cascade, Nanaimo) have high ratios of students to teachers.

Taken together, these data on teachers show Aboriginal teachers in both the areas of high Aboriginal population and the major urban areas with low proportions of Aboriginal students.

VIII. Conclusions and Recommendations

The research team encountered a rich range of stories and perspectives from various groups throughout the project. These included planning discussions with the project Steering Committee, discussions with Faculty of Education Deans and administrators, interviews with educational professionals, and survey responses from current Aboriginal teacher education students and Aboriginal educators. Various data sources from Statistics Canada, the BC provincial government, universities and colleges, and professional education associations provided additional contextual information. Seven narratives emerged from the qualitative and quantitative study.

1. The Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, universities and colleges, and school districts lack an action and accountability framework regarding Aboriginal learners' accessibility to and completion of teacher education programs and recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers in the public schools. As a result, Aboriginal people are grossly under-represented in teacher education programs and in the teaching profession.

If Aboriginal teachers were to represent the Aboriginal K–12 student population, just over 3,000 Aboriginal teachers would be needed. The 2001 Census data identified 1,210 Aboriginal teachers in BC schools. The need to triple the numbers of Aboriginal teachers in order to meet population parity was also recommended by the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, Volume 3, p. 574). A more recent provincial study reinforces the under-representation of Aboriginal people in educational leadership positions. The Leadership in First Nations Education (LIFE, 2004) initiative managed by the British Columbia School Superintendents' Association (BCSSA) and funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) through the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) in 2004 found that Aboriginal people were under-represented in all teaching and leadership positions in the BC school system. LIFE estimated that Aboriginal teachers comprised less than 1% of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF); less than 1% of principals/vice-principals in the British Columbia Principal and Vice Principals' Association; less than 2% of district staff in the British Columbia School Superintendents' Association; and less than 7% of trustees in the British Columbia School Trustees' Association.[53] Their findings are somewhat lower than the 2001 Census that showed that K–12 Aboriginal teachers comprise 2.5% of the teaching force in BC.

The British Columbia Teachers' Federation identified 325 Aboriginal teachers in their 2002 survey, which accounts for 0.9% of their membership. The divergence between the Census data and that of the BCTF may be partially attributed to the latter having few members in Band and Independent schools and by the significant under-reporting of Aboriginal identity that our in-depth interviewees discussed. Another factor may relate to

[53] The slide presentation, Leadership in First Nations Education (March 2004), outlines project goals, opportunities and challenges, and strategies to promote leadership roles for First Nations educators. http://www.bcssa.org/topics/firstnations/firstnations.htmlhttp://www.bcssa.org/topics/firstnations/firstnations.html

individuals not wanting to self-identify because of their perceived negative stigma attached to Aboriginal teachers. The BCTF is the only provincial organization that is attempting to identify and keep track of Aboriginal teachers in the public schools. Provincial Aboriginal teacher data about recruitment and retention in public, Band, and independent schools is another critical information void.

Our study points to the same conclusion as previous studies and data sources: the consistent trend of gross under-representation of Aboriginal people in the teaching profession. A focussed cooperative effort among provincial and federal governments, universities and colleges, school districts, educational professional associations, and Aboriginal communities/organizations is required in order to reach a target of 2,000 more Aboriginal teachers.

In addition to a co-operative strategy, institutional accountability to act on the issues identified in this study is urgently needed. These issues relate to Aboriginal invisibility in teacher education programs, except for Aboriginal-specific programs; the systemic marginalization of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal knowledge; extraordinary expectations placed upon Aboriginal teacher education students and Aboriginal teachers; and enduring racism.

2. Post-secondary institutions, especially teacher education programs and public school districts, tend not to keep or use consistent data about Aboriginal teacher education students and Aboriginal teachers teaching in public schools. Limited and disparate data result in lack of ability to identify and track Aboriginal teacher education students and lack of ability to identify Aboriginal teachers in the public schools.

Generally, BC teacher education programs do not have a data collection process in place to identify and track the admissions and subsequent academic progress of Aboriginal students enrolled in their programs, except for Aboriginal-specific programs. Nor do they track Aboriginal students' transition to and retention in the teaching field. The study research team found it difficult to obtain specific information from Faculties of Education about the numbers of Aboriginal students enrolled in their programs. Some would say, "less than a handful" and others, "we don't keep track of that type of student data."

The problems of public school data for recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers was discussed above. Having a consistent data tracking method will help provide basic information that would be useful for planning and accountability purposes, but it will not alleviate the systemic problems that prevent Aboriginal people from self-identifying. Because of the negative assumptions and stigma attached to being Aboriginal, some of the survey respondents and interviewees told of Aboriginal teachers who did not self-identify as Aboriginal when applying for teaching positions.

3. Aboriginal people and Aboriginal knowledge are systemically marginalized in public schools and post-secondary institutions.

Aboriginal learners and teachers' experiences of marginalization in high school, teacher education programs, recruitment to teaching, and retention in the teaching profession

were voiced many times throughout the study. The Aboriginal narratives about the K–12 and post-secondary system, the Teacher-on-Call process, and enduring educator employment largely spoke to experiences of exclusion to them personally or to their Aboriginal knowledge and culture. Except for Aboriginal-specific and community-based teacher education programs, the stories positioned Aboriginal people as being "outsiders" to the education systems. Their stories reflected experiences of an Aboriginal add-on approach in public school, college/university, and employment systems.

4. Aboriginal teacher education students and educators face extraordinary expectations and multiple responsibilities.

The Steering Committee conversations, study interviews, and survey responses addressed the difficulties of multiple expectations and responsibilities for Aboriginal learners and educators. They are expected to be experts on Aboriginal knowledge and culture, advocates for improving Aboriginal education, liaisons for all Aboriginal parents and communities, and experts at solving the problems of Aboriginal students, their parents, and communities based on the premise that because they are Aboriginal, they should know. Aboriginal teacher education students begin to take on the extra responsibility of educating their professors and fellow students about Aboriginal matters in their courses, where they are in the minority. They also become the target of backlash when Aboriginal political issues are aired on the media. New Aboriginal teachers are often assigned to difficult teaching assignments that experienced teachers or specialists should have. Because there is a need to have Aboriginal representation on school and district committees, and because there are so many inequities to address in Aboriginal education, the few Aboriginal educators take on extraordinary responsibilities in order to make institutional change. All these extraordinary expectations and responsibilities add much additional stress and pressure on Aboriginal teachers.

5. Aboriginal knowledge, culture, and community are necessary for creating successful pathways for access to and completion of teacher education programs.

Aboriginal-specific and Aboriginal community-based teacher education programs attract Aboriginal learners to their programs. The inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge, culture and perspective, along with maintaining family and community connections, are helpful factors in successfully completing a teacher education program. The few Elders associated with university/colleges provide valuable support to Aboriginal students. Community-based programs ensure relevancy to the community's educational goals and needs. Teacher education coordinators who work with these programs become sensitized to the colonization effects that influence Aboriginal learners. These programs are viewed as being a safe and caring place to learn; thereby enhancing the successful completion of Aboriginal learners.

Conversely, when Aboriginal knowledge, culture, and community are marginalized and not valued, their exclusion is cited as a hindering factor. Those who leave their home territory and community to complete their teacher education program experience added stress and additional financial and emotional costs.

6. Racism endures in schools and post-secondary institutions.

All British Columbians censure racist actions. Unfortunately, many Aboriginal learners and educators who participated in this study believe that racism continues to be a significant impediment to Aboriginal learners' education and their subsequent employment. How can the British Columbia public education system successfully recruit and employ more Aboriginal teachers if Aboriginal learners experience racism in their secondary schools, then continue to post-secondary education and experience racism once more, perhaps to a lesser degree, and then encounter racism once more in their work place?

7. A significant increase in Aboriginal educators requires transformative change in order to eliminate systemic hindering factors and to increase the helpful factors that lead to success in each education and career pathway.

The issues identified in our study in relation to the aforementioned thematic areas resonate with earlier research (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Human Capital Strategies, 2005;[54] University of Victoria,[55] 2000). Common obstacles that post-secondary Aboriginal learners faced in these studies and the teacher career path study included:

- low high school completion rates and lack of required high school academic courses for entrance to university programs
- inadequate financial support
- racism
- lack of adequate academic skills
- stress related to relocating such as finding housing, moving away from family, and feeling unsupported
- institutional curriculum that omits or marginalizes Aboriginal knowledge and culture

The helpful factors included:

- teacher education programs with sound Aboriginal knowledge base and perspective
- caring and knowledgeable Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal faculty and staff
- programs that built and maintained family ties and community spirit
- Aboriginal teacher networks and mentoring programs
- positive relationships with family, community, teacher education faculty and staff, and school colleagues

These seven interconnected narratives have been shaped by the actions over time of multiple communities—Aboriginal communities, public schools, post-secondary

[54] Human Capital Strategies. (2005). Final Report. Review of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Programs, Services and Strategies/Best Practices & Aboriginal Special Projects Funding (ASPF) Program. Submitted to Ministry of Advanced Education, Province of British Columbia.
[55] web.uvic.ca/iicrd/graphics/Canada%20Survey%20Report.PDF

programs, teacher education programs, and Aboriginal teacher education programs, school districts, provincial ministries, and Aboriginal education partners. Our conclusions and recommendations follow from these stories and are addressed to agents who we believe can work to fill the accountability vacuum. Accompanying our recommendations is an identification of which agent(s) we feel are responsible for implementing the recommendations.

Recommendations

The following recommendations identify strategies for government and key stakeholders to increase the number of qualified Aboriginal teachers in the BC public education system generally, as well as in areas of specific need. It also recommends data collection and analysis for tracking Aboriginal students in teacher education programs through transition to and retention in employment. The recommendations build upon the study's seven major findings noted above, which are based on the interviews, surveys, examination of databases, and previous research. The first recommendation should be given priority because it provides a framework for the others, which are organized according to the education and career paths discussed in the Indigenous wholistic analysis, survey findings, and data discussion sections. The other recommendations do not have an order of priority. All recommendations are important.

Recommendations to increase the number of qualified Aboriginal teachers in the BC public education system generally, as well as in areas of specific need

Recommendation 1: Develop and implement an Aboriginal Teacher Education and Employment Policy and Action Plan to guide Aboriginal Teacher Education and Employment initiatives.

Change Agents: School districts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education, Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, BC Partners' Group on Aboriginal Education

There is need for a deliberate, aggressive, yet cooperative plan and accountability policy regarding Aboriginal Teacher Education and Aboriginal Teacher Employment and Retention. The BC Partners' Group on Aboriginal Education could lead the development and oversee the implementation of a policy and funded outcome action plan that sets target enrollment and graduation rates of Aboriginal teacher education students, sets target numbers of Aboriginal educators teaching in public, Band, and independent schools, and establishes program benchmarks for quality Aboriginal teacher education.

Recommendation 2: Create personally oriented mentoring and recruitment initiatives for Aboriginal high school students through cooperative efforts among high schools, Band schools, teacher education programs, and Aboriginal communities/organizations.

Change Agents: Aboriginal communities, School districts, University Transfer/Arts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education

Teacher education programs should develop proactive outreach efforts to encourage and mentor Aboriginal high school students to consider teaching as a future career. RCAP (1996) even suggested that teacher career efforts could begin in later elementary grades. These efforts go much beyond attending school career fairs and setting up an information table. Future teachers' clubs, interactive websites, mentoring programs, sending personalized letters to Aboriginal students encouraging them to think about a teaching career are some suggestions of proactive initiatives. Teachers, principals, and other school staff could identify students who have an aptitude or "gift" for teaching and encourage or mentor them. University teacher education students could design a teachers' club or interactive website. Aboriginal high school students may become more motivated to complete required academic courses needed to enroll in teacher education programs if they have a future career path. These initiatives could also help Aboriginal high school students acquire the necessary academic and study skills in the areas of English, writing, and mathematics. Aboriginal knowledge, community/parent/Elder involvement, and Aboriginal perspectives must be a core part of these recruitment and mentoring strategies.

Recommendation 3: Financial support, in the form of bursaries and awards, and the waiving of registration fees, is highly recommended in order to alleviate the high costs of attending a college or university.

Change Agents: Aboriginal communities, University Transfer/Arts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education, Ministries of Education and Advanced Education

There are a lot of circumstances that make access to post-secondary education difficult for Aboriginal learners. A disproportionate number of Aboriginal students come from locations that make it impossible to complete their education while living in their own community. In addition, Aboriginal students are more likely to wait before entering post-secondary, which means they may have additional family responsibilities. These facts, along with the leadership role played by many Aboriginal students in their extended family or community, means they are more likely to face additional financial responsibilities. Rising tuition fees and limited Band funding are barriers that prevent Aboriginal people from considering teacher education. Institutions that offer bursaries, awards, and any other financial incentives may attract applicants. Sometimes applicants may not follow through with an application because they do not have the registration fees. While a registration fee of $100 may not seem like much to a big institution; it is a hindrance to those who do not have the funds. In future, institutions may need to think

about awarding tuition awards to attract strong Aboriginal applicants. Currently, universities such as UBC give tuition awards to Ph.D. students accepted into graduate programs for a four-year period, in order to be competitive in attracting top students.

Recommendation 4: Establish or enhance teacher education programs that build upon Aboriginal knowledge, address Aboriginal K–12 student learning needs, and maintain family and community ties. These programs may be Aboriginal specific, and/or integrate Aboriginal knowledge throughout the program, and/or be joint initiatives between post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities and organizations. Other strategies that fall within this recommendation include:

a. Ensure Aboriginal Elders have a teaching and mentoring role and compensate them for their professional expertise.

b. Increase Aboriginal faculty in teacher education programs.

c. Ensure that all teacher education students take one core course about Aboriginal education and integrate Aboriginal content and perspectives throughout general teacher education programs.

Change Agents: Aboriginal communities, University Transfer/Arts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education, Ministries of Education and Advanced Education

Increasing Aboriginal peoples' accessibility to teacher education programs that meet their cultural and geographic diversity requires the availability of many options. Research participants emphasized the value of Aboriginal-specific and community-based programs. They also talked about the need for general teacher education programs to include more Aboriginal content and perspective. There are currently seven universities in BC with a Faculty of Education offering teacher education programs. Not all have the resources to develop and maintain an Aboriginal-specific program and not all agree that Aboriginal-specific programs should be the only option for Aboriginal learners. Joint-degree initiatives offered in partnership between universities and in cooperation with Aboriginal communities/organizations could maximize limited financial and human resources.

We hope that, as a new generation of teachers enters the profession having been educated along with Aboriginal students, it will reduce Aboriginal teachers' isolation within the schools, as they will have been part of the diversity of the teacher education process.

Recommendation 5: Ensure teacher education programs address the wholistic needs of Aboriginal teacher education students and prepare them for the challenges they will face in the teaching profession.

Change Agents: Aboriginal communities and organizations, School Districts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education, Ministry of Education, and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation

The wholistic Indigenous analysis discussed the helpful and hindering factors that related to the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual domains. The influence of self, family, community, and place upon these factors and domains was also part of the wholistic framework. Aboriginal knowledge and culture is often described as having a wholistic nature. If teacher education programs build upon Aboriginal knowledge and culture, then they must incorporate a wholistic approach.

The research participants identified critical challenges that Aboriginal teachers face in the teaching profession: extraordinary expectations and multiple roles; colonization impact from Aboriginal parents and communities; and isolation and marginalization. These issues could be addressed in coursework and practica. Teacher Education Programs could also develop cooperative initiatives to deal with these critical challenges with Aboriginal organizations such as the First Nations Schools' Association, the First Nations Education Steering Committee, the Aboriginal Teacher Education Consortium, Schools Districts, Ministry of Education, and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation.

Recommendation 6: Ensure teacher education programs are responsive to the educational needs of K–12 Aboriginal learners. Transformative action plans need to be developed in the following areas: Aboriginal languages, special education, literacy, mathematics and science, and classroom management.

Change Agents: Aboriginal communities, School districts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education

The research participants suggested areas that needed to be addressed in teacher education programs as indicated in the recommendation above. A transformative approach is recommended in responding to the educational needs of K–12 Aboriginal learners, which includes questioning approaches that focus on a student deficit approach or that perpetuate a Western education perspective to the exclusion of Aboriginal knowledge. The teacher education program areas/specializations must be based upon Aboriginal knowledge. Aboriginal languages continue to be an area of priority for many Aboriginal communities. All BC Band schools have a First Nations language program and public schools are slowly increasing First Nations language offerings. A transformative approach would consider combining learning the First Nations language with curriculum development and pedagogy such as language immersion approaches. Special education approaches would critically examine the effects of labelling, consider Aboriginal ways of identifying the "gifts" that each child has, and then develop

approaches that build upon one's gifts in order to improve the child's learning difficulties. Culturally responsive approaches could be used for teaching literacy, mathematics, and science and dealing with classroom management.

Recommendation 7: Teacher education programs should prepare Aboriginal students and graduates for their job search in areas such as interviewing and developing their knowledge of school district organization and hiring practices.

Change Agents: School districts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education, British Columbia Teachers' Federation

According to the research participants, job search skills were either non-existent or inconsistently developed in teacher education programs. The competitive nature of the job search, systemic challenges related to the Teacher-on-Call process, and racism are challenging factors facing new Aboriginal teacher applicants to public schools. Teacher education programs could work with school districts and the BCTF to develop a course module or job-search program to better prepare Aboriginal applicants. This cooperative action should not be seen as replacing the need to change the systemic challenges facing new Aboriginal teacher applicants.

Recommendation 8: School districts should have Aboriginal teachers in numbers that at least reflect the Aboriginal student population in their district. To this end, districts should be held accountable for their Aboriginal teacher-hiring and retention strategies in pursuit of this goal.

Change Agent: School districts

Address the following:

a. Recognize and deal with the fact that hiring based on seniority from Teacher-on-Call experience discriminates against new teachers who do not have the social and personal networks in the school districts. This tends to discriminate against Aboriginal teachers.

b. Encourage newly graduated Aboriginal teachers to teach in classrooms longer before taking on district-wide roles (recognizing that many currently begin in district roles because of the difficulty of securing sufficient seniority through the TOC system to become employed full time).

c. Reduce the pressure on new Aboriginal teachers to act as a knowledge resource, social worker, and Aboriginal community representative on top of their role as classroom teacher. These additional pressures and expectations on Aboriginal teachers prompted many to reconsider their position as a classroom teacher.

d. Stop the stereotyping of new Aboriginal teachers that often sees them placed in the most challenging classroom situations—often without proper training. If an Aboriginal teacher is placed in a classroom with students who are having trouble with the school system, it should be because that teacher is trained in those areas, not because a disproportionate number of the students are Aboriginal.

Recommendation 9: Create an Aboriginal teachers' network that facilitates the development of mentoring programs, engages in action teacher research, and provides communications and opportunities for Aboriginal teachers to work together on an on-going basis in order to increase their retention in the teaching profession.

Change Agents: School districts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education, BC Partners' Group on Aboriginal Education, Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation

The research participants reinforced the value of networks, mentoring programs, action research, and mechanisms that facilitated ongoing communication and collaboration for addressing issues related to isolation and marginalization. The only formal mechanism that exists for Aboriginal teachers to network is the BCTF's First Nations education specialist group that usually convenes an annual Aboriginal education conference. This group is led by an elected executive who volunteer their time to carry out the group's goals. More resources for coordination and implementation of mentoring and networking programs and research are required. The mentoring and networking programs need to happen at a school district level, then extend to a provincial level as appropriate.

Recommendations about data collection for tracking Aboriginal students in teacher education programs and transition to and retention in employment

The Ministry of Education has dramatically increased our understanding of student progress, special issues, and the performance of groups like Aboriginal students by creating and improving an individual student database that tracks performance and progress. The Provincial Education Number (PEN) has made analysis, understanding, and accountability much more achievable as it is possible to look at various aspects of performance.

Recommendation 10: The Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, in consultation with Aboriginal organizations, should work with post-secondary institutions to ensure they create consistent and thorough reporting databases to understand the paths, successes, and barriers of Aboriginal students in teacher education programs.

Change Agents: Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education, Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, BC Partners' Group on Aboriginal Education

We recommend that the post-secondary system adopt the use of the current PEN Aboriginal identifier for all BC students who have a PEN. This number could create a much better longitudinal picture of performance and trajectories. As well, the PEN now has robust Aboriginal identifiers—significantly better than the self-identification relied upon by most post-secondary institutions. This should become an integral element in the data plan of the Central Data Warehouse of the post-secondary system.

This will give the post-secondary system a common identifier with a reliable Aboriginal "flag." This is particularly important to those institutions that do not have the scale to set up a sophisticated data management system to track other than academic essentials for their students.

For non-BC students, or for mature students who were last in BC schools before PENs were reliable, colleges and universities should create a number that can be used in parallel with the PEN. It will be important that consistent effort be put into accurately identifying Aboriginal students as part of assigning this parallel number.

Recommendation 11: From the new Aboriginal database, the Ministry of Advanced Education should work with post-secondary institutions to create regular reporting similar to the Ministry of Education's *How Are We Doing?* report.

Change Agents: University Transfer/Arts, Faculties of Education and Aboriginal Teacher Education, Ministry of Advanced Education

There is a lack of knowledge about the pathways, successes, and barriers facing Aboriginal students in post-secondary education. This undermines progress and accountability through a simple lack of information on which to hold anyone responsible or information sufficient to improve understanding.

The K–12 system has, through its data capture, analysis, and reporting initiatives, increased knowledge of the way in which Aboriginal learners progress in the system. This has led to a better understanding of critical issues the system must address and has set benchmarks against which progress, or lack thereof, can be assessed.

In contrast, the post-secondary system has partial information on Aboriginal identity. The information is captured in different and inconsistent ways across time and institutions. The effect of this patchwork of information is to make the analysis of patterns of progress

through even a single institution difficult. Across institutions, the differences in data collection make inter-institutional comparisons of administrative data misleading where it is possible at all.

Fundamentally, lacking reliable information on how many Aboriginal students take what courses and how well they do in those programs makes it difficult to set goals for which institutions can be accountable.

Recommendation 12: Create an Aboriginal teacher candidate and educator database system.

Change Agents: School districts, the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, the BC College of Teachers

The Aboriginal educator tracking system would include teachers on call and existing and new hires entering directly from other schools. This would require school districts, the BCTF, the BC College of Teachers, and teacher education programs to adopt provincially standardized processes and procedures to the extent possible, and create an Aboriginal Teacher Candidate Database:

- An Aboriginal Educator Human Resources Database (AEHRDB) would contain key Aboriginal human resource information for British Columbia's school districts. AHRDB provide a useful research database with the following types of information: demographics, employment type/status, etc.

If the data are collected as part of the College of Teachers' certification, an efficient, single-source process can result.

Table 1
Summary of Recommendations and Change Agents

RECOMMENDATIONS	CHANGE AGENTS				
1: Develop and implement an Aboriginal Teacher Education and Employment Policy and Action Plan to guide Aboriginal Teacher Education and Employment initiatives.		School Districts		Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	BC Partners' Group on Aboriginal Education / Ministries of Education and Advanced Education
2: Create personally oriented mentoring and recruitment initiatives for Aboriginal high school students through cooperative efforts among high schools, Band schools, teacher education programs, and Aboriginal communities/organizations.	Aboriginal Communities	School Districts	University Transfer/Arts	Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	
3: Financial support, in the form of bursaries and awards, and the waiving of registration fees, is highly recommended in order to alleviate the high costs of attending a college or university.	Aboriginal Communities		University Transfer/Arts	Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	Ministries of Education and Advanced Education
4: Establish or enhance teacher education programs that build upon Aboriginal knowledge, address Aboriginal K–12 student learning needs, and maintain family and community ties. These programs may be Aboriginal specific, and/or integrate Aboriginal knowledge throughout the program, and/or be joint initiatives between post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities and organizations.	Aboriginal Communities		University Transfer/Arts	Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	Ministries of Education and Advanced Education

5: Ensure teacher education programs address the wholistic needs of Aboriginal teacher education students and prepare them for the challenges they will face in the teaching profession.	Aboriginal Communities and Organizations	School Districts		Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	Ministries of Education / British Columbia Teachers' Federation
6: Ensure teacher education programs are responsive to the educational needs of K–12 Aboriginal learners. Transformative action plans need to be developed in the following areas: Aboriginal languages, special education, literacy, mathematics and science, and classroom management.	Aboriginal Communities			Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	
7: Teacher education programs should prepare Aboriginal students and graduates for their job search in areas such as interviewing and developing their knowledge of school district organization and hiring practices.		School Districts		Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	British Columbia Teachers' Federation
8: School districts should have Aboriginal teachers in numbers that at least reflect the Aboriginal student population in their district. To this end, districts should be held accountable for their Aboriginal teacher-hiring and retention strategies in pursuit of this goal.		School Districts			
9: Create an Aboriginal teachers' network that facilitates the development of mentoring programs, engages in action teacher research, and provides communications and opportunities for Aboriginal teachers to work together on an on-going basis in order to increase their retention in the		School Districts		Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	BC Partners' Group on Aboriginal Education / Ministries of Education and Advanced

teaching profession.					Education / British Columbia Teachers' Federation
10: The Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, in consultation with Aboriginal organizations, should work with post-secondary institutions to ensure they create consistent and thorough reporting databases to understand the paths, successes, and barriers of Aboriginal students in teacher education programs.				Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	BC Partners' Group on Aboriginal Education / Ministries of Education and Advanced Education
11: From the new Aboriginal database, the Ministry of Advanced Education should work with post-secondary institutions to create regular reporting similar to the Ministry of Education's *How Are We Doing?* report.			University Transfer/Arts	Faculties of Education/ Aboriginal Teacher Education	Ministry of Advanced Education
12: Create an Aboriginal teacher candidate and educator database system.		School Districts			Ministries of Education and Advanced Education / British Columbia Teachers' Federation / BC College of Teachers

IX. Appendices

Appendix A: BC Ministry of Education Request for Proposals Number C5/2534
Appendix B: Questions and Answers (Project proponents meeting, Victoria, BC, Nov. 29/04)
Appendix C: Edudata Canada's bid in response to the BC Ministry of Education's Request RFP C5/2534
Appendix D: Edudata's application to the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB)
Appendix E: Privacy Protection Schedule forming part of the agreement between Her Majesty the Queen in right of the Province of British Columbia and Edudata Canada as the Contractor for this research project
Appendix F: MED Letter to Project Steering Committee
Appendix G: MED Letter to BC University and College Deans of Education
Appendix H: Steering Committee Terms of Reference
Appendix I: Research Project's Frequently Asked Questions
Appendix J: Letter of Invitation to Aboriginal Education Professionals
Appendix K: Consent Form for Round 1 Interviews Participants (Education Professionals)
Appendix L: Interview Guidelines Based on Components of Edudata Proposal
Appendix M: Interview Guide for Round 1 Interviews (May, 2005)
Appendix N: Cover Letter to Potential Survey Respondents
Appendix O: The Five-Part Edudata Survey
Appendix P: Follow-up Interview Request Form (for survey respondents)
Appendix Q: Consent Forms for Round 2 Interviews Participants (survey respondents)
Appendix R: Survey Follow-up Interview Questions
Appendix S: Survey Output Tables
Appendix T: Aboriginal Students by BC School District, 1995/96 – 2004/05 (Public and Independent)
Appendix U: The Priorities of High School Aboriginal Students

Technical Report

The following appendices represent a comprehensive collection of the materials used throughout the course of this research study.

The British Columbia Ministry of Education posted Request for Proposals (RFP) Number C5/2534 on November 17, 2004 (Appendix A) and held a Question & Answer meeting in Victoria, BC on November 29, 2004 for contract proponents (Appendix B). Edudata Canada responded to the RFP with a complete proposal (Appendix C) and was awarded the contract (Appendix E).

This research study involved human participants and, as a result, Edudata was required to meet the standards of the University of British Columbia's Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB). Appendix D is Edudata's application for BREB approval.

The next stage of the project involved communications from the Ministry of Education. Appendix F is the February 7, 2005 letter from Ministry of Education, Aboriginal

Education Enhancements Branch Director Trish Rosborough to the project Steering Committee, outlining the details of the project. Appendix G is the February 16, 2005 letter from Trish Rosborough to BC university and college Deans of Education requesting their participation in the project. Appendix H is the Steering Committee Terms of Reference, a document drawn up by the BC Ministry of Education outlining the Steering Committee membership, parameters and protocols, and purpose.

Further communications pieces were necessary from Edudata Canada. A "Frequently Asked Questions" document (Appendix I) was created in consultation with the Steering Committee to inform study participants and other interested parties. It was posted to the project website and later included in all survey packets.

An information booth was prepared for the First Nations Schools Association (FNSA) Conference on April 22, 2005. Information packets were distributed and names and addresses collected of future potential participants. One team member made several personal contacts with Aboriginal educators and encouraged their participation in the research study.

Appendix J is the letter of introduction sent to 40 BC Aboriginal professionals (principals, retired teachers, coordinators of Aboriginal teacher education programs, university professors, etc.) and selected non-Aboriginal professionals working in the field of Aboriginal education, informing them of the study and inviting them to participate in an interview. The project team was eventually able to conduct interviews with 23 of these individuals.

UBC's BREB requires that before research study participants may be interviewed, they must sign a consent form. Appendix K is the consent form signed by the education professionals who agreed to be interviewed.

The original interview guidelines that appeared in the Edudata proposal and formed the basis of what later became the streamlined interview questions can be viewed in Appendix L. The actual questions used by the research team to interview the Round 1 interviewees (education professionals) in May, 2005 after consultation with the Steering Committee are listed in Appendix M.

In early July, 2005, 292 surveys were mailed directly from Edudata Canada and UBC to Aboriginal graduates and current students of BC teacher education programs whose names and addresses Edudata was able to acquire by previous permission. An additional 120 surveys were distributed to BC college and university teacher education programs (20 surveys each to six institutions). Program Deans and coordinators were requested to distribute the surveys to their Aboriginal graduates and current students on behalf of the research study, thereby ensuring the anonymity of potential participants. Follow-up correspondence with these institutions revealed that two sent out 17 surveys and one sent out seven. The other three institutions did not reply to our enquiry about actual mail out numbers.

In mid-July, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) sent a letter on behalf of the project to their Aboriginal teachers' mailing list. This letter went out to 350 addresses and, from this mail out, eight teachers contacted Edudata for a survey.

Ten (10) total surveys were returned directly to Edudata stamped as "moved" or "undeliverable" by Canada Post. So while a total of 420 surveys went out from Edudata's office, we can account for 331 surveys being mailed directly to potential participants.

Appendix N is the introductory letter to potential survey participants included in all survey packets. Appendix O is the five-part survey designed in consultation with the project Steering Committee, and Appendix P is the form included in survey packets for respondents to indicate interest in participating in a follow-up interview.

Survey respondents who indicated interest in participating in a follow-up interview were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix Q) before being given the list of interview questions (Appendix R).

A total of 65 surveys were returned. Appendix S is a list of frequency tables presenting the counts and valid percent results from the survey's closed-response items. They represent each question in the survey and are presented in the order they appeared, labelled by section and question number, and followed by the description of the survey question. Participants' responses (where relevant) to the open-ended items on the survey, are also presented in Appendix S.

Appendix T is a document compiled by the BC Ministry of Education Information Department entitled Aboriginal Students by BC School District, 1995/96 – 2004/05 (Public and Independent). It is an auxiliary piece to this report and presents the numbers of Aboriginal students registered in each BC school district from the 2002/2003 school year to the 2004/2005 school year and showing public and independent school enrollment from 1995/1996 to 2004/2005.

A second auxiliary piece, Appendix U, is The Priorities of High School Aboriginal Students. Authored by Ian McKinnon, this sub-report is based on a survey done in January, 2005 in School District 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) that asked Grade 10–12 Aboriginal students to rate what was most important to them in terms of high school student services.